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REDEPTIVE HISTORICAL SUMMARIES: MICROCOSMS OF THE BIBLICAL
STORY SHAPING IDENTITY, TIME AND MISSION

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF THEOLOGY

BY
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ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

MAY 2011

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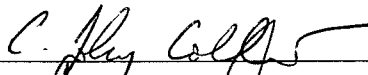
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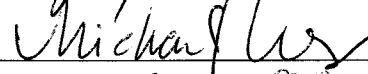
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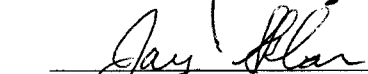
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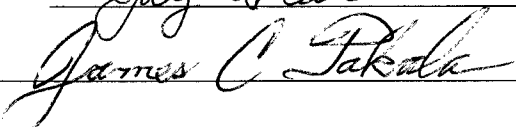
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ABSTRACT OF
REDEMPITIVE HISTORICAL SUMMARIES: MICROCOSMS OF THE BIBLICAL
STORY SHAPING IDENTITY, TIME AND MISSION

by Cheryl Eaton

Redemptive historical summaries appear across the canon. Varying in length and scope, they are microcosms of the overarching biblical story of God's interaction with his people. Although a recurring phenomenon in the canon, redemptive historical summaries and their purpose have been largely unexplored.

This work seeks to contribute to the understanding of phenomenon of redemptive historical summary by examining the summaries contained in the larger pericopes of Deut 26:1-11, 2 Kgs 17:6-23, Acts 13:13-43 and Rom 1:1-7, exegeting each passage to determine its purpose within the story and for the original readers/hearers of the story. This study uses C. John Collins' discourse-oriented literary methodology, distinguishing between the author/editor and speaker.

Findings include that a detailed exegesis of these narratives reveals that while various elements of this common story are employed in very different circumstances, each carries the same ultimate purpose – to instill in the people of God their identity as inheritors of the story, to situate them along its ongoing timeline, and to engage their participation in the fulfillment of its goal of the redemption of God's good creation.

For my father, William R. Eaton Jr.

Brilliant and skeptical, he died Oct. 17, 2009, trusting in Jesus Christ.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Redemptive historical summaries appear across the canon. Varying in length and scope, they are microcosms of the overarching biblical story of God's interaction with his people. In Deuteronomy 26, Moses commands the Israelites to recite the story to the LORD in their ceremonial offering of firstfruits. In 2 Kings 27, the narrator uses the story to demonstrate the justice of the LORD's judgment in annihilating the Northern Kingdom and to foreshadow the similar fate that awaits Judah. In Acts 13, Paul tells the story in bringing the gospel to a group of Jews, proselytes and Godfearers. In Romans 1, he incorporates the story into the opening of his letter seeking support for an evangelistic trek to Spain.

A detailed exegesis of these narratives reveals that while various elements of this common story are employed in very different circumstances, each carries the same ultimate purpose – to instill in the people of God their identity as inheritors of the story, to situate them along its ongoing timeline, and to engage their participation in the fulfillment of its goal of the redemption of God's good creation.

Related research

Little research has been conducted in the study of redemptive historical summary. My own previous study, "Author Versus Speaker: An Approach for Exegesis of Redemptive Historical Summaries in Biblical Narrative,"¹ focused on the summaries contained within the larger narratives of Neh 9:1-10:40 and Acts 6:8-8:3. The summary of Neh 9:5b-37 is a prayer of covenant renewal offered by the returned exiles and led by a group

¹ Cheryl Eaton, "Author Versus Speaker: An Approach for Exegesis of Redemptive Historical Summaries in Biblical Narrative" (master's thesis, Covenant Theological Seminary, 2010).

of Levites. Its scope extends from the creation to the exiles' return. The summary of Acts 7:2-53 is a speech of defense and indictment given by Stephen in his response to charges before the Sanhedrin. Its scope extends from the call of Abraham to the execution of Jesus.

The study considered the nature of the two passages as narratives within narratives, and so distinguished between the communicative acts of the editors/authors and the character/s to their respective audiences. It explored the summaries' structures, content, and purposes within their pericopes, as well as the purposes of those pericopes within their larger narratives, but did not address in depth their function in shaping identity, position in the biblical timeline or mission.

Findings included:

“(1) Characteristics of narrative are exhibited by both the Hebrew of Neh 9:5b-10:1, and the Greek of Acts 7:2-53; (2) both the prayer and the speech have peaks that are separate from those of the narrative frameworks in which they are couched; and (3) just as the editor of Ezra-Nehemiah and Luke are distinct from the characters they portray in their written work, so does their communicative intent toward their readers differ from that of the characters to their audiences.”²

This work builds on the findings of the previous study.

Williams sets out some preliminary work he has conducted in this area of study in an unpublished article, “Story Summaries.”³ He notes that the overall story that runs from Genesis through Revelation serves to unify the biblical works that do not fall into the genre of narrative, creating “one cohesive revelatory word.”⁴ He points out that summaries are “one way that the biblical authors evidence their sense that each is witness to a singular story of God’s active redemptive involvement with his creation.”⁵

² Ibid., Abstract.

³ Michael D. Williams, “Story Summaries,” (Paper, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Summer 2010).

⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁵ Ibid., 2.

Features Williams observed that are shared by all redemptive historical summaries are:

1. They provide no new information for readers, so that their function must lie elsewhere, such as in situating a particular group within the biblical narrative “to remind them of who they are;”⁶ shaping worldview; forming character; calling to mission; and warning, comforting or blessing.
2. They are not exhaustive.
3. They recount God’s mighty deeds.
4. They portray God in “personal-relational” terms.
5. Their scope is often wider than the works in which they appear, and therefore tie those works to the larger biblical story.
6. All are situated within and serve to advance the ongoing story.
7. They are “self-involving for the speaker.”⁷

Williams also offers a list of redemptive historical summaries he has identified: Deut 6:20-24; Deut 26:5-9; Josh 24:2-13; 1-2 Chronicles; Neh 9:6-37; Pss 78, 105, 106, 135:8-12; 136; and Acts 7:2-50 and 13:17-41.⁸ Williams’ study provides only an overview, however, and therefore does not offer a detailed examination of any particular passage.

Steck,⁹ in his work *Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten*,¹⁰ identifies what he sees as a recurring theme, a Deuteronomistic view of Israel’s history in

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁹ I am indebted to Dr. Hans Bayer, Professor of New Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, who generously shared with me his own notes from a somewhat related study. His notes are not included in this work but pointed me to aspects of Steck’s work relevant to my study.

connection with “the violent fate of the prophets,” in numerous passages in the OT, including Neh 9 and 2 Kgs 17,¹¹ as well as in the apocrypha, Josephus, pseudepigrapha and Rabbinic literature.¹² Elements of the theme continue into the NT, such as in Stephen’s speech in Acts 7, which Steck believes was altered by Luke from Stephen’s traditionally themed original to better fit the Christian world mission.¹³ Steck labels the recurring elements of what he believes to have been a dynamic, oral tradition by letter, from A to F2, seeing the final elements (E to F2) as having been developed later as evidenced in later biblical and extra-biblical literature. He identifies those elements as:

- A. The LORD’s people are disobedient.
- B. The LORD in his forbearance admonishes the people through his prophets.
- C. The people stubbornly refuse to listen.
- D. The prophets pronounce the LORD’s judgment on the people.¹⁴
- E. Repentance and obedience.¹⁵
- F1. The restitution of Israel.
- F2. The judgment of the wicked.

Because Steck approaches the texts he identifies in terms of the Deuteronomistic History, his analysis focuses on their development. He does not exegete the texts or consider their purpose from the aspect of the overarching redemptive history as set out in its final, canonical form.

¹⁰ Odil Hannes Steck, *Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten*, Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten Testament, 23 (Neukirchen Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1967).

¹¹ Ibid., 63, 68.

¹² Ibid., 103.

¹³ Ibid., 267.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ E, F1 and F2, Ibid., 123-124.

Goal of this work

This work seeks to contribute to the understanding of redemptive historical summary, a recurring feature of the canon that has been largely unexplored. It will examine the summaries contained in the larger pericopes of Deut 26:1-11, 2 Kgs 17:6-23, Acts 13:13-43 and Rom 1:1-7, exegeting each passage to determine its purpose within the story and for the original readers/hearers of the story.

Given that the authors/editors of the works explored in this study each purports to be writing a redemptive history of the people of God, research into the use of this story by them and/or their characters will contribute to the exegesis of other such passages, the understanding of the interconnectedness of the testaments, and the theological understanding of the Bible as a whole. It will also help to better equip the people of God today in taking up their part in the ongoing, redemptive story.

A detailed exegesis of the passages will also contribute to the better understanding of such issues as the seeming lack of organization in the reflection on the fall of the Northern Kingdom, the similarities in the speeches of Peter, Stephen and Paul in Acts, and the conventionally odd opening of Paul's Letter to the Romans.

Method

Given that redemptive historical summaries have a story-like quality and that most exhibit the features of narrative, the method used in examining the summaries in this work will be the discourse-oriented literary analysis set out by C. John Collins in his work, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary*.¹⁶ In interpreting Scripture, Collins takes a redemptive historical approach, a hermeneutical tradition that

¹⁶ C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2006).

views Scripture as the revelation of God in and through history. The approach developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through the work of such New Testament scholars as J.C.K. von Hofmann, Adolf Schlatter and Oscar Cullman, and challenged the rationalistic theories of scholars such as William Wrede, Rudolf Bultmann and Walter Bauer. As Yarbrough observes:

Whereas Baur-Wrede-Bultmann saw a largely negative relation, so that “historical” synthesis of New Testament convictions must be fatal to classic Christian belief ... they [von Hofmann, Schatter, Cullman and others] saw Christian salvation and the world’s historical processes as positively related.¹⁷

Collins’ method draws on discourse analysis, informed by notions of from Speech Act Theory that the author communicates through the text to an audience with whom he shares knowledge, language, experiences and understanding of literary and linguistic conventions.¹⁸ It takes a literary approach to the text, focusing on the text as a whole, emphasizing its unity and viewing it as an end in itself,¹⁹ and therefore is vulnerable to criticism involving a lack of emphasis on historicity.

Collins anticipates such criticism in a section in Chapter 2 entitled “What about History?”,²⁰ and answers with a discussion about the meaning of the term, arguing that “the ancients were capable of telling the difference” between historical writing and fiction, and that any redemptive historical approach to the biblical works “requires that they be real history.”²¹ He also contends, “...[I]f we can see a unity to the stories, then we open up the possibility that the story is true.”²² In a section in Chapter 10, entitled

¹⁷ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Salvation Historical Fallacy? Reassessing the History of New Testament Theology* (Leiderdorp, The Netherlands: Deo Publishing, 2004), 3.

¹⁸ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is there a Meaning in this Text? The Bible, the Reader and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 208-217.

¹⁹ Mark Allen Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 7.

²⁰ Collins, *Genesis 1-4*, 13-18.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

²² *Ibid.*, 18.

“Historical Truth Claims,” he offers a series of questions the reader should consider, such as: “Does the book show an interest in historical people and events?” “Does the narrator make explicit statements about historical precedents, circumstances and consequences of the events he records?” “How would competent readers from the same culture have taken the narrative?” and “What is the literary milieu in which these pericopes belong?”²³

Collins characterizes his Discourse-Oriented Literary Analysis as a method “based on empirical studies of linguistic and literary conventions,” and contends that it “entitles us to a level of confidence in our reading.”²⁴ To employ the method, Collins offers a series nine expositional questions:

1. “What is the pericope and who are the participants?”

Collins suggests that the boundaries of a given pericope in a text are evident by such features as a change in location or participants, grammatical discontinuity, such as the use of *waw* plus a noun that serves as the subject of a sentence breaking a chain of sentences beginning with *wayyiqtol*s, or the introduction of a problem whose resolution marks the end of the pericope.²⁵

2. “What is the paragraph structure of the pericope (including peak)?”

Collins suggests paragraph structure is indicated by a connected set of actions or exchange between characters, with the peak occurring at the point of “maximum interest.”²⁶

²³ Ibid., 251-252.

²⁴ Ibid., 12.

²⁵ Ibid., 18-19.

²⁶ Ibid., 20. His examples of maximum interest are: “when God finally makes his opinion known or when the narrative tension is at its climax...”

3. “What is the basic sequence of events?”

Collins points to the *wayyiqtol* as the key to finding the events sequence in biblical Hebrew narrative.²⁷ The *qatal* marks events off storyline, while *weqatal* and *qotel* indicate actions that are habitual, repeated, inceptive or in progress.²⁸ In New Testament Greek, aorist indicatives and adverbial participles form the storyline, with imperfects²⁹ serving to mark background and event resolution.³⁰

4. “How do these events follow causally from what comes before and affect causally what comes after?”

In order that a pericope be analyzed within its proper context, Collins suggests determining what events may have been influenced by events that preceded or follow it in the text, noting “[t]his reflects the biblical position that, under divine sovereignty, our choices are freighted with unimaginable significance and effect.”³¹

5. “Are there repeated key words or roots (both within this pericope and across several pericopes?)”

Collins contends key words across pericopes provide “theological unity” and that root words within pericopes can be used for such things as irony or for pointing back to something previously mentioned.³²

²⁷ Ibid., 21-22.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 22. The present participle also is used to mark background.

³⁰ Ibid. Collins notes the LXX normally uses the aorist with καὶ and δὲ to translate the Hebrew *wayyiqtol*. He also observes that the historic present is often used to indicate storyline in the gospels of Matthew and John.

³¹ Ibid., 24.

³² Ibid., 25.

6. “How does the author present the characters?”

Collins observes that the author reveals the disposition of his characters through depictions that include their actions and responses to the actions of others, and whether their words contradict or correspond to those of the narrator.³³

7. “What devices does the author use to communicate his point of view?”

Literary devices Collins lists include assessment, contrast, foreshadowing and back reference.³⁴ Collins also suggests taking note of omissions.³⁵

8. “What is the passage about?”

Collins suggests that the author’s intent can be determined by considering such questions as: “what is the key event, what is its significance, and how does the author want his audience to think about it?”³⁶

9. “How are the covenantal principals on display here?”

In identifying the covenantal principals displayed by the pericope, Collins again offers a set of expository questions that include asking about its representation of covenant succession, mediatorial kingship, God’s grace, the working of his divine sovereignty, and the tension between “the conditionality and unconditionality of covenant participation”. He suggests considering ways in which the pericope uses texts that appear earlier and later in the canon.³⁷

³³ Ibid., 26.

³⁴ Ibid., 27.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 28. He also suggests considering the author’s use of genre conventions, discourse features, rhetorical devices and point of view.

³⁷ Ibid.

Collins' Discourse-Oriented Literary Approach offers a practical method for the interpretation of biblical narrative that provides a detailed literary and linguistic analysis of the text. The method is employed in this work, with modification based on the features of the text.

Chapter Two: Deut 26:1-11

In Deut 26:1-11, God's covenant people Israel are commanded to give the LORD the first of their produce in an offering of thanksgiving for his gracious provision. An integral part of that offering is a redemptive historical summary that Moses commands the people to recite before God immediately after presenting their gifts. This recitation serves to ground both the first offerers and their descendants in their identity as members of the people of God, position them in the ongoing story of that people and prepare them for their mission to be a blessing to the nations.

At the opening of the pericope, Moses and the Israelites are gathered before the LORD in the valley across from Beth Peor, east of the Jordan River (4:44-49). The pericope concerns instructions they must follow *וְיִרְשְׁתֶּם אֶת-הָאָרֶץ ... כִּי-תָבוֹא אֶל-הָאָרֶץ* “when you come into the land ... and have taken possession of it, and live in it.”³⁸

Because 26:1-11 recounts one of many commands Moses³⁹ gives to the Israelites within the larger narrative of his addresses to them before they enter Canaan, much of the pericope is written in the second person indicative (*weqatal* and *yiqtol*).⁴⁰ The embedded redemptive historical summary (vv. 5b-9), however, is written as a narrative, and its events sequence is indicated by the use of the *wayyiqtol*.

³⁸ Firstfruits were to be offered during the Feast of Weeks (Num 28:26; 16:9-12; 18:4; cf. Lev 23:15-22), a harvest celebration that occurred seven weeks after Passover, and is described in Tob 2:1 as the “festival of Pentecost, which is the sacred festival of weeks” (NRSV).

³⁹ A large portion of Deuteronomy purports to be the words of Moses (1:1). It is likely, given that the book also records Moses' death and aftermath (34:1-12) that it was compiled and/or additions were made by another/other authors/editors. Meanwhile, the OT attributes portions of the Pentateuch to Moses (Ex. 17:14; 24:4, 7; 34:27; Nu. 33:2), the NT calls the Pentateuch “Moses,” “the book of Moses” and “the law of Moses,”³⁹ and Jesus refers to Moses' writings (Jn. 5:46).

⁴⁰ The second person indicative is used to express commands focusing “not on the will of the speaker, but on the action requested.” Ahouva Shulman. “Imperative and Second Person Indicative Forms in Biblical Hebrew Prose,” *Hebrew Studies Journal* 42 (Annual 2001): 278.

The beginning of the narrative is marked by a change of character and location,⁴¹ grammatical discontinuity in the switch from the 2ms of v. 5a (וְעַתָּה “and you shall answer”) to the 1cs of v. 5b (אָבִי “my father”).⁴² The end of the narrative is marked by the grammatical discontinuity introduced by the phrase וְעַתָּה הִנֵּה “And now, behold” at v.10, a temporal change that breaks the preceding *wayyiqtol* chain.⁴³

Structure and Events Sequence

The structure of vv. 1-11 is indicated by a consecutive series of actions:

26:1 Setting – The commands Moses gives concerning firstfruits are to begin when the Israelites תָּבוֹאוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ “come into the land”, נָחֲלָה וַיְרִשְׁתָּהּ “have taken possession of it”, וַיֵּשְׁבוּ בָּהּ “and live in it” (v. 1). The beginning of the pericope is marked by the grammatical discontinuity expressed by the literary device of *waw* plus הָיָה: וְהָיָה “and it will come to pass”) ⁴⁴ coupled with the temporal כִּי “when”⁴⁵ that begins v. 1, and the change in subject matter from Moses’ command that the Israelites destroy Amalek (vv. 17-19) to his command that they offer the firstfruits of their harvests to the LORD (vv. 1-2).

⁴¹ See below.

⁴² For the implications of the change from the first singular of v. 5 (אָבִי “my father”) to the first plural (נָּ - “us”) of v. 6 ff., see below.

⁴³ A *wayyiqtol* chain indicates storyline in biblical Hebrew narrative. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4*, 21, who cites Robert Longacre, “Discourse Perspective on the Hebrew Verb: Affirmation and Restatement,” in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Walter Bodine (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 177-89; and Randall Buth, “The Hebrew Verb in Current Discussions,” *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics* 5, no. 2 (1992): 91-105.

⁴⁴ Introductory formula, Joüon-Muraoka §111i (cf. 119c; 166q).

⁴⁵ Temporal; BDB 473.1, Joüon-Muraoka §166o.

- 26: 2-5a Definition and Instructions – The indicatives⁴⁶ of vv. 2-5a detail instructions the Israelites are to follow in carrying out the command. The head of each household⁴⁷ must (v. 2) take (וְלָקַחְתָּ “and you shall take”) מִרְאשִׁית כָּל-פְּרִי “from the first of the fruit” to the place where the LORD has chosen לְשֹׁכֵן שְׁמוֹ “to make his name dwell”, i.e. the tabernacle or later, the temple, (Exod 40:38; 1 Kgs 9:3, cf. 2 Chron 7:1,12). He then (v. 3) must go to the priest (וּבָאתָ “and you shall go”) and make a declaration that he has come into the land the LORD promised to his fathers (וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו... “and you shall say to him...”). The priest then (v. 4) must set the firstfruits before the LORD’s altar (וְלָקַחְתָּ...וְהִנִּיחוֹ “and he shall take... and he shall set it...”), and the Israelite (v. 5a) is to make a response before the LORD (וְעָנִיתָ “and you shall answer and you shall say...”).
- 26: 5b-9 Redemptive Historical Summary – The *wayyiqtol*s of vv. 5b-9 form the storyline of the redemptive historical summary the Israelites are to recite before the Lord. Structure is indicated by a connected set of actions:
- 26:5b serves as the introduction of the summary. A wandering Aramean, Jacob, is the father of the Israelites, who went and sojourned (וַיֵּרָד ... וַיֵּגֶר “and he went... and he sojourned”) in Egypt where he became (וַיְהִי + לְ “and he became”) a nation.
 - 26:6-7 describe the problem of the Israelites’ slavery in Egypt. The Egyptians were evil (וַיִּרְעוּ “and they were evil”) to the Israelites,

⁴⁶ For the sake of brevity, only a sampling of the indicatives in the pericope are listed to show the events sequence.

⁴⁷ Cf. v. 11.

and afflicted them (וַיַּעֲנוּנוּ “and they afflicted us”)⁴⁸ and laid (וַיִּתְּנוּ “and they laid”) hard labor on them (v. 6). Then the Israelites cried out (וַנִּצְעַק “and we cried out”) to the LORD, and the LORD heard them (וַיִּשְׁמַע “and he heard”) and saw their affliction (וַיֵּרָא “and he saw”; v. 7).

- 26:8 sets forth the peak as God displays his mighty acts⁴⁹ to redeem the Israelites. Then the LORD brought them (וַיּוֹצֵאנוּ “and he brought us”) out of Egypt with a mighty hand, outstretched arm, great deeds of terror,⁵⁰ signs and wonders.
- 26:9 serves as the resolution, bringing the story into the present day of the storytellers.⁵¹ Then he brought them (וַיְבִיאנוּ “and he brought us”) into and gave (וַיִּתֵּן “and he gave”) them the land flowing with milk and honey.⁵²

⁴⁸ The switch from the first singular of v. 5 (אֲנִי “my father”) to the first plural (נוּ - “us”) of v. 6, indicates that these individual Israelites, who are the heads of their households (v. 11), represent not only themselves and their households but stand before the LORD as members of the collective whole of the people of God, whose inheritance in the promises and obligations of the covenant are transferred from generation to generation (Deut 5:3). This also is seen in the related variation between the second singular and second plural that appears throughout Deuteronomy and that has been the subject of some debate among scholars.

⁴⁹ The narrative tension reaches its climax at this point of maximum interest with God’s action. C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2006), 20.

⁵⁰ The description בְּמִרְאָה גְּדֹלָה, composed of the noun מִרְאָה “fear” and the adjective גְּדֹלָה “great”, has been translated in various ways: “great terribleness” by the ASV and KJV; “great terror” by the NIV and NASB; and “terrifying display of power” by NRSV. The ESV translation “great deeds of terror” complements the series of mighty acts in which it appears along with בְּאֵחוֹת וּבְמִפְתֵּימָם “signs and wonders”, and captures the sense that God’s mighty acts terrorized the Egyptians and frightened and filled the Israelites with awe.

⁵¹ Verse 9 is designed to continue functioning this way throughout the generations, uniting the storytellers with their ancestors. Meanwhile, the first to recount this story would likely have been the direct descendants of the adult Israelites the LORD redeemed from Egypt (29:2-3, 5; cf. 1:26-35, 39-40; 2:14; 9:23-29).

⁵² As Stern observes, this phrase is used repeatedly to convey the covenantal concept of “YHWH’s promise to clear the land for Israelite occupancy, and within a larger context that clearly places this land at YHWH’s disposal, as in YHWH’s promises that the land would be given to the progeny of

- 26:10 Peak⁵³ – The Israelite responds to God’s gracious acts and announces his gift, calling on the LORD to see it: וְעַתָּה הִנֵּה הֵבֵאתִי... “And behold, now I bring...”
- 26:11 Epilogue – The Israelite is to rejoice בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב “in all the good [things]” the LORD has given him, his household, the Levites and the sojourners in the land.⁵⁴ The end of the pericope is marked by the grammatical discontinuity expressed by כִּי “when”, and by a change in subject matter from Moses’ command concerning firstfruits (vv. 1-11) to his command concerning the year of tithing (26:12-15; cf. 14:28-29).⁵⁵

Therefore, the structure of the pericope is:

Table: 2.1: Structure of Deut 26:1-11

I.	Setting (v. 1)
II.	Definition of firstfruits and offering instructions (vv. 2-5a)
III.	Redemptive Historical Summary, peaking at v. 8 (vv. 5b-9)
	A. Introduction: Father was wandering Aramean (v. 5b)
	B. Problem of slavery in Egypt (vv. 6-7)
	C. Peak: God’s mighty act of redemption (v. 8)
	D. Resolution (v. 9)
IV.	Announcement of firstfruits and peak of larger pericope (v. 10)
V.	Epilogue (v. 11)

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob...” Philip D. Stern, “The Origin and Significance of “The Land Flowing with Milk and Honey,” *Vetus Testamentum* 42 (October 1992): 555.

⁵³ The peak is evidenced by a break in the wayyiqtol chain of the redemptive historical summary, a focus on the offerer’s present action and his direction of the LORD’s attention to his response of offering to God’s gracious gifts: וְעַתָּה הִנֵּה הֵבֵאתִי “And behold, now I bring...” This is the maximum interest point.

⁵⁴ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב – The previous recitation of God’s redemption of his people coupled with reference here to sojourners in the land seems to refer to God’s particular and universal grace.

⁵⁵ It is interesting to note that the Masoretic Text also identifies v. 11 as the close of the pericope, placing a *samech* at the end of the verse.

As Tigay observes:

Offerings of first products of the soil are a way of acknowledging God as the source of the land's fertility and the true owner of its produce. ...In the present ceremony, however, the theme of fertility plays only a secondary role, as the farmer is led from his immediate situation to a recognition of the land's fertility as merely one aspect of the larger picture, namely God's guidance of Israel's history from its humble beginnings, freeing it from oppression and giving it land. ...This shift of the focus ... leads the worshiper from the immediate experience to an understanding of the larger picture.⁵⁶

Context and Narrative Flow

The present pericope immediately follows Moses' command that the Israelites remember how Amalek attacked his brother Israel⁵⁷ as the nation came out of Egypt, עֵיפָה "faint and weary", and וַיִּזְנוּב "cut off the tail", כָּל-הַנִּשְׁפָּשִׁים lit. "all the shattered ones" who followed, and וְלֹא יִרָא אֱלֹהִים "he [Amalek] did not fear God."⁵⁸ When the LORD has given the Israelites rest from all their enemies in the land they are about to inherit, they must תִּמְחָה אֶת-יִזְכָּר עֲמָלֵק מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם "wipe out the memory of Amalek from under heaven." Moses' adds: לֹא תִשְׁכַּח "Do not forget." His admonishment recalls the battle between Israel and Amalek (Exod 17:8-16), another of the LORD's mighty acts⁵⁹ to rescue his people. The command concerning Amalek follows two other commandments: that a woman who seizes a man by his private parts when he is fighting with her husband shall have her hand cut off (25:11-12), and that no one is to use dishonest weights – all who do

⁵⁶ Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 237-238.

⁵⁷ While there is no reference here to the kinship between Amalek and Israel, the connection likely would not have been lost on the Israelites, given their reference to Jacob as their father (26:5b) and the fact that Amalek was descended, at least in part, from Jacob's brother Esau (Gen. 36:12).

⁵⁸ According to the biblical record, the LORD's mighty redemption of Israel from Egypt was well known to the people of the Levant, including the inhabitants of Jericho (Josh 2:10), the Hivites (Josh 9:8) the Philistines (1 Sam 4:8; 6:4) and others (1 Kgs 9:8-9; cf. 1 Chron 7:22), so there is little doubt the nomadic Amalekites would have heard about it.

⁵⁹ Whenever Moses held up מִשֵּׁה הָאֱלֹהִים "the staff of God" (Exod 4:2-5; cf. 4:20) in both hands, the Israelites prevailed in the battle, indicating that the battle was the LORD's. It is interesting that *Tg. Neof* adds בצלו "in prayer" at Exod 17:11, while the Mishnah observes "it is, rather, to teach thee that such time as the Israelites directed their thoughts on high and kept their hearts in subjection to their Father in heaven, they prevailed; otherwise their suffered defeat." *m. Roš. Haš. 8:1*.

are an abomination to the Lord (25:13-16). The unifying principal of all three commandments seems to be that of warning against taking advantage of the vulnerable.

The commandment immediately following the pericope that details the care the Israelites are to provide for three landless groups⁶⁰ through the שְׁנַת הַמַּעֲשֵׂר “year of tithing” (cf. 14:22-29): (1) the Levite (18:1-2), whose care is required for the proper worship of God (18:5), which was vital to Israel’s mission (7:6; 26:19; cf. Exod 19:5-6; Gen 12:1-3); (2) the sojourner, whom Israel is reminded that they once were (10:19); and (3) the orphan and widow.

On entering into their inheritance, the Israelites are to fear God, rejoicing with gratitude for his provision and reflecting his gracious character by taking care of rather than taking advantage of the vulnerable among them (10:18; 26:9,11). When they carry out the command to wipe out Amalek, they are to fear God, remembering his mighty acts on their behalf (7:18-19; 26:7; Exod 17:8-16) and the fact that it is he who fights their battles. The commands to care for the vulnerable, fear the LORD and remember his mighty acts in redeeming his people from Egypt are also tied together in 10:16-22.

The commands concerning the offering of firstfruits are situated in the third of Moses’ three addresses to the Israelites as they are about to enter, after 40 years in the wilderness, the land God promised to the patriarchs: 1:6-4:43 concerns their history; 4:44-11:32 concerns their covenant with the LORD; and 12:1-30:20, details proper worship, blessings and curses that result from obedience and disobedience under the LORD’s gracious covenant and Moses’ final admonishment. The similarity of the structure of Deuteronomy to treaties of the ancient Near East has been widely

⁶⁰ While the תָּיִם וְאַלְמָנָה “orphan and widow” are two different groups, each of the 11 times one group appears in Deuteronomy, it appears with the other. The term גֵּר “sojourner” appears a total of 21 times, including 11 times with orphan and widow.

recognized.⁶¹ As Gaffney observes: “Ancient Israel did not live in a vacuum, but derived many of its institutions and concepts from contact with other cultures.”⁶²

In recounting Israel’s history, Moses notes that the people were afraid and refused to enter the land God had promised them, despite having witnessed his mighty acts in redeeming them from Egypt and how, as Moses’ observes, he נָשָׂאָהּ ... כְּאִשָּׁר יִשְׂאֵל אִישׁ אֶת-בְּנוֹ הָהוּא “carried you as a man carries his son” (1:31). Their fear and lack of trust in the LORD incurred his wrath, and he vowed that none of the adults would enter the land – their children would inherit it instead (1:26-35, 39-40; 2:14; cf. 9:23-29). In addressing their covenant with the LORD, Moses reminds the Israelites of the people’s unfaithfulness with the golden calf (9:16), which also incurred the wrath of the LORD, who threatened to destroy them (9:19). In detailing proper worship, Moses admonishes the Israelites that they are to worship God not in their previous, haphazard manner (12:6), nor in the manner of the people whose land they are about to inherit (12:13), but in the manner and at the place the LORD commands.

Events that follow the pericope include Moses laying out for the Israelites the blessings and curses that their faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the covenant will bring (27:1-28:68), Joshua’s appointment to succeed Moses (31:1-3) and Moses’ death (34:1-12). Poised to enter the promised land after 40 years of wandering that resulted from

⁶¹ Eugene Carpenter, “Deuteronomy,” in Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, ed. John H. Walton, 5 vol. (Grand Rapids, MI: 2009) 1:444-445, who points out that treaties of the period generally included “1. Title, 2. Historical prologue, 3. Stipulations, 4. Provision for the deposition and public reading of the treaty text, 5. List of witnesses to the treaty, and 6. Listing of blessings and curses.” He cites Westbrook, *HANEL*, 30.

⁶² Edward McGlynn Gaffney Jr. “Of Covenants Ancient and New: The Influence of Secular Law on Biblical Religion,” *The Journal of Law and Religion* 2 (1984): 123. That God communicated with people through the existing milieu should not be surprising. Kitchen notes, for example, that similarities in the pattern of the tabernacle (built according to God’s specifications, Exod 25:9) to Egyptian rather than Babylonian architecture, support rather than undermine the accuracy of the biblical record. K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 495-96.

unfaithfulness, and with Moses no longer leading them, the Israelites must learn from the past and trust in their mighty God.

Key words

Several key words are repeated within this pericope and across several pericopes.

They include:

- אֶרֶץ “land” in reference to the promised land occurs 128 times in Deuteronomy, including five times in the pericope.
- נָתַן “gave” occurs seven times in the pericope, four times with reference to the promised land, once with reference to פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה “firstfruits of the ground,” and once with reference to כָּל־הַטּוֹב “all the good”. All are described as that which the LORD gives the Israelites. The term appears once with reference to the עֲבֹדָה “hard labor” the Egyptians laid on them. It is used a total of 118 times in Deuteronomy of that which the LORD gives to the Israelites, including land, enemies into their hands, the law, signs and wonders, rain, grass, cities, mercy, and blessings and curses. It is used seven times of gifts the Israelites are to give to others.
- נַחֲלָה “inheritance” occurs once in the pericope with reference to the promised land. It appears a total of 25 times in Deuteronomy, including 18 times with reference to the land the LORD gives the Israelites and six times to describe what the Israelites are to the LORD.
- רִאשִׁית “first, chief; choicest”⁶³ occurs a total of seven times in Deuteronomy, twice in this pericope. It is used three times of produce of the land, referred to in vv. 2

⁶³ BDB, 912.

and 10 as פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה “fruit of the ground”, which includes תְּבָנִים “grain or corn”⁶⁴ (18:4) and is to be offered to the LORD. The term is also used in 18:4 of wine and the fleece of sheep, which is to be offered along with the firstfruits of grain for use by the priests. It is used in 21:17 of the firstborn son, described as the “firstfruits” of a man’s אֵן “vigor” or “strength”⁶⁵ and to whom is owed a double portion of his inheritance. It is used in the prophecy concerning Gad (33:21) to describe the “best” or “choicest”⁶⁶ portion of the land, and once of the beginning of the year (11:12).

- שִׂמְחָה “rejoice”. The command to rejoice appears once in this pericope (v. 11) and five other times in Deuteronomy (12:18; 14:26; 16:11, 14; 26:11; 27:7), each time in connection with worship, in offerings made to the LORD, and in celebrations of the feasts of Weeks and Booths. Five times, the command specifically involves the Israelite’s entire household. It includes the Levites four times among the list of those called to rejoice along with the Israelite and his household; the sojourner, three times; and the orphan and widow, twice.

The repetitions show that the first of all that the land produces – grain, oil, fleece – is to be offered in thanksgiving to and worship of the LORD; the Israelites are to rejoice before him for his gracious provision (18:4, 26.2, 10). The “first” carries significance: the firstborn is due a double portion of his father’s inheritance; the “first” of the land is the best portion.

These repetitions also show the LORD’s fulfilling his promise to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) of name, land, offspring and, through them, blessing to the world, which he

⁶⁴ BDB, 816.

⁶⁵ BDB, 20.

⁶⁶ BDB, 912.

repeated to Abraham's son, Isaac (Gen 26:3-4), and to Isaac's son, Jacob (Gen 28:13-15), who passed the blessing on to his sons (Gen 48:3-27), the heads of Israel's 12 tribes (26:5, 9). The promise of blessing through offspring stretches back to the garden (Gen 3:15), and his redemption of his people from Egypt (Deut 26:8-9), toward his redemption of his creation.

Characterization and Literary Device

In this pericope, the author characterizes the LORD as generous and caring: He gives the Israelites the land for their inheritance (vv. 1, 2, 9, 10), the firstfruits of its ground (v. 10), and good [things] (v. 11). He is faithful, keeping the promise he swore to the patriarchs (v. 3), and responding to the cries of his people (vv. 7-9). He is sovereign, giving the Israelites freedom from their oppressors (v. 6) and sustenance (vv. 2, 9, 10, 11), working mighty acts, which include great deeds of terror, signs and wonders (v. 8), and worthy of thanksgiving (v. 11) and worship (v. 10) in the manner and place he chooses (1-11; cf. v. 2).

The Israelites are portrayed as totally dependent on God for their freedom (vv. 7-8), their conquest of the land (v. 1), and their sustenance and enjoyment (vv. 2, 9, 11). Moses is portrayed as a leader and prophet, speaking the words of the law God has commanded (vv. 1-11). The Egyptians are portrayed as evil oppressors (vv. 7-8), vanquished by the LORD (v. 9).

The author uses the device of back reference with the redemptive historical summary (vv. 5c-9). The summary is part of the larger command, which is purported by the author to be the very words of God (1:3; cf. 4:2,5, 14, 40; 5:12, 15, 16, 32, 33; 6:1, 17, 20, 24, 25; 8:11; 10:13; 11:27, 28; 13:19; 15:5; 26:13, 14, 16, 27:10, 28:1, 13, 15, 45;

30:8, 16; 34:9).⁶⁷ The summary is, therefore, God's own summary of redemptive history for the Israelites for the purpose of fulfilling his command concerning firstfruits.⁶⁸

In the summary, the author contrasts the Israelite's treatment by the Egyptians, who were רָעָה "evil" to them, afflicted them and נָתַן "laid" hard labor on them (v. 6), with their treatment by the LORD, who נָתַן "gives" them an abundant land for an inheritance (v. 1, 9) and טוֹב "good [things]" (v. 11). It is ironic that the parents of the first Israelites who will recount this story in offering their firstfruits received these same promises, but rebelled against the LORD's command to take the land and sought instead to return to Egypt (Num 14:1-4).

There is no mention in the summary of the Israelites' unfaithfulness with the golden calf (9:13-21; Exodus 32) or their refusal to take the land, a rebellion that caused God to refuse them entry until the whole generation of adults had died (1:26-35, 39-40; 9:23-29; Num 14:26-25).⁶⁹ This despite that fact that both incidents are recounted in Deuteronomy; in fact the rebellion is recounted twice.

Rather than recalling Israel's track record of unfaithfulness and rebellion, the redemptive historical summary focuses on their total dependency on the LORD, who is their gracious, mighty savior and provider.

⁶⁷ This list includes only those verses in which the commands in general relayed by Moses are explicitly stated to be the commands of the LORD. It does not include verses in which the source of the commands is implied to be the LORD or in which the LORD is explicitly stated to be the source of a specific command.

⁶⁸ It is interesting to note that Ezekiel 20 also contains the LORD's own redemptive historical summary, which he recounts to his people under very different circumstances. Both Deut 26:5c-9 and Ezek 20:5-26 begin by describing the people of God as the sons of Jacob, but the redemptive historical summary of Ezekiel 20 includes Israel's repeated unfaithfulness and rebellion, whereas the redemptive historical summary of Deuteronomy 26 does not, although it certainly could have.

⁶⁹ Both these incidents are included in a similar redemptive historical summary that appears later in the canon: Nehemiah 9, which functions for the participants as part of a covenant renewal prayer.

Use of Earlier Texts

The redemptive historical summary couched within the pericope draws on earlier texts,⁷⁰ even repeating some of the words and phrases contained within them:

- v. 5b Recounts the migration of Jacob and his family during a time of famine to Egypt (Gen 43:1-2), where they grew in number from 70 people (10:22; Gen 46:27) into a nation “mighty and great” (v. 5c: עַצוֹם וָרָב; Exod 1:8: רַב וְעָצוֹם).
- v. 6 Recounts the treatment of the Israelites there: “the Egyptians were evil to them” (v. 6: וַיַּרְעוּ לָנוּ מִצְרַיִם; Num 20:15: וַיַּרְעוּ לָנוּ מִצְרַיִם), and “afflicted them” (v. 6: וַיַּעֲנוּנוּ; Exod 1:10: עָנָתוּ) with “hard labor” (v. 6: עֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה; Exod 1:14: עֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה).
- v. 7 Recounts how the Israelites “cried out to the LORD” (v. 7: וַיִּצְעַק אֶל־יְהוָה; Num 20:16: וַיִּצְעַק אֶל־יְהוָה; Exod 2:23: וַיִּזְעַקוּ), who “heard ... and saw” (v. 7: וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים...וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים; Exod 2:24-25: וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה...וַיַּרְא) their suffering.
- v. 8 Recounts how the LORD redeemed his people out of Egypt with an “outstretched arm” (v. 8: בְּזֵרַע נְטוּיָה; Exod 6:6: בְּזֵרַע נְטוּיָה), “great deeds of terror” and “signs and wonders” (v. 8: בְּאֵתוֹת וּבִמְפֹתִים; Exod 7:3: וְאֵת־אֲתֹתַי וְאֵת־מוֹפְתֵי).

The concept of firstfruits appears later in the canon, not only with reference to the offering, but as a metaphor for the first of a greater number that will follow:⁷¹

- Israel: As the firstfruits of the LORD’s harvest (Jer 2:3); as the dough of firstfruits compared to the “whole lump” of the Gentiles, offered to the LORD and holy (Rom 11:16).

⁷⁰ A sampling of the earlier texts is given. Meanwhile, redemptive historical summaries that incorporate some of the same material appear across the canon, and include Nehemiah 9, Psalm 106, Ezekiel 20, Acts 7 and Acts 13 to name only a few.

⁷¹ It is interesting, given the metaphor of firstfruits as referring to the harvest of the first who God redeems and pointing to a greater number that will follow, that the Holy Spirit was given to the church at Pentecost, the Feast of Weeks celebrating the firstfruits of the harvest.

- Various Christians: As the firstfruits of the Spirit (Rom 8:23) Cf. 1 Cor 15:16; 2 Thes 2:13; Jas 1:18; Rev 14:4.
- Christ: as the firstfruits of those who have died and will be resurrected (1 Cor 15:20, 23).

Purpose

One of the most prominent features of the pericope is the use of the redemptive historical summary, which grounds both the characters within the story of Deuteronomy and the readers of that story in their identity as members of the people of God, positions them at their point of time in the ongoing story of that people and prepares them for their mission to be a blessing to the nations.

The summary functions to identify the offerers – both those who are gathered east of the Jordan River, about to enter the promised land, and their descendants, who are charged with obeying the command – as inheritors of the promise first given to Abraham, grandfather of the patriarch Jacob, with whom the summary begins, of name, land, offspring and, through them, blessing to the world. It identifies the descendants of those about to enter the land with the people the LORD chose for himself – his inheritance, whom he redeemed from Egypt. As noted above, the individual Israelites Moses commands convey, through their use of the first plural, their membership in the collective whole of the covenant people and the transference of the covenant promises and obligations from generation to generation (Deut 5:3).

The summary functions to position them at their point in time of the ongoing story of the covenant people of God, which began when God called Abraham and will end in their being a blessing to the world. And it functions to prepare them for their

mission to be a blessing to the surrounding nations by reflecting the character of their God, who is gracious and generous, providing for those who cannot provide for themselves.

The command concerning the offering of firstfruits is presented as the proper response to the LORD's redemption and gracious care of his people Israel. All that the Israelites enjoy – their freedom, their land, their sustenance – has been given to them by the LORD, a mighty God who is faithful to his promises and worthy of their worship.

In offering their firstfruits to the LORD, his covenant people are offering the first, and therefore, the best of their produce. As Wright observes: “The most prominent feature of these verses is the emphasis on the land as Yahweh's gift The land itself and the fruit of the land are gifts of grace and that must be acknowledged”⁷²

Conclusion

The proper response of God's covenant people to his gracious provision is that of worshipful obedience to his commands. In seeking to follow his commands, God's people, then and now, reflect his character, fulfilling their mission to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod 19:6-7; 1 Peter 2:9) that will bless the world and point others to the LORD and his redemption. The covenant people are the LORD's own inheritance, his firstfruits, redeemed by his mighty acts in history, culminating in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the firstfruits of those who will follow him, united to him by the Holy Spirit, in resurrection and the restoration of God's good creation.

⁷² Christopher Wright, *Deuteronomy*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 270.

Chapter Three: 2 Kgs 17-7-23

In 2 Kings 17:7-23, the narrator⁷³ uses the tool of redemptive historical summary to underscore that it was the apostasy of the Northern Kingdom and its kings that provoked God's judgment of its destruction by Assyria and permanent exile. Rather than fulfilling its mission to be a light to the surrounding nations, Israel became a cesspool of darkness blacker than the nations the LORD had driven out of Canaan before settling his people there. The narrator traces the apostasy to Jeroboam's establishment of false worship of the LORD by setting up calf idols at Bethel and Dan, and observes that the Southern Kingdom of Judah has also failed to keep the LORD's commandments and is on a path that will follow Israel into judgment and exile.

The pericope begins at 17:6 as the narrator recounts Assyria's capture of Samaria and its deportation and scattering of the inhabitants across its empire⁷⁴ in the ninth year of the northern King Hoshea. The embedded redemptive historical summary sets out the rationale. The beginning of the larger pericope is marked by the grammatical discontinuity of בְּשָׁנָה "in the year...", which breaks the *wayyiqtol* chain of the previous pericope (17:1-5), and by a temporal change from the period extending from the beginning of Hoshea's reign through three years of Assyrian siege to the destruction of Samaria that brings the Northern Kingdom to its final end. The pericope ends at 17:23

⁷³ Unlike the other instances of redemptive historical summary examined in depth in this work, the summary of 2 Kings 17 is given solely from the viewpoint of the narrator. While incorporating material from earlier sources, such as the סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַנְּאֻמִּים לְמַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel" (1 Kgs 14:19) and the סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַנְּאֻמִּים לְמַלְכֵי יְהוּדָה "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" (1 Kgs 15:7), the Books of the Kings, in its final, canonical form, is recounted from the vantage point of a time after the Babylonian exile.

⁷⁴ The Israelites were deported to חֲלָה וּבְחָבּוֹר נָהָר גּוֹזָן וְעֵרֵי קָדִי "Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes". Halah was located northeast of Ninevah, the Gozan River on the Harbor, west of Assyria and the cities of the Medes, east. Alan Millard, ed., *The IVP Atlas of Bible History* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic Press, 2006), 88.

with a change in focus in 17:24 from the redemptive historical summary to Assyria's repopulation of Samaria. The embedded redemptive historical summary begins at 17:7 with the causal: וַיְהִי כִּי "And it happened because..."⁷⁵ and ends at 17:23.

Structure and Events Sequence

17:6 Setting – The narrator recounts Assyria's capture and deportation of the Northern Kingdom.

17:7-23 Redemptive Historical Summary – In this long indictment, the narrator attributes the cause of the Assyrian devastation to Israel's long-standing, deep-seated sin against her gracious LORD. The *wayyiqtol*s structure the storyline:

- 17:7-17 recounts how Israel despised the prophets and commandments: וַיְהִי כִּי "And it happened because" begins the litany: וַיִּירָאוּ "and they feared" other gods (v. 7), וַיֵּלְכוּ "and they walked" in the customs of the nations the LORD had driven out before them and in the customs its kings had introduced,⁷⁶ וַיִּתְּנוּ "and they ascribed" words⁷⁷ to him which were

⁷⁵ So Provan, who doesn't provide a translation; and House, who translates "All this took place because...." Contra Montgomery, who translates "And it came to pass, because..."; Cogan and Tadmor, who translate "Now, because..."; and Keil, who translates "And it came to pass when..." All see the *wayyiqtol* וַיְהִי that begins v. 18 as providing the result rather than repeating it (see וַיְהִי that begins v. 7). Instead, v. 7 contains both the result: וַיְהִי "And it happened" (referring to the events of v. 6); and the reason: ...כִּי-תִטְּאוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם הַמַּעַלָה אֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם "because the children of Israel had sinned the against the LORD their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt...", which begins the redemptive historical summary. Iain W. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995, 248; Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995); James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings*, International Critical Commentary (New York: Scribner, 1951), 468; Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* The Anchor Bible Commentary (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 204; C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 3 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 294. For more on v. 18, see below.

⁷⁶ The meaning of the last clause of v. 8 (missing from some MSS), וַיִּתְּנוּ לַיהוָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה, has caused some debate among scholars. Some, such as Montgomery, *Books of Kings*, 468, take עָשָׂה as "appoint" (cf. 1 Kgs 12:31) and the clause as secondary, translating it "and the kings of Israel, whom they made" as a commentary on the unauthorized Northern kings. So NKJV. Others, such as Keil, *Commentary*

not right (v. 9), וַיִּבְנוּ “and they built” high places, וַיַּצְבּוּ “and they erected” pillars and Asherim (v.10), וַיִּקְטְרוּ “and they made sacrifices” at all the high places just as the nations that he had removed from before them, וַיַּעֲשׂוּ “and they did” evil things that provoked⁷⁸ him (v. 11), and וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ they served idols” (v. 12), which the LORD had told them not to do. וַיִּזְעַר “And he warned them” by all the prophets and seers, telling them to keep his commandments, but they did not listen (v. 13), וַיִּקְשְׁוּ “and they stiffened” their necks like the necks of their fathers (v. 14);⁷⁹ וַיִּמְאָצוּ “and they despised”⁸⁰ his statutes and covenant, וַיֵּלְכוּ “and they walked” after

on the Old Testament, 3:294, take it as the second of Israel’s sins: not only did they walk in the statues (or customs) of the nations but also “in the statutes which the kings of Israel had made” (cf. v. 19), which Keil takes to mean the golden calves. So Montgomery, *Books of Kings*, 468, NASB, NIV, NRSV and NLT, all of which make this explicit by translating וַיִּקְשְׁוּ as “introduced.” Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 204, take the clause as tying Israel’s kings to the customs of the Canaanites. ESV’s rendering is elegant but somewhat ambiguous: “and in the customs that the kings of Israel had practiced.” Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 248, does not explain his take on the verse, either in his commentary or in the ESV Study Bible notes. The refrain of evaluation for the Northern kings of דָּרָה וְדָרָה נִרְבָּעָם and the similar structure of v. 19 to v. 9 support Keil’s view, which is taken here.

⁷⁷ The term הִסְתַּר appears only here in the OT. BDB, 341, takes הִסְתַּר as a synonym for כִּפֶּה “cover” and suggests “do secretly”. So ESV, NASB, NIV, NRSV and NKJV. What then would be meant? Were these things that that were “done secretly” not recounted in the Former Prophets? The numerous high places the sentence goes on to describe cannot be meant, given that they are by no means secret in the narrative or in the cultural setting. It also does not seem to be meant that the children of Israel worshiped God publically but idols secretly, given the widespread and open idolatry. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 251, makes a similar observation and points to 2 Chron 3:5-9, suggesting what is meant is the “overlay” of objects of worship with gold, such as the golden calves: “the Israelites overlaid things that were not right so far as their LORD God was concerned.” That is unconvincing, however, given that the objects themselves, not merely the overlay, would have been the problem. The metaphorical term used in the LXX translation is equally obscure: ἀμφιέννυμι “to clothe”, occurring only here and in a positive sense in Job 40:10. Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 205, take the writer to mean that the Israelites engaged in unauthorized worship as though it were commanded and translate “ascribed untruths to YHWH, their God”. So Keil, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 3:295, who translates: “they covered words which were not right concerning Jehovah their God.” That seems to fit best with the context of Jeroboam’s introduction of false worship at Bethel and Dan.

⁷⁸ The infinitive construct לְהַקְעִיט here and at v. 17 should be taken as conveying a causal sense rather than purpose, Joüon-Muraoka §1241.

⁷⁹ The idiomatic phrase of obstinacy occurs in 11 times in the Hebrew canon (here, Deut 10:16, 2 Chron 30:8, 36:13; Neh 9:16, 17, 29; Prov 29:1; Jer 7:26, 17:23 and 19:15). The writer here is underscoring the long-standing, deep-seated obstinacy and unfaithfulness of the Israelites.

⁸⁰ The term מָאָץ can mean “reject” or “despise”, BDB, 549. The latter is a better fit here, given that the Israelites originally bound themselves to the covenant (Exod 24:3, 7 etc.) but were repeatedly and obstinately unfaithful to it. So ESV, NRSV. NASB, NIV, NKJV, NLT translate “rejected”.

vanity⁸¹ וַיִּהְיוּ כִלְיוֹ “and they became vain” (v. 15) and walked after the nations that surrounded them. וַיַּעֲזֹבוּ “And they forsook” the LORD’s commandments, וַיַּעֲשׂוּ “and they made” images of two calves, וַיַּעֲשׂוּ “and they made” Asherah, וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ and “they bowed down”, וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ “and they served” Baal (v. 16), וַיַּעֲבִירוּ “and they passed” their sons and daughters through the fire,⁸² וַיִּקְסְמוּ “and they practiced divination, וַיִּבְחָשׁוּ “and they interpreted omens,”⁸³ וַיִּתְמַכְרוּ “and they sold” themselves to do evil the LORD’s sight, provoking him (v. 17).

- 17:18-20 is the peak,⁸⁴ as the LORD removes Israel from his covenant people and the narrator observes that Judah is following in its path: וַיִּתְאַזְּרָה “So he was (מְאֹד extremely) angry, וַיִּסְרֶם “and he removed” Israel from before his face, save⁸⁵ the tribe of Judah alone (v. 18), but Judah did not keep his commandments either, and instead וַיֵּלְכוּ “they walked” in the customs Israel had introduced (v. 19). וַיִּמָּאֵס “And he rejected” all the

⁸¹ As in worthless things, ie. idols, BDB, 210. The eloquence of the Hebrew noun כִּלְיוֹ is best captured here by “vanity” and “vain”, describing both the worthlessness of the objects and pursuits to which the Israelites gave themselves and their end. So NASB. The ESV, NIV, NRSV, NKJV and NLT all supply the concrete “idols”, with the ESV and NRSV using the additional adjective “false” and the NIV and NLT, “worthless”.

⁸² This is a reference to the practice of child sacrifice common to the religions (especially the worship of Molech; likely the Ugaritic god *mlk*) of some Canaanite groups, such as the Phoenicians, according to both textual and archaeological evidence. (Cf. Lev. 18:21; 1 Kgs 11:7; 2 Kgs 16:3, 21:6; Jer. 32:35). Iain Provan, “2 Kings,” in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 3:128. Provan cites A. R. W. Green, *The Role of Human Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East* ASOR Dissertation Series 1 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975).

⁸³ The meaning of the Hebrew קָסַם (BDB, 890) and נָחַשׁ (BDB, 638) seem much the same, although there may be a slight difference given the prohibition of Deut 18:10, which the narrator evokes in indictment against Israel. The term נָחַשׁ is translated variously as “used ... omens”, ESV; “practiced ... enchantments”, NASB; “practiced ... sorcery” NIV and NLT [no ellipsis here]; “used ... augury”, NRSV; and “practiced ... soothsaying”, NKJV. Given the narrator’s use, the ESV translation of Deut 18:10, which is differs slightly from this verse, seems the best fit.

⁸⁴ Tension climaxes at this point of maximum interest with God’s action. Collins, *Genesis 1-4*, 20.

⁸⁵ וַיִּשְׁאָר, in the sense of “except”, BDB, 956. “Save” seems to fit even better, lending itself in the English to a theological play on words.

offspring of Israel, וַיַּעֲנֵם “and he afflicted them”, וַיִּתֵּן “and he gave” them into the hands of plunderers and cast them away (v. 20).

- 17:21-23a recounts Jeroboam’s sins and their effect: The narrative sequence is broken with כִּי “when” the LORD had torn Israel from the house of David, then resumes with the *wayyiqtol* וַיִּמְלִיכוּ “they crowned”⁸⁶ Jeroboam king, וַיִּדָּן “and he drove” Israel from following the LORD, caused them to sin greatly (v. 21), וַיֵּלְכוּ “and they walked” in all the sins Jeroboam⁸⁷ introduced and did not turn aside from them (v. 22) until the LORD turned aside Israel from before his face as he had warned (v. 23a).

17:23b Epilogue – Israel וַיִּגָּל “was exiled”⁸⁸ עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה “until this day”.

Table 3.1: Structure of 2 Kgs 17:6-23

I. Setting (v. 6)	
II. Redemptive Historical Summary (vv. 7-23)	
A.	Israel despises Prophets, Commandments and Covenant (vv. 7-17)
B.	Peak: The LORD rejects Israel; Judah is following Israel (vv. 18-20)
C.	Jeroboam’s Sins and their effect (vv. 21-23a)
III. Epilogue (23b)	

Context and Narrative Flow

The pericope is part of a larger section (17:1-41) that includes the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, which begins with its final downfall under Hoshea (17:1-5) and ends with Assyria’s repopulation of Samaria and the ensuing widespread syncretism that will characterize the region through the NT period (17:24-41).⁸⁹ The section is the sixth in the overall chiastic structure of the Books of Kings, which recounts the reigns of the

⁸⁶ Lit. “they caused to become king”.

⁸⁷ See below.

⁸⁸ The passive English better describes the verb גָּלָה “went into exile” BDB, 163.

⁸⁹ These are not necessarily the “Samaritans” of the NT period.

Northern and Southern kings on either side of a large section on the Omride Dynasty. The beginning is divided into sections on Solomon's reign and kingdom division, while the ending is divided into sections on Israel's and Judah's exiles. Solomon's sin is mirrored in the structure by Judah's exile, and Jeroboam's sin, by Israel's exile. Interaction and intermarriage between the Omride and Davidic dynasties spread Israel's wickedness to Judah, and seems to be the reason the Omride Dynasty is placed at the heart of the work. This infection of sin is reflected in the structure, set out above, of the redemptive historical summary, which peaks at 17:18-20, with the narrator's recounting of the LORD's rejection of Israel and observation that Judah is walking in its customs.

Table 3.2: Structure of the Books of Kings⁹⁰

A. Solomon's sin divides kingdom (1Kgs 1:1-11:43)
B. Jeroboam's sin leads Israel into apostasy (1 Kgs 12:1-14:31)
C. Reigns of N. and S. Kingdoms recounted (1 Kgs 15:1-2 Kgs 25:30)
D. Omride: Israel's wickedness infects Judah (1 Kgs 16:21-2 Kgs 10:27)
C.' Reigns of N. and S. Kingdoms recounted (2 Kgs 10:28-16:20)
B.' The LORD executes the judgment of exile against Israel (2 Kgs 17:1-41)
A.' The LORD executes the judgment of exile against Judah (2 Kgs 18:1-25:30)

⁹⁰ The structure of the Books of Kings is notoriously difficult to decipher, and commentators have proposed a variety of outlines. Some also see, as in my own structure above, seven major sections, including House, *1, 2 Kings*, 25, and George Savran, "1 and 2 Kings," in *Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, 146-164 (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press: 1987), 148. Savran also sees a chiastic structure, but divides it differently:

- A Solomon; United Monarchy (1 Kgs 1:1-11:25)
- B Jeroboam/Rehoboam; Division (1 Kgs 11:26-14:31)
- C Kings of Judah/Israel (1 Kgs 15:1-16:22)
- D Outside of dynasty; rise & fall of Baal cult in Israel and Judah (1 Kgs 16:23-2 Kgs 12)
- C' Kings of Judah/Israel (2 Kgs 13-16)
- B' Fall of Northern Kingdom (2 Kgs 17)
- A' Kingdom of Judah (2 Kgs 18-25)

Unity, Literary Device and Characterization

There is a widely held view resulting from decades of scholarship involving the Deuteronomistic History⁹¹ that vv. 7-20 and vv. 21-23 are the works of at least two author/editors. Montgomery, for example, believes vv. 21-23 to be pre-exilic and pre-nomistic, arguing “the literary flavor is that of Jeremiah and Deuteronomy.”⁹² He points to v. 13 as evidence that vv. 7-20 is the work of a later “Deuteronomic editor,” and contends: “The long homily is diffuse, as is the custom of most preaching, and too strict criticism of logic and order may not be made.”⁹³ But, as shown below, the narrator clearly draws from Exodus and Leviticus as well as Deuteronomy, Judges and Jeremiah. He does so in the manner reminiscent of a modern prosecutor setting out a written indictment of charges against a criminal defendant.

Cogan and Tadmor see references to Judah in vv. 13 and 19-20 as “glosses,” and a clear delineation of blame in the two sections, with the people being at fault in the first (“Even in v. 16, the royal perpetrators are passed over in silence.”⁹⁴), and Jeroboam in the second. “These two sections cannot be the product of the same historical outlook.”⁹⁵ But the narrator’s intention is to show that while the people of Israel had wicked kings that led them into idolatry and sin, they are culpable for their own rebellion. And he foreshadows that Judah, having been infected with the wickedness of the Northern

⁹¹ Given that the focus of this work is on the biblical works in their completed, canonical forms, the complex development of and variety of theories now surrounding the Deuteronomistic History will not be addressed here. A thorough discussion can be found in Sandra L. Richter, “Deuteronomistic History” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Historical Books* eds. Bill T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson, 219-230 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

⁹² Montgomery, *Books of Kings*, 470.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 206.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

Kingdom, is well on its way to a similar fate. He then traces the apostasy to the worthless system of worship established by Jeroboam.

The tradition of redemptive historical summary makes clear the unity of the verses, whose purpose is to serve in part as a cautionary tale for an exilic or post-exilic audience.⁹⁶ The summary peaks at vv. 18-20, with the LORD's removal of the Northern Kingdom from his covenant people and inheritance in his covenant promises to David, including the resultant blessings to all the nations. The narrator uses repetition to emphasize the LORD's judgment on the Northern Kingdom: וַיִּתְּאֶנְף יְהוָה מְאֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּסְרֶם: ⁹⁷מֵעַל פָּנָיו “So the LORD was extremely angry with Israel and removed them from [before] his face” (v. 18) and וַיִּמָּאֵס יְהוָה בְּכָל־נֶרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל “And the LORD rejected all the offspring of Israel...”, v. 20). He elegantly couches between them the observation that Judah walked in the customs of Israel which they had introduced⁹⁸ (v. 19). He then goes on to note that Jeroboam's sins were at the root of Israel's wickedness, using the same language to remind his readers that Israel ... יָלְכוּ “walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he had introduced” (v. 22). The exilic or post-exilic audience is therefore warned of the consequences of walking in the ways of their predecessors.

Other uses of the literary device of repetition that demonstrate the unity of the pericope include:

- Mention of prophetic warnings – Verse 13: וַיַּעַד יְהוָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וּבִיהוּדָה בְּיַד כָּל־נְבִיאָו:
 “And the LORD warned Israel and Judah by the hand of all his prophets”; ... מְצֹתָיו:

⁹⁶ See further below.

⁹⁷ My translations follow.

⁹⁸ Although a better English translation would be “walked in the customs that Israel had introduced”, the more literal translation is used here and in the next sentence, where it is especially important, in order to underscore the relationship between the entities and the customs/sins.

“my commandments ... which I have sent to you by the hand of my servants the prophets” (v. 23). Verse 23: כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּיַד כָּל־עֲבָדָיו הַנְּבִיאִים “as he had spoken by the hand of all his servants the prophets” (v. 23).

- Reference to Jeroboam’s sin – Verse 9: אֲשֶׁר לֹא־כֵן עָלִיתָהּ “And the children of Israel ascribed words which were not right to the LORD their God, and they built for themselves high places...”⁹⁹ Verse 16: וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם מַסֵּכָה שְׁנַיִם עֲגֻלִּים “and they made for themselves images of two calves”. Verse 23: וַיִּדָּא יִרְבֶּעַם אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאַחֲרֵי יְהוָה וַהֲחֻטִּיאָם חֲטָאָה גְדוֹלָה “And Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD and he caused them to sin greatly” and כָּל־חֲטָאוֹת יִרְבֶּעַם אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה “all the sins of Jeroboam which he had introduced”.
- Idiomatic expression for “followed the practices of” – Verse 8: וַיֵּלְכוּ בְּחֻקֹּת הַגּוֹיִם “and of the kings of Israel which they had introduced.” Verse 15: וַיֵּלְכוּ אַחֲרֵי הַהֶבֶל “walked after vanity”; וְאַחֲרֵי הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר סָבִיבָתָם “and after the nations which surrounded them....” Verse 19: וַיֵּלְכוּ בְּחֻקֹּת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ “and they walked in the customs of Israel which they had introduced”. Verse 22: וַיֵּלְכוּ בְּכָל־חֲטָאוֹת יִרְבֶּעַם אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לֹא־סָרוּ מִמֶּנָּה “walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he had introduced”.

As throughout the Books of Kings, the narrator in 2 Kings 17:7-23 makes explicit evaluations of the Northern Kingdom, its kings and of Judah. The children of Israel¹⁰⁰ are portrayed as lacking trust in the LORD (v. 7, 14) and as twisting his words and

⁹⁹ For the false system of worship encompassed by the phrase כָּל־חֲטָאוֹת יִרְבֶּעַם, see below.

¹⁰⁰ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל, lit. “sons of Israel”, is a phrase the narrator uses to describe both the people as a whole (v. 8) and the people of the Northern Kingdom in particular (vv. 7, 9, 22-23). The focus above is on the people of the Northern Kingdom.

worshipping him in unauthorized ways (vv. 9, 16, 22). Idolaters (vv. 7-8, 10-12, 16-17) who despised the LORD's commandments and covenant (vv. 9, 12-13, 15-16, 21) and were heedless of his many warnings (v. 14), they became worthless (v. 15), and their judgment of destruction, exile and excommunication from the covenant was well deserved.

Judah is portrayed as a remnant (v. 18), whose people are also unfaithful to the covenant (v. 19a) and also have been warned (v. 13). Using the device of back reference, the narrator points to the judgment Solomon's idolatry incurred (v. 21), demonstrating that Judah is not immune to the LORD's wrath. In describing Judah as walking בְּחֻקֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה "in the customs which Israel had introduced" (v. 19b), the narrator foreshadows that it will suffer a fate similar to that of Israel.

The LORD is portrayed as a gracious redeemer, a champion of his people and their protector (vv. 7-8, 11). The maker and sustainer of the covenant (vv. 7, 9, 12-13, 15-16, 19), he mercifully and repeatedly warned the people of the Northern Kingdom by his faithful prophets of the terrible fate their rebellion would incur (vv. 13, 23). Deeply angered by their faithlessness (v. 11, 17-18), he righteously executed his judgment against them of destruction, exile and excommunication (vv. 7, 18, 20, 23).

While portraying the Northern kings (and the unnamed Solomon) in general as introducing customs that lead the people away from the LORD and into idolatry (v. 8), the narrator reserves his most sobering assessment of all Northern and Southern kings for Jeroboam in particular, and points to him as the root of the apostasy (vv. 8-9, 11, 21-23). He notes וַיִּדְא יִרְבְּעָם אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאַחֲרֵי יְהוֹה וְהִסְטִיאוֹם חֲטָאָה גְדוֹלָה "And Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD and he caused them to sin greatly", and that יָלְכוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

בְּכָל־חַטָּאוֹת יִרְבְּעָם אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לֹא־סָרוּ מִמֶּנּוּ “the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he had introduced and had not turned aside from them.”

There are 39 references to Jeroboam’s sins in Scripture, all in the Books of Kings. Sometimes used in the plural, sometimes in the singular, Jeroboam’s sins are blamed for the destruction of Jeroboam’s house (1 Kgs 13:34); Israel’s sin (1 Kgs 15:34) and the LORD’s abjurement of Israel (1 Kgs 14:16). The wickedness of Northern kings is measured by their adherence to its practice (1 Kgs 16:26; cf. 16:31; 2 Kgs 3:3). The sins encompasses the entire system of false worship Jeroboam introduced to prevent the Israelites the LORD had entrusted to him from returning to worship at Jerusalem in case they decided to return to its king as well. The false system of worship Jeroboam installed included: two golden calves, one each set up at Bethel and Dan; the construction of temples at high places; the appointment of non-Levitic priests; and the institution of his own liturgical calendar (1 Kgs 12:28-33; 13: 33).

Like this false system of worship the narrator evokes by his use of the phrase כָּל־חַטָּאוֹת יִרְבְּעָם “all the sins of Jeroboam”, he evokes prohibitions set out in the law to make implicit evaluations of Israel and its kings.

Use of Earlier Texts

Throughout his indictment of Israel in providing the rationale for the LORD’s judgment, the narrator draws heavily from earlier texts, especially the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. It was the use of Deuteronomy that prompted Noth’s seminal work of the Deuteronomistic History. He observes,

The negative characteristics of Dtr are exactly the same as those in the Deuteronomic Law Hence the history was probably the independent project of a man whom the historical catastrophes he witnessed had inspired with curiosity about the meaning of what had happened, and who tried to answer this

question in a comprehensive and self-contained historical account, using those traditions concerning the history of his people to which he had access.¹⁰¹

The earlier texts on which the redemptive historical summary draws include:¹⁰²

v. 7:	הַמַּעֲלָה אֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִתַּחַת יַד פַּרְעֹה “who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt”
Exod 3:8:	וְאֶרְדּוּ לְהַצִּילוֹ מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם “and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians”
v. 7	וַיִּירָאוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים “and feared other gods”
Judges 6:9	לֹא תִירָאוּ אֶת־אֱלֹהֵי הָאֻמִּי אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם יוֹשְׁבִים בְּאֶרֶץ “you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell”
v. 8	יָלְכוּ בְּחֻקֹּת הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר הוֹרִישׁ יְהוָה מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל “and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel”
Lev 18:3	לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וּכְמַעֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ־כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְבִיא אֲתֶכֶם שָׁמָּה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וּבְחֻקֵּיהֶם לֹא תֵלְכוּ “...[Y]ou shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their customs...” ¹⁰³
v. 10	וַיַּצְבּוּ לָהֶם מִצְבּוֹת “They set up for themselves pillars”
Exod 23:24	וְשֹׁבֵר תִּשְׁבֹּר מִצְבֹּתֵיהֶם “[Y]ou shall ... break their pillars in pieces”
v. 12	וַיַּעֲבְדוּ הַגִּלְגָּלִים אֲשֶׁר אָמַר יְהוָה לָהֶם לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה “and they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, “You shall not do this.”
Lev 26:30	וְנָתַתִּי אֶת־פְּגָרֵיכֶם עַל־פְּגָרֵי גִלְיֹלֵיכֶם “and I will cast your dead bodies upon the dead bodies of your idols”

¹⁰¹ Martin Noth, “The Central Theological Ideas,” in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History*. Eds. Gary N. Knoppers and J. Gordon McConville, 20-30. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000).

¹⁰² This list, which is not intended to be exhaustive, tends to undermine Noth’s thesis, given that the author/editor clearly draws from some works Noth considers to be much earlier than Deuteronomy.

¹⁰³ Some ESV translations have been altered to bring out similarities/differences in the Hebrew.

vv. 13-14	וַיַּעַד יְהוָה... בְּיַד כָּל־נְבִיאָיו... לֵאמֹר שׁוּבוּ מִדְּרָכֵיכֶם הָרָעִים... וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ “Yet the LORD warned ... by every prophet ... saying, ‘Turn from your evil ways ... But they would not listen...’”
Jer 35:15	וְאֶשְׁלַח אֲלֵיכֶם אֶת־כָּל־עַבְדֵי הַנְּבִיאִים... לֵאמֹר שׁוּבוּ־נָא אִישׁ מִדְּרָכּוֹ הָרָעָה... וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם אֵלַי “I have sent to you all my servants the prophets ... saying, ‘Turn now every one of you from his evil way ... But you did not ... listen to me...’”
v. 15	וַיִּמָּאֲסוּ אֶת־חֻקָּיו וְאֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ אֲשֶׁר כָּרַת אֶת־אֲבוֹתָם “They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers...”
Deut 29:24	וְאָמְרוּ עַל אֲשֶׁר עָזְבוּ אֶת־בְּרִית יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתָם “Then they will say, ‘It is because they abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers...’”
v. 15	וַיֵּלְכוּ אַחֲרֵי הַהֶבֶל וַיִּהְיֶה לָּו “and they walked after vanity (worthlessness) and became vain (worthless)”
Deut 12:31	כַּעֲסוּנִי בְּהֶבְלֵיהֶם “they have provoked me to anger with their vanities”
Jer 2:5	וַיֵּלְכוּ אַחֲרֵי הַהֶבֶל וַיִּהְיוּ לָו “and they walked after vanity (worthlessness) and became vain (worthless)”
v. 15	וַיִּהְיוּ לָּו וְאַחֲרֵי הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבֹתָם אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֹתָם לִבְלֹתִי עֲשׂוֹת כְּהֵם “and they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them that they should not do like them”
Deut 12:30	הַשָּׁמַר לָךְ כִּן־תִּנְקַשׁ אַחֲרֵיהֶם אַחֲרֵי הַשְׁמָדָם מִפְּנֵיךָ וּפְנֵי־תִדְרֹשׁ לֵאלֹהֵיהֶם לֵאמֹר אֵיכָּה יַעֲבֹדוּ הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה אֶת־אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְאָעֲשֶׂה־יָפֶן גַּם־אֲנִי “take care that you be not ensnared to follow them, after they have been destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods?—that I also may do the same.’”
v. 16	יִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לְכָל־צָבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם “worshipped all the host of heaven”
Deut 4:19	וּפְנֵי־תִשָּׂא עֵינֶיךָ הַשָּׁמַיִמָּה ... וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתָ לָהֶם וַעֲבַדְתָּם “And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven ... and you bow down to them and serve them”

v. 17 וַיַּעֲבִירוּ אֶת־בְּנֵיהֶם וְאֶת־בָּנוֹתֵיהֶם בָּאֵשׁ
 “And they passed their sons and their daughters through the fire”

Deut 12:31 לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂה כֵן לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי כָל־תּוֹעֵבֹת יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר שָׁנָא עָשׂוּ לְאֱלֹהֵיהֶם כִּי גַם אֶת־בְּנֵיהֶם וְאֶת־בָּנוֹתֵיהֶם יִשְׂרְפוּ בָאֵשׁ לְאֱלֹהֵיהֶם
 “You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way, for every abominable thing that the LORD hates they have done for their gods, for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods.”

Purpose

Employing the tradition of redemptive historical summary, such as is found in Deut 26:1-11 and some of the Psalms, the narrator of 2 Kgs 17:7-23 indicts¹⁰⁴ the Northern Kingdom on charges of apostasy, using the list of its offenses to evoke the very laws it violated. In doing so, he demonstrates the LORD’s justice in his judgment of destruction, exile and excommunication. The story contrasts the faithfulness, mercy and patience of the LORD, a gracious champion and protector whose repeated warnings were met with indifference, with the faithlessness and rebellion of his people who, rather than striving to meet their covenant obligations out of a response of love and delight, instead entrusted themselves to worthless things.

The false system of worship set up by Jeroboam lead to the annihilation of the Northern Kingdom and the devastation and exile of the Southern Kingdom. Its wickedness lie not only in its breaking of the covenant and its attributing of Israel’s redemption to that other than the LORD. It was a system with no purpose save keeping Jeroboam and his descendants on the throne (1 Kgs 12:27). Its feasts, devised from Jeroboam’s “own heart” (1 Kgs 12:33), lacked the larger purpose held by the true covenant of instilling in the covenant people an understanding of their identity as inheritors of God’s promises to Abraham of

¹⁰⁴ Stephen will do much the same thing centuries later before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7).

offspring, land and blessing to the nations (Gen 12:1-3). Its sacrifices and celebrations did not move toward any goal. Where the Mosaic covenant pointed to the redemption that was to come in the sacrifice of the LORD's perfect, unblemished lamb (Lev 1:2-9; Isa 52:13-53:12), and the Davidic covenant, toward a perfect king who would lead his people in expanding his kingdom to incorporate the Gentiles (2 Sam 7; Isa 9:1-6), Jeroboam's system held no mission to the world, no participation of its worshippers in the LORD's purposes of redeeming his creation. It was worthless, and in following it, the people of Israel became worthless. Judah, following after all the customs of Israel, will do the same.¹⁰⁵

Conclusion

For the audience of the Books of Kings, the redemptive historical summary of 2 Kings 17:7-23 would serve as more than a cautionary tale. In it, the LORD's covenant people would recognize the justice of his judgment of exile on one the hand, and his gracious provision, patience and mercy on the other, as they struggled with their own tendencies toward faithlessness, hopelessness and fear during the difficult years of exile and restoration.

For the modern audience, the sobering tale serves to indict any false system of belief, even those cloaked in "Christian" garb, that would seek to replace the LORD's purposes of redeeming his whole creation with a self-serving, self-focused salvation. Meanwhile, it assures them of the LORD's abiding faithfulness to his covenant people, preserving a faithful remnant of Israel for the sake of future generations and blessing to the whole world.

¹⁰⁵ The LORD notes Judah's worthlessness and addresses all the tribes of Israel as one in his rebuke through Jeremiah, prophet to the Southern Kingdom of Judah (Jer 2:4-5). Compare the identical wording with 2 Kgs 17:15, noted above.

Chapter Four: Acts 13:13-43

In his speech to the Jews, proselytes and Godfearers gathered at the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13, Paul presents the gospel in its redemptive historical context, using the device of redemptive historical summary. He points to God's righteous vindication of his covenant people in history to demonstrate God's righteous vindication of his people from their sin through Jesus Christ and warns that rejecting Christ is faithlessness to the covenant.

The pericope begins at 13:13 in the midst of Luke's account of Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13-14), evidenced by a location change from Paphos in the previous pericope (13:4-12) to Antioch near Pisidia. On the Sabbath Day (v. 14), Paul and his companions (v. 13; cf. 26, 32), including Barnabas (v.43), go to the synagogue and are invited to speak (v. 15).¹⁰⁶ Paul stands and addresses those gathered (v. 16a): Jews and Gentiles, the latter to whom he refers as οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν "Godfearers" (v. 16b). Luke later describes some as τῶν σεβομένων προσηλύτων "devout converts" (v. 43). It is likely that both groups of Gentiles were present.¹⁰⁷

Paul's redemptive historical speech begins in v. 16b and continues through v. 41. Its narrative nature is evidenced by the predominance of aorist indicatives and aorist

¹⁰⁶ First century synagogue services included a reading from the Law and a reading from the Prophets, usually followed by a sermon. Everett Ferguson, ed., *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, second edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 540, 544-45.

¹⁰⁷ Luke seems to use the term προσηλύτος elsewhere to describe circumcised converts (2:11;6:5), and uses φοβούμενος τὸν θεόν of Cornelius (10:2, 22). It makes sense that Paul would use the more inclusive term in addressing the group. In preserving this part of Paul's speech, Luke not only uses it as a structural device (see table) but also may be showing readers that both types of Gentiles were present. He then singles out the proselytes, along with the Jews, as following Paul and Barnabas (v. 43) to underscore the impact the gospel has had on them despite their costly devotion to Judaism. Contra Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 515-16, who sees Luke as using the two terms interchangeably. Fitzmyer also takes προσηλύτος to mean circumcised converts. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Acts of the Apostles*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 243, 520.

adverbial participles,¹⁰⁸ which, like the Hebrew *wayyiqtol*, serve as the “backbone” of biblical narrative.¹⁰⁹ The embedded narrative of Paul’s speech and its larger narrative frame both peak at vv. 38-41 in a gospel proclamation and warning. A simultaneous peak of the embedded and larger narratives is not always the case in biblical narrative. For example, the embedded narrative of Stephen’s speech (7:2-53), couched in the larger narrative frame of the Stoning of Stephen (6:8-8:3), peaks at his indictment of the Sanhedrin (7:51-53), while the larger narrative peaks at Stephen’s stoning (7:54-60).¹¹⁰

The pericope of Paul’s Speech at Pisidian Antioch then closes in an epilogue (vv. 42-43), evidenced by the shift of time and participants at the beginning of the next pericope (v. 44).

Structure and Events Sequence

Paul’s speech is divided into three sections by three addresses of the group that interrupt the narrative flow: 1) ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται καὶ οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν, ἀκούσατε “Men of Israel and Godfearers, listen...” (v. 16b); 2) Ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, υἱοὶ γένους Ἀβραάμ καὶ οἱ ἐν ὑμῖν φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν, ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος τῆς σωτηρίας ταύτης ἐξαπεστάλη “Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those Godfearers among you, to us this word of salvation has been sent...” (v. 26); and 3) γνωστὸν οὖν ἔστω ὑμῖν, ἄνδρες¹¹¹ ἀδελφοί “Therefore, let it be known to you brothers...” (v. 38). With each address, Paul decreases the distance between himself and his audience; at the beginning, distinguishing between the groups and referring to them as men of Israel and Godfearers,

¹⁰⁸ In the first two sections of the speech, which are narrative, there are twelve aorist indicatives and four aorist adverbial participles in vv. 16b-24, and thirteen aorist indicatives and seven aorist adverbial participles in vv. 26-37.

¹⁰⁹ Collins, *Genesis 1-4*, 20, who notes that this is supported by the fact that the LXX uses the aorist indicative and participle plus a καὶ or δὲ to translate the *wayyiqtol*, 21-22.

¹¹⁰ Cheryl Eaton, “Author Versus Speaker: An Approach for Exegesis of Redemptive Historical Summaries in Biblical Narrative” (master’s thesis, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, 2010), 46.

¹¹¹ Ἄνδρες “men” is implied.

and by the end, calling them all brothers. He also uses the literary devices of narrative, flashback (vv. 24-25), foreshadowing (v. 29) and dialogue (vv. 22, 25).

The focus of the sections are:

- 13:16b-25: Paul recounts the story of God's election of Israel (ἐξελέξατο τοὺς πατέρας), his redemption of Israel from Egypt, and covenant blessings including land, judges, prophets (evoked by mention of Samuel), King David and, the blessing to which all others ultimately point: the Davidic heir, a savior, Jesus. That God is the source of all Israel's blessings is emphasized by a string of aorist, active (or deponent), indicative, 3ms verbs of which God is the subject: ἐξελέξατο "chose", ἐξήγαγεν "led" (v. 17); ἐτροποφόρησεν "bore with" (v. 18); κατεκληρονόμησεν "assigned" (v. 19); ἔδωκεν "gave" (v. 20, 21); ἤγειρεν "raised up" (v. 22); and ἤγαγεν "brought" (v. 23). The story of blessings Paul recounts stems from the promises God made to the patriarchs (Gen. 12:3; 26:3-4; 28:13-14) of offspring, land, blessing Israel and making Israel a blessing to the nations.

Paul ends this portion of his story in a flashback to John's baptism and proclamation of the One to come (v. 24-25). Marshall sees this as "something of a digression," and speculates it could be a corrective for those who held John in too high esteem.¹¹² It seems more likely, however, that having himself testified in the preceding verse (v. 23) that Jesus is God's promised Savior, Paul now flashbacks to the testimony of John, a second witness, with whom his audience is likely to be familiar, given the stir John's mission caused (Matt 3:5; *Ant.* 18.5.2). And in

¹¹² I. H. Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 238.

recounting the story of John's baptism of repentance and heralding the one to come (Luke 3:9, evoked by v. 25), Paul foreshadows his proclamation of the substitutionary atonement of Jesus' death in the final section.

- 13:26-37: Paul begins Ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, υἱοὶ γένους Ἀβραάμ “Brothers, sons of Abraham...”, identifying himself with his audience and naming Abraham, in a tie to the previous section (v. 17), as the patriarch with whom God made his covenant with Israel. In responding to an invitation to speak λόγος παρακλήσεως “a word of encouragement” (v. 15), Paul brings “ὁ λόγος τῆς σωτηρίας ταύτης “the word of this salvation” (v. 26).¹¹³ Paul's story now focuses on God's promised savior, Jesus, whom he introduced in the previous section (v. 23).

Paul subtly contrasts his audience with κατοικοῦντες ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ “those dwelling in Jerusalem” who, like his audience, listen to a reading from the prophets every Sabbath Day, but did not understand them or recognize the Savior (v. 27), and so had Jesus executed (v. 28). Paul's use of τοῦ ξύλου evokes Deut. 21:23 (LXX: ὅτι κεκατηραμένος ὑπὸ θεοῦ πᾶς κρεμᾶμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου “because everyone who is hanged upon a tree is cursed by God”), foreshadowing his proclamation of Jesus' death as a substitutionary atonement (v. 38) in the next section. Paul continues his story with God's vindication of Jesus by resurrection (v. 30) and Jesus' appearance to those who now are his witnesses (v. 31). Paul ends by quoting Pss 2:7 and 16:10 and alluding to Isa 55:3 to show Jesus' resurrection and exaltation fulfilled God's promises to Abraham and David. (vv. 32-37).

¹¹³ There is a subtle difference in the nuance of the term λόγος “word” used for the “instruction/proclamation” the visitors were invited to speak and the “message” Paul brings (BAGD 599).

- 13:38-41: Having recounted the story of God’s interaction with his covenant people, leading to the fulfillment of his promises in the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, Paul now addresses his audience a third time, calling them all ἀδελφοί “brothers.” He imparts to them the climax of his message, here indicated by the twofold use of the inferential conjunction οὖν¹¹⁴ (vv. 38, 40): διὰ τούτου¹¹⁵ “through this man” – God’s promised Savior – ὑμῖν ἄφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν καταγγέλλεται “to you the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed.” The placement of ὑμῖν emphasizes the inclusion of Paul’s audience into this story of God’s salvation of his people.¹¹⁶ Paul then contrasts the law of Moses¹¹⁷ with faith in this Savior (v. 38b-39), a concept he emphasizes repeatedly in his letters:

καὶ ἀπὸ πάντων¹¹⁸ ὧν οὐκ ἠδυνήθητε ἐν νόμῳ¹¹⁹ Μωϋσέως δικαιωθῆναι,
 “and from all things which you could not be justified by the law of Moses,
 ἐν τούτῳ¹²⁰ πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων¹²¹ δικαιούται.
 in this [man], everyone who believes is justified.”¹²²

¹¹⁴ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 673.

¹¹⁵ Instrumental use; Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, second edition (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 149.

¹¹⁶ In much the same way, Paul includes the recipients of his epistle to the Romans in God’s ongoing redemptive history when he describes the gospel (Rom 1:1-6), beginning with the promise of Christ’s coming through the prophets and ending with: καὶ ὑμεῖς κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ “and you who are called of Jesus Christ.”

¹¹⁷ Verses 38b-39 argue against Dunn’s view that Paul’s polemic against “works of the law” concerned boundary markers separating Jews from Gentiles. (Dunn does not address these verses). Here, as in Rom 3:21-26, Paul’s focus is not on the removal of boundary markers. His focus is on the fact that his audience cannot be justified by the law but only through faith in Christ. Contra James D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, revised edition (Grand Rapids: MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 222.

¹¹⁸ The idea conveyed here is *all* sins. So F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, third edition (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000), 311.

¹¹⁹ Instrumental use; Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 372.

¹²⁰ Dative here seems to be what Porter describes as “a physical locative metaphor for ... corporate mystical union between the believer and Christ”, rather than his preferred spherical use, which he defines as “in the sphere of Christ’s control.” Porter, *Idioms*, 159. What is conveyed here is the same concept Paul uses in his epistles (ἐν Χριστῷ). Contra ESV, NRSV “by him” and NIV, NASB “through him.” While the use of the dative ἐν νόμῳ is instrumental, that does not necessarily dictate the same use of ἐν τούτῳ, despite the contrast intended.

¹²¹ Paul uses the plural phrase in Rom 3:22: πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας “all those who believe”.

¹²² Paul says much the same thing using similar wording in Rom 3:21-26, 28. For this reason, the passive and active infinitives of δικαίωω in these verses are translated as “justified” rather than “freed.” So Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 312; Fitzmyer, *Acts of the Apostles*, 518; and NIV, KJV, ASV. Preferring

Paul ends the climax of his speech by quoting Habakkuk.¹²³

Therefore, the structure of the pericope is:

Table 4.1: Structure of Acts 13:13-43

I.	Setting / Staging (vv. 13-16a)
II.	Redemptive Historical Speech (vv. 16b-41)
A.	God's covenant blessings point to Jesus (vv. 16b-24)
B.	Jesus rejected in Jerusalem, vindicated by God (vv. 26-37)
C.	Peak: Gospel Proclaimed/Warning against faithlessness(vv. 38-41)
III.	Epilogue (vv. 42-43)

Soards divides the speech into four sections: 1) Story of Israel (vv. 16b-25; 2) Message and meaning of salvation (vv. 26-37); 3) Conclusion (vv. 38-41); “and after further developments” 4) Epilogue (46-47).¹²⁴ He contends: “As Paul moves to speak, he takes the stance of a Hellenistic orator, even making an orator’s gesture.”¹²⁵ However, Soards’ structure is inadequate because it tacks on comments from the next pericope – the boundaries of which are clearly marked by a change in day and characters – that may or may not be Paul’s comments (v. 46).

Kennedy, who approaches the speech as epideictic rhetoric, sees five sections: 1) Proem; 2) Narration of events from Egyptian captivity to John the Baptist; 3) Proposition; 4) Proof (27-37); and 5) Epilogue (38-39).¹²⁶ However, his division also falls short, most importantly in missing God’s election of Israel and implied covenant with the patriarchs (v. 17), which is the foundation of Paul’s speech. In addition, while Kennedy recognizes

“freed” are ESV, although it agrees in the footnotes the Greek term is “justified”, NASB and NRSV among others. Marshall sees them as relatively interchangeable, *Acts*, 242-43; ISV uses both.

¹²³ See below.

¹²⁴ Marion Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context and Concerns* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press: 1994), 79-80

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹²⁶ George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 124-25.

that the speech ends in a warning, he fails to include the Habakkuk quotation as part of the speech, despite that it is tied by v. 40.

Bruce also views the speech through the lens of Hellenistic rhetoric, dividing it into four sections: 1) Exordium (v. 16); 2) God's mighty works in history (v. 17-22); 3) History/prophecy fulfilled in Christ (vv. 23-37); and 4) Peroration (vv. 38-41).¹²⁷

There is little doubt that Paul and other NT writers and speakers were influenced by the pervasive discipline of rhetoric.¹²⁸ However, it is more likely that in addressing a Jewish audience, Paul here, like Peter and Stephen before him, is doing so in the tradition of redemptive historical summary.¹²⁹ The tradition includes references to Israel's unfaithfulness and God's patience (found here in v. 18), and often rejection of God's prophets (found in vv. 27-28), and an ending that incorporates a call to repentance (vv. 38-40).¹³⁰

In any event, the predominant feature of Paul's speech, as of Stephen's, is embedded narrative. Given that these redemptive historical summaries are microcosms of the overarching biblical story of God's interaction with his people, any attempt to analyze these embedded narratives divorced from their larger narrative framework, and so from their covenantal context, is vulnerable to error. However, no method of analyzing embedded narrative has yet been developed. As literary theorist William Nelles observes:

The device of story within a story ... or 'embedded' narrative ... is so widespread among narrative literature of all cultures and periods as to approach universality. ...[E]mbedded narrative is an undeveloped resource in literary theory. In fact,

¹²⁷ So Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 302-12.

¹²⁸ Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 101-102.

¹²⁹ As Bayer, who follows Steck in identifying it as a prophetic repentance speech, notes of Peter, "...[H]e calls his fellow Jews to return to God in the light of his sovereign work through Jesus." Hans Bayer, "The Preaching of Peter in Acts," in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*. Eds. I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 263.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 264.

there is no generally accepted model or terminology for the analysis or even discussion of the structure.¹³¹

Use of Earlier Texts

At the peak of his speech, Paul proclaims the gospel and adds a warning: βλέπετε οὖν μὴ ἐπέλθῃ τὸ εἰρημένον ἐν τοῖς προφήταις “Watch, therefore, so that what is said in the prophets does not happen [to you]...” Then he quotes Habakkuk:

Acts 13:41

ἴδετε, οἱ καταφρονηταί,
καὶ θαυμάσατε καὶ ἀφανίσθητε,
ὅτι ἔργον ἐργάζομαι ἐγὼ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις
ὕμῶν,
ἔργον ὃ οὐ μὴ πιστεύσητε ἐάν τις
ἐκδιηγῇται ὑμῖν

“Behold you scoffers,
and wonder and be destroyed
because I am working a work in your
days,
a work which you would not believe if
someone told you.”

Hab 1:5

ἴδετε, οἱ καταφρονηταί,
καὶ ἐπιβλέψατε καὶ θαυμάσατε θαυμάσια
καὶ ἀφανίσθητε,
διότι ἔργον ἐγὼ ἐργάζομαι ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις
ὕμῶν,
ὃ οὐ μὴ πιστεύσητε ἐάν τις ἐκδιηγῇται.

“Behold you scoffers,
and observe and be exceedingly astonished
and be destroyed
because I am working a work in your days,
which you would not believe if
someone told [you].”

¹³¹ William Nelles, “Stories within Stories: Narrative Levels and Embedded Narrative,” in *Narrative Dynamics: Essays on Time, Plot, Closure and Frames*, ed. Brian Richardson (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2002), 339.

The quote follows the LXX¹³² rather than the Hebrew,¹³³ which commands רֵא וְהִנֵּה “look among the nations.” The LXX substitutes οἱ καταφρονῆται¹³⁴ “scoffers” and also adds καὶ ἀφανίσθητε¹³⁵ “and be destroyed.” The reason for the changes from the Hebrew to the LXX does not concern us here. Paul’s quote condenses the wording of the LXX but retains its meaning.

The book of Habakkuk is an inspired dialogue between the prophet to the Southern Kingdom and LORD, and dates to the seventh century BC, possibly as early as the reign of Manasseh (687-642 BC).¹³⁶ In 1:2-4, Habakkuk is asking the LORD why he is allowing wicked Jews to oppress their weaker brethren.¹³⁷ The LORD’s response (1:5-11) is that he will punish them with the oppression of the wicked Chaldeans. Despite the harsh remedy, his righteous justice and his people will ultimately be vindicated (2:20).

¹³² *Duodecim prophetae*, Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum, vol. 13, ed. Joseph Ziegler (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 261.

¹³³ רֵא וְהִנֵּה “Look among the nations and behold, and be exceedingly astounded because I am working a work in your days that you would not believe if it were recounted.”

¹³⁴ Καταφρονῆτης, defined “despiser” LSJ, 920, and “despiser, scoffer”, BAGD, 529, the term appears only three times in the LXX (twice in Habakkuk [cf. 2:5 of drunkards and “men who act treacherously”] and once in Zeph. 3:4, of false prophets; in the latter cases it is used to translate בְּגָד “act treacherously” and בְּגָדוֹת “treacherous” respectively), and only once in the NT. It appears in Josephus of warriors, such as Saul, who are “despisers of adversities” (Josephus, *Ant.* 6.347, Whiston)

¹³⁵ In the context of most of the 83 verses in which it appears in the OT and apocrypha, as well as in pseudepigraphal writings such as Psalms of Solomon (17:11) the term conveys the idea of being destroyed, put to death, cut off from the covenant people, devoted to destruction, etc.

¹³⁶ So Keil, C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 10 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002),

¹³⁷ Scholars disagree about whether Habakkuk is referring to oppression by wicked Jews or Assyrians. It seems Hab 1:4, among other factors, supports an internal oppressor. Also viewing it as Jewish oppression are F. F. Bruce, “Habakkuk,” in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, ed. Thomas McComiskey, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 2:847; and O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 141. Others believe Habakkuk is referring to the Assyrians. So C. John Collins, “A Study Guide for the Old Testament Prophetic Books,” revised edition (Course Handout OT250, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, 2006), 85, who cites Robert Vasholz, “Habakkuk: Complaints or complaint?” *Presbyterion* 17 (Spring 1992), 50-52. Collins notes, however, that Vasholz’ “overall case, that both 2-4 and vv. 12-17 describe the Assyrians, doesn’t account for the presence of vv. 5-11 and vv. 12-17 being Habakkuk’s reaction to vv. 5-11.” [emphasis his, p. 84]

Meanwhile, Habakkuk evokes the words of Isaiah, a prophet to the Southern Kingdom ca. 740-680 BC, of the Assyrian threat: לָכֵן שָׁמְעוּ דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֲנֹשֵׁי לְצִוּן “Thus, hear the word of the LORD, [you] scoffers...” (Isa 28:14);¹³⁸ לַעֲשׂוֹת מַעֲשָׂהוּ זָר מַעֲשָׂהוּ יְקוֹם יְהוָה ... “for the LORD will arise up to ... work his work, strange is his work” (Isa 28:21); הִנְנִי יוֹסֵף “...behold, I will add to the wonders of this people, with wonder upon wonders, and the wisdom of the wise will perish and the discernment of the discerning will be hidden.” (Isa 29:14)

Purpose

In quoting Habakkuk, Paul is not only issuing a warning of disaster against spurning God’s offer of salvation or failing to recognize God’s work in Christ,¹³⁹ he is underscoring the central point of his speech. He is evoking God’s righteous vindication of his covenant people in history to point his predominantly Jewish audience to God’s righteous vindication of his people from their sin (vv. 38-39) – both Jews and Gentiles – God’s own vindication in righteously punishing sin (vv. 28-29), God’s vindication and exaltation of the promised Davidic heir, and he is warning them not to be faithless to the covenant or they will perish as did their faithless predecessors. Rejecting Christ is faithlessness to the covenant.

Luke¹⁴⁰ places the episode at Pisidian Antioch into the fourth in a series of six sections¹⁴¹ that witness the spread of the gospel and growth of the early Church, both

¹³⁸ This may be the source of the LXX’s use of οἱ καταφρονεῖται in Hab 1:5, although its translation of Isa 28:14 uses the term τεθλιμμένοι “oppressors.”

¹³⁹ So Marshall, *Acts*, 243; Fitzmyer, *Acts of the Apostles*, 519; Bruce, *The Book of The Acts*, 263. Neither Soards, *Speeches*, 87, nor Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 106, comment on the purpose of the Habakkuk quote beyond noting that it is a warning or admonition. Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, trans. by James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel, and Donald H. Juel. Ed. Eldon Jay Epp (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

¹⁴⁰ This paper assumes a date of AD 48-49 for the First Missionary Journey, a date of about AD 62 for the composition of Luke-Acts, and that Luke edited the speeches contained in his work.

internally, despite tension among members over issues such as giving, Hebrew- and Greek-speaking Jewish factions and Jewish-Gentile relations, and externally, despite opposition, such as that from Jewish authorities, Jewish believers, Judaizers and pagan mobs. His masterful editing of the speech helps Gentile readers connect with Israel's redemptive history, which as covenant people of God, is their redemptive history too.

Finally, approaching the speeches as embedded narratives may help explain similarities between the speeches of Peter, Stephen and Paul. It is not inconceivable that Stephen may have been present for – and possibly even converted at – Peter's speech (4:4), and so would have retained much of what he had said. Paul, who witnessed Stephen's speech and death, and was converted a short time later, likely retained much of what he had said. Paul and others (8:2), such as Philip, may have provided Luke with the material from which he reconstructed Stephen's speech. While scholars, such as Marshall,¹⁴² have noted similarities between the speech of Stephen and those of Peter or Paul, none seems to have proposed this as a possible explanation.¹⁴³

Conclusion

Paul, in his address, and Luke, in his narrative, use redemptive historical summary for the purpose of instilling identity, time in the biblical storyline and mission. Paul seeks to demonstrate for his predominantly Jewish audience that Jesus Christ is the long-awaited Davidic king. In him is salvation, just as God promised to the patriarchs and revealed through his prophets. The time to which they pointed has arrived: Jesus' life and substitutionary atonement fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law. By his

¹⁴¹ H. F. Bayer, "Handouts Acts and Paul," (Course Handout NT330, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis (Spring 2010).

¹⁴² Marshall, *Acts*, 141-42.

¹⁴³ Eaton, "Author Versus Speaker," 57.

resurrection and ascension, Jesus Christ has been installed as king. In him, God provides vindication and salvation for his people. They must not fail to recognize this. Their allegiance is due to the true Davidite who will lead them in bringing the Gentiles into his kingdom. Luke uses Paul's speech to help his predominantly Gentile hearers/readers of his letter to understand that they are inheritors of God's promises. Christ is now expanding his kingdom and they must participate in that expansion.

Modern believers, likewise, should see in this redemptive historical summary that the salvation that has come to them in Jesus Christ is rooted in an ongoing story that stretches back to God's promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and forward to the redemption of God's creation. They are the heirs of the story, participants in their own right, and subjects of the kingdom of God's true Davidic king. They must look beyond their own salvation and engage themselves in his mission to the nations.

Chapter Five: Rom 1:1-7

Scholars have long puzzled over the unconventional opening of Paul's Epistle to the Romans. They have noted its promise-fulfillment sequence, debated whether it incorporates an early-church confession and even pointed out its summary marking the gospel's continuity with OT revelation. But none has addressed its similarity to other redemptive historical summaries that appear across the canon. The tradition of redemptive historical summary is the proper lens through which to view the opening of Romans (1:1-7), and Paul uses this microcosm of the overarching story of God's people (1:2-6) to ground his readers in their identity as members of this people, position them in the ongoing story and prepare them to take up their role in the story.

Syntactical analysis and translation

In approaching Rom 1:1-7, it is helpful to first examine its syntactical structure:

1. Παῦλος
"Paul,"¹⁴⁴

δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ
"servant of Christ Jesus,"

κλητὸς ἀπόστολος
"called [to be] an apostle,"

ἀφωρισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ
"set apart for the gospel of God,"

2. ὁ προεπηγγέλματο
"which he promised beforehand"

διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ
"through his prophets"

¹⁴⁴ Translation provided for reader convenience; see annotated translation below.

ἐν γραφαῖς ἁγίαις
“in the holy Scriptures”

3. περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ¹⁴⁵
“concerning his son”

τοῦ γενομένου¹⁴⁶
“who was born

ἐκ¹⁴⁷ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ
“from the seed of David”

κατὰ σάρκα
“according to the flesh”

4. τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ
“who was appointed Son of God”

¹⁴⁵ Cranfield suggests that θεοῦ “of God” and περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ “concerning his son” should be taken as attributes of εὐαγγέλιον “gospel” so that v. 2 is separated by commas as a relative clause, with vv. 3-4 flowing from v. 1. C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The International Critical Commentary, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 1:57. Byrskog agrees. Samuel Byrskog, “Epistolography, Rhetoric and Letter Prescript: Romans 1:1-7 as a Test Case,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 65 (March 1997): 29. But such an understanding of the structure misses Paul’s point, which concerns the fulfillment of God’s promise to his covenant people. It is better to take εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ “gospel of God” as one concept and ὁ προεπηγγείλατο “which he promised beforehand” as its attribute, especially given that εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ identifies the implied subject of προεπηγγείλατο. Both διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ “through his prophets” and περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ “concerning his son” modify ὁ προεπηγγείλατο: The promise came through God’s prophets and concerned God’s son. God promised the gospel, he fulfilled the promise, and Paul’s readers are part of that fulfillment (v. 6). Moo sees little difference in whether or not περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ is tied to εὐαγγέλιον or προεπηγγείλατο; Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 44.

³ Parallel participle clauses τοῦ γενομένου “he was born” and τοῦ ὀρισθέντος “he was appointed” are attributes of τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ “his son”. The structure is significant in that Jesus is called God’s son before he is born, indicating his eternal nature (cf. 8:3). Contra Dunn, who rejects that 8:3 indicates the same concept (but does not offer an explanation) and calls this a post-Pauline concept, despite what he sees in this structure as Paul’s distinction of Jesus’ sonship from that of other believers. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 11-12.

⁴ Both ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ “from the seed of David” and κατὰ σάρκα “according to the flesh” modify the τοῦ γενομένου “who was born” (cf. Gal 4:4), while κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης “according to the Spirit of holiness” and ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν “by the resurrection from the dead” modify τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ “who was appointed son of God”. Much as εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ “gospel of God” (v. 1) is one concept, so is τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ “who was appointed son of God,” which parallels τοῦ γενομένου “who was born.” There are also parallels between κατὰ σάρκα and κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης, and, in a rhetorical-lexical sense, between ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ and ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν. The two participles are part of the overall temporal sequence of the pericope.

ἐν δυνάμει
“in power”

κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης
“according to the Spirit of holiness”

ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν
“by resurrection from the dead”

Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
“Jesus Christ”

τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν
“our Lord,”

5. δι’ οὗ ἐλάβομεν
“through whom we have received”

χάριν
“grace”

καὶ ἀποστολὴν
“and apostleship”

εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως
“to bring about [the] obedience that
is faith,”

ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος
αὐτοῦ¹⁴⁸
“for the sake of his name,”

ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν
“among all the nations,”

6. ἐν οἷς ἐστε καὶ ὑμεῖς
κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
“including you who are
called by Jesus Christ,”

¹⁴⁸ Both ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν “among all the nations” and ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ “for the sake of his name” modify ὑπακοὴν πίστεως “[the] obedience that is faith.” They are placed in opposite order to make clear the syntactical relationships.

7. πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ
 “to all those in Rome loved by God,”
 κλητοῖς ἁγίοις
 “called to be saints:”

χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη
 “Grace and peace to you”

ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
 “from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

It is apparent from the syntactical analysis that vv. 2-6, beginning with the relative pronoun ὃ “which”, function to define the phrase εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ “the gospel of God”. The “definition” ends at v. 6 with the prepositional ἐν ... ὑμεῖς “including you”, which identifies Paul’s readers as constituents of the larger whole that ἐν ... ὑμεῖς modifies, which is ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν “among all the nations”. The syntactical analysis also informs the translation:

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called [to be] an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures concerning his son, who was born from the seed of David according to the flesh, who was appointed¹⁴⁹ the Son of God in power¹⁵⁰ according to the Spirit of holiness¹⁵¹ by resurrection¹⁵² from¹⁵³ [the] dead,¹⁵⁴ Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we¹⁵⁵ have

¹⁴⁹ The term ὀρίζω here conveys a vesting of authority (see further below), as it does elsewhere in connection with Christ’s resurrection (see Luke’s record of Paul’s speech at the Aeropagus; Acts 17:31) and/or the final judgment (Peter’s report; Acts 10:42), and therefore “appoint” seems to be a better choice than “declare”. Cranfield, 61, Dunn, 13, the NET, NIRV and TNIV translate as “appoint”; the ESV, NIV, NRSV, and NASB as “declare”. Moo, 467, argues ὀρίζω did not carry the meaning “declare” in the first century, and so translates it “designate”; Fitzmyer, 234, prefers “established”.

¹⁵⁰ Paul modifies υἱοῦ θεοῦ with ἐν δυνάμει “in power” to underscore Christ’s authority. Byrskog also takes ἐν δυνάμει as modifying υἱοῦ θεοῦ, but suggests Paul intends “to make a certain distinction as he introduced the same concept of God’s son” after having done so in v. 3.” Byrskog, “Romans 1:1-7,” 29.

¹⁵¹ The divine presence of God. See further below.

¹⁵² The genitive ἀναστάσεως “resurrection” is instrumental. So Cranfield, 62.

¹⁵³ The ἐξ here is temporal rather than causal. So Fitzmyer, 236. Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 155.

¹⁵⁴ The genitive plural νεκρῶν implies the article (“the dead ones”) and references the realm of the dead.

received grace and apostleship¹⁵⁶ to bring about¹⁵⁷ [the] obedience that is faith,¹⁵⁸ for the sake of his name, among all the nations,¹⁵⁹ including¹⁶⁰ you who are called by Jesus Christ,¹⁶¹ to all those in Rome loved by God, called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁶²

Structure and Events Sequence

Having examined the syntax and arrived at a translation, we now turn to the discourse/literary structure. The pericope begins at 1:1 with the title and ends at 1:7 with the address and salutation. Verse 8 begins a new pericope with Paul's thanksgiving for his readers. Paul sets out vv. 2-6 as a brief narrative. Its narrative nature is indicated by the presence of successive relative clauses, attributive participles that correspond to a sequence of actions,¹⁶³ coupled with the presence of aorist indicatives.¹⁶⁴ The action peaks at v. 6.

¹⁵⁵ Epistolary plural; Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 395.

¹⁵⁶ The idea conveyed by χάριν καὶ ἀποστολὴν is likely God's gracious gift to Paul of apostleship, given 12:3 and 15:15-16, rather than grace and apostleship. So Cranfield, 66; Moo, 51.

¹⁵⁷ Denotes purpose; BDAG, 290.

¹⁵⁸ The genitive πίστεως is a genitive of apposition (epexegetical). Paul seems here to be clarifying ὑπακοή "obedience" with πίστις "faith". Wallace, 95, notes it is "frequently used when the head noun is ambiguous..." He further observes, 96, that it occurs when the terms "stand in symbiotic relation: they need each other if both clarification and connotation are to take place!" Moo, 52, sees πίστεως as source or subjective genitive. Many, including ESV, NASB and NASV translate ambiguously: "obedience of faith." Other translations include NIV: "obedience that comes from faith," and BDAG, 1028: "obedience which springs from faith."

¹⁵⁹ Both ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν "among all the nations" and ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ "for the sake of his name" modify ὑπακοὴν πίστεως "[the] obedience that is faith." I have placed them in opposite order in the translation, separated by a comma, to accommodate the flow of the English.

¹⁶⁰ Spherical use of ἐν; Porter, *Idioms*, 157.

¹⁶¹ Genitive of agency, given the use of the verbal adjective κλητός "called", and the parallel between κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ and ἀγαπητοὶ θεοῦ lit. "beloved of God" (v. 7). So Cranfield, 69; Wallace acknowledges the possibility, 126. Taking Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ as a possessive genitive and translating it as "called to belong to Jesus Christ" are ESV, NRSV, NIV, NLT, Moo, 54; Fitzmyer, 238; and Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 63. Dunn, 19, translates it "called to be Jesus Christ's", and likens it to being "guests or dependants of" Jesus, arguing that "in Paul, it is God who issues the invitation/summons...". In any event, certainly those Jesus calls, he calls to belong to him. (Matt 9:13) (His calling of the twelve is a different matter).

¹⁶² There are no textual variants in this passage that would significantly alter its meaning.

¹⁶³ Collins, *Genesis 1-4*, 20.

- 1:1 Title – Paul begins his letter with the nominative absolute Παῦλος, followed by the appositional δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ and two attributive phrases.
- 1:2-6 Redemptive Historical Summary – The relative pronoun ὃ serves as a transition into the summary, which provides an explanation of εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ in v. 1. The events sequence begins in v. 2 with the aorist indicative προεπηγγείλατο: God makes a promise through τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ – the plural indicates more than one prophecy through more than one prophet – concerning his promise, which they set down ἐν γραφαῖς ἀγίαις.
- The events sequence continues in v. 3 with the second of its two modifying phrases: περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ: God’s promise concerns his son. This son, already in existence, is born a descendant of Israel’s great King David.
- The events sequence continues in v. 4 with the aorist attributive participle τοῦ ὀρισθέντος, which parallels the aorist attributive participle in the preceding verse: God’s son is vested with authority by virtue of his resurrection from the dead.¹⁶⁵
- The events sequence continues in v. 5 with the aorist indicative ἐλάβομεν: Paul is given the charge of being an envoy to the nations of the εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ of v. 1.
- The events sequence peaks at v. 6 with Paul’s readers as a fulfillment of the promise.
- 1:7 Address and Salutation – Paul greets his readers, fellow heirs of the promise.
- Let us now consider the OT concepts, themes and stories Paul evokes.

¹⁶⁴ Aorist indicatives, like the Hebrew *wayyiqtol*, serve as the “backbone” of biblical narrative. Collins, *ibid.*, 21-22.

¹⁶⁵ See further below.

OT background

Paul introduces himself in v. 1, using first an appositional construction in which he refers to himself as δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. The term δοῦλος, lit. “slave,” is one that a Greek audience would find “well-nigh impossible” to use “without some feeling of abhorrence.”¹⁶⁶ But Paul is evoking the OT phrase עַבְד יְהוָה “servant of the LORD (Yahweh)”, which bespeaks a status of great honor and responsibility coupled with humility before God in specific cases of one specially designated for a work.¹⁶⁷ Found at least 30 times in the Hebrew, 28 times in the LXX,¹⁶⁸ it is used to describe a range of God’s covenant people: Moses,¹⁶⁹ his successor Joshua,¹⁷⁰ David,¹⁷¹ God’s people in general¹⁷² and Hezekiah, king of Judah.¹⁷³ The LORD himself refers to some as עַבְדִּי “my servant,” including members of his covenant people, such as Jacob,¹⁷⁴ Moses,¹⁷⁵ David,¹⁷⁶ Job,¹⁷⁷ and Isaiah,¹⁷⁸ and his covenant people as a whole.¹⁷⁹ In addition, עַבְד יְהוָה

¹⁶⁶ Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:50.

¹⁶⁷ The LXX also uses other phrases, such as παῖς κυρίου, commonly used for the Isaianic Servant, and οἰκέτης κυρίου, to translate the Hebrew.

¹⁶⁸ OT citations follow the Hebrew versification unless otherwise specified. The LXX (its versification follows here) uses a variety of terms for servant: οἰκέτης (Deut 34:5 of Moses); παῖς (Josh 1:13; 11:12; 12:6; 13:8; 14:7; 18:7; 22:2, 5; 2 Chron 1:3 of Moses; Dan 3:36 of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; Ps 17:1 of David; 112:1 of the LORD’s servants in general); θεράπων (Josh 9:2 twice of Moses; Isa 54:17 of the prophets); δοῦλος (Josh 24:30 and Judges 2:8 of Joshua; 2 Kgs 9:7 and 10:23 of the prophets; 18:12 of Moses; Jonah 1:9 of Jonah; Ps 35:1 of David; 133:1 and 134:1 of the LORD’s people in general; Isa 42:19 of Israel; 54:17 of the prophets); and ἀνθρώπου (2 Chron 24:6 of Moses). The LXX assumes “servant of the Lord” with reference to Moses in Josh 1:1, 1:15 and 22:4.

¹⁶⁹ Deut. 34:5; Josh 1:1, 13, 15; 8:31, 33, 12:6; 14:7; 22:2, 4, 5; 24:29; 2 Kgs 18:12; 2 Chr 1:3 and 2 Chr 24:6.

¹⁷⁰ Josh 24:29 and Judg 2:8.

¹⁷¹ Ps 18:1 and 36:1.

¹⁷² 2 Kgs 9:7; 10:23; Pss 113:1; 134:1; 135:1 and Isa 54:17.

¹⁷³ 2 Chr 32:16

¹⁷⁴ Ezek 37:25

¹⁷⁵ Num 12:7; Josh 1:2, 7; 2 Kgs 21:8 and Mal 3:22.

¹⁷⁶ 2 Sam 3:18; 7:5; 1 Kgs 11:13, 34, 36, 38; 1 Chr 17:4; Ps 89:21; Jer 33:21, 22, and 26.

¹⁷⁷ Job 1:8; 2:3 and 42:8.

¹⁷⁸ Isa 20:3

¹⁷⁹ Isa 41:8, 9; 42:19; 44:1, 2, 21; 45:4; 49:3; Jer 30:10; 46:27 and 28.

“servant of the LORD” is used in a specialized way to describe Messiah.¹⁸⁰ Therefore, in using the phrase δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, Paul is equating himself with those called עַבְדֵּי יְהוָה in the OT and equating Jesus with Yahweh and Messiah, while viewing his own mission as part of the fulfillment of Gentiles being brought into the kingdom (cf. 15:8-12).¹⁸¹

Paul further describes himself in v. 1 by using two attributive phrases: κλητὸς ἀπόστολος “called [to be] an apostle” and ἀφορισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ “set apart for the gospel of God”. Both κλητὸς and ἀφορίζω convey the OT concept of service to the LORD. While the term κλητὸς is never used in the LXX to refer to those called by God,¹⁸² the related verb καλέω is used in translating קָרָא “he called”. The Hebrew term is used in Isaiah to express the concept of God’s summons in election and mission of his people, such as Abraham (Isa 41:9; 51:2), Messiah (Isa 42:6; 49:1) and Israel (43:1; 54:6).

Meanwhile, the term ἀφορίζω “set apart, separate” is used in the LXX to translate לָּחַד “divide, separate,” with reference to the people Israel (Lev 20:26) of whom the LORD says: “You will be holy to me, because I, your LORD God, have set you apart from all the nations to be mine” (LXX). The same term is used to translate הָלַךְ “wave”, most often with reference to wave offerings or offerings that are set apart as special to the LORD,¹⁸³ but also of the Levites (Num 8:11), who are set apart for special service to the LORD.¹⁸⁴ As the Levites were set apart as mediators and models of holiness among the covenant

¹⁸⁰ Isa 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-12 (cf. Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24, 25 and Zech 3:8).

¹⁸¹ Dunn seems to take a similar view. Dunn, *Romans*, 8.

¹⁸² The term κλητὸς appears nearly 20 times in the LXX, most often referring to a holy convocation (עֲבֹדָת־יְהוָה) before the LORD (Exod 12:16; Lev 23:2-4; 7-8; 21, 24, 27, 35-37 and Num 28:25). It also is used of invited guests (קָרָא; 2 Sam 15:11, 1 Kgs 1:41, 49; Zeph 1:7 and 3 Macc 5:14).

¹⁸³ Such as Exod 29:24, 26 and Num 15:20.

¹⁸⁴ Fitzmyer, 232, also notes this, but mistakenly cites the verse as Num 8:1.

people Israel, so Israel was to be set apart to the LORD as a mediator and model of holiness among the nations (cf. Exod 19:6; Deut 7:6).

With these attributive phrases, Paul is evoking the OT concept of being called by God to a mission and set apart for service to him. In Paul's case, he is set apart for εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ "the gospel of God." Paul now defines the gospel in a redemptive historical summary (vv. 2-6).

The first thing he notes is that God προεπηγγείλατο "promised [it] beforehand". While προεπαγγέλλω appears only once in Romans, Paul uses it in 2 Cor 9:5 to describe a gift the church there had pledged to give.¹⁸⁵ Paul then notes that the promise is given beforehand διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν γραφαῖς ἁγίαις "through his prophets in the holy Scriptures" (v. 2).

Prophets served as God's spokesmen, raised up for specific purposes involving his people and their mission in the world, and often at times of moral or national crises.¹⁸⁶ God's revelation of himself and his purposes unfolded over time as he communicated directly through his prophets, most often through dreams and visions, which they wrote down (Isa 1:1; Dan 7:1; Ezek 1:1, etc.). God's prophets included those whose writings form books of the canon, such as Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah, and whose service is recounted in the historical books, such as Samuel (1 & 2 Samuel), Elijah (1 & 2 Kings)

¹⁸⁵ Paul uses the related term ἐπαγγελία "promise" eight times in Romans (4:13, 14, 16, 20; 9:4, 8, 9 and 15:8). In each case, the reference is clearly to God's promise to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3), also known as his covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15), which God repeated to Abraham's son Isaac (Gen 26:2-5) and to Isaac's son Jacob (Gen. 28:13-15), the father of the twelve tribes (cf. Rom 15:8).

¹⁸⁶ For example, the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 9 is set about 735 BC, during the reign of Ahaz and about 10 years after Tiglath Pileser III has taken the throne and is expanding the Assyrian empire. Pekah, king of Israel, and Rezin, king of Syria, are besieging Jerusalem and plan to replace Ahaz with a puppet king because he has refused to join their coalition against Assyria. (Is. 7:1-6). The Messianic prophecy, which gives more detail about Immanuel, the child described in 7:14 and 8:8, 10, is intended to assure a terrified Judah that God will fulfill the Davidic covenant. The exact circumstances of many prophecies, however, are lost to time.

and Micaiah (1 Kings 22), as well as those who may not generally be thought of as prophets but whose prophetic writings are preserved, such as David and Asaph (1 Chron 25:2).

In recounting the story of the εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ for his readers, Paul adds that the promise God gave beforehand concerns τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα “his son, who was born from the seed of David according to the flesh” (v. 3). The pre-existence of God’s son is assumed by the very fact that he is God’s son before he is born (cf. 8:3).

The idiomatic phrase ἐκ σπέρματος refers to lineage. God will fulfill his promise to the patriarchs (cf. 15:8) through the line of David. Paul is evoking God’s covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7, in which God promises to establish David’s “house” forever. As each descendant is coronated, thereby becoming a representative and embodiment of God’s “son” Israel (Exod 4:22, Hos 11:1; cf. Rom 9:4), God “appoints” each as his son (2 Sam 7:14-15).¹⁸⁷ These Davidic kings point to what the prophets foretell in increasing detail as the coming Messiah, the Davidic heir who will be an ideal king, ruling with righteousness, and protecting and vindicating his people (Isa 11:1-9; Jer 23:1-8; Ezek 34:1-31; cf. Rom 15:12). Messiah will be a divine king (Isa 9:2-7), and in his priestly role, this embodiment of Israel will make atonement for the iniquities of his people through his substitutionary death. Afterward, he will be resurrected and exalted, serving as mediator and leading the nation in its mission to be a light to the Gentiles, thereby expanding the Davidic kingdom to include other nations (Isa 52:13-53:12; cf. Rom 4:25-5:1; 15:21).

¹⁸⁷ C. John Collins, “Redemptive History and the People of God,” (Paper, Covenant Theological Seminary, January, 1 2007).

The succession of the Davidic heirs and their appointments as sons at their coronations sheds light on the next aspect of God's son that Paul recounts (v. 4). He is the one τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν “who was appointed the son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection from [the] dead.” Paul identifies the son of God with the appositional Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν “Jesus Christ our Lord.” Jesus' resurrection and ascension served as his coronation, his vesting of authority over the kingdom, his “appointment” as God's son. Luke depicts Paul as making this same observation during his redemptive historical speech at Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13:33. He quotes from Psalm 2, a prophetic psalm closely tied to 2 Samuel 7 (cf. Heb 5:5):¹⁸⁸ Υἱός μου εἶ σύ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε “You are my son, today I have begotten you.”¹⁸⁹

The phrase πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης “Spirit of holiness,” is not found elsewhere in the LXX or NT. This is not a typical Pauline formulation for the Holy Spirit; rather, Paul here draws upon OT precedent. The Hebrew רוּחַ קֹדֶשׁ lit. “Spirit of holiness” is the phrase used in the OT to describe God's divine presence (Ps 51:13 [51:11 English]; and in Isa 63:10 and 11; cf. Eph 4:30). It is this use that Paul is evoking: the presence of God raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 4:25), thereby accomplishing his coronation and appointment.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Kidner speculates the Psalm may have been used in the coronation ceremony for the Davidic kings of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973).

¹⁸⁹ The Greek of the Acts 13:33 and the LXX translation of Ps 2:7 are identical.

¹⁹⁰ See the same concept at work in 4:24; 8:11 and 10:9. Contra Dunn, 15, who also believes Paul and other early Christians would not have recognized the Holy Spirit as anything more than divine power. While their understanding about the divine nature was likely not as theologically defined as occurred later in the history of the church and was likely somewhat variegated, it is clear from the gospels that there was some recognition of the Trinity (Matt 3:13-17).

In juxtaposing κατὰ σάρκα “according to the flesh” and κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης “according to the Spirit of holiness,” Paul is referencing two facets of Jesus Christ: that he is the Davidic heir and Messiah in terms of his descent from David and that he is the divine Messiah under whose authority God the Father has placed all things.¹⁹¹

Paul’s recounting of redemptive history to the point of Jesus’ vesting of authority as the divine, Davidic heir who will lead his people in incorporating the nations (ἐθνῶν; Gentiles) into his kingdom (Isa 42:6; 49:6; 52:10; 60:3; cf. Acts 13:47; Rom 15:12), now brings Paul to his own role in the story: that of “envoy”¹⁹² ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν “among all the nations” (v. 5).¹⁹³

Paul’s encounter with the coronated Son of God is recounted in Acts 9. It turns Paul from the church’s persecutor (Acts 9:13-14, 21, 26; 22:4-5; 19-20) into its apostle (Acts 9:15; 26:16-17), and provides the basis for his theology. He sees his mission as helping fulfill the eschatological promise of the Gentiles being brought into the kingdom (Acts 13:47; 15:15-18; 22:10; 26:16-18).¹⁹⁴ With the phrase ἐν ... ὑμεῖς, Paul hits his story’s peak (v. 6) as the incorporation of his readers into the story looks toward the final consummation (Rom 8:21-23).

¹⁹¹ Contra Dunn, 13, who takes κατὰ as thesis/antithesis and therefore sees a negative connotation in κατὰ σάρκα, saying “...so far as Jesus’ role in God’s redemptive purpose through the gospel was concerned, Jesus’ physical descent, however integral to that role, was not so decisive as his status κατὰ πνεῦμα.” Dunn takes a wrong turn and keeps on going. Jesus’ humanity and divinity are equally important to his ability to save his people, but that is not what Paul has in view here. Contra also Moo, 50, who sees κατὰ σάρκα and κατὰ πνεῦμα as marking the old and new covenants. That does not work, however, because both phrases are clearly attributive of υἱοῦ θεοῦ (see syntactical analysis above). Finally, it could be argued that Paul is making much the same point as Jesus did in his discussion with the Pharisees about the divine nature of Messiah (Matt 22:41-45). While Isaiah makes clear Messiah is divine (Isa 7:14; 9:5), that point was evidently not recognized by many awaiting the Davidic heir. If this is what Paul had in mind, however, he would be giving three attributes of the Son: his birth according to the flesh, his ontological sonship and his appointed sonship, and so likely would have used a different structure to do so.

¹⁹² BDAG, 122.

¹⁹³ Cf. 9:15.

¹⁹⁴ Collins makes a similar observation about Paul’s view of his mission. C. John Collins, “Echoes of Aristotle in Romans 2:14-15; Or, Maybe Abimelech Was Not So Bad After All,” *Journal of Markets & Morality* 13 (Spring 2010): 137.

Purpose

Paul's purpose for opening his letter to the Romans with a redemptive historical summary is multi-faceted, touching on his readers' identity, position in the biblical story and mission.

Scholars, such as Fitzmyer,¹⁹⁵ have noted in Paul's opening his grounding of the gospel in redemptive history. They have seen, as has Moo, a promise-fulfillment sequence,¹⁹⁶ and have recognized, as has Dunn, that the verses are a summary marking the gospel's continuity with OT revelation.¹⁹⁷ Many, such as Cranfield, have speculated that the verses, especially vv.3-4, incorporate an early-church confession.¹⁹⁸ But none has addressed its story-like quality, explored its similarity to other such passages that appear across the canon, or considered the implications.

Manson calls it "heavily encrusted with doctrinal embellishments,"¹⁹⁹ and Dunn suggests it is out of place: "Why [Paul] should interrupt the flow of his normal greeting by this insertion is not immediately obvious."²⁰⁰ Fitzmyer contends it is "lengthy and unusual" because "Paul had to introduce himself. ...[He] explains who he is and the right he feels he has to address the Roman Christians ... not in his name alone, but in that of his Lord and by his commission."²⁰¹

Byrskog also puzzles over the opening of the epistle. Using Rom 1:1-7 as a test case, he seeks to weigh the effectiveness of the rhetorical versus the epistolographic

¹⁹⁵ Fitzmyer, 233.

¹⁹⁶ Moo, 44.

¹⁹⁷ Dunn, 22.

¹⁹⁸ Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:57.

¹⁹⁹ T. W. Manson, "St. Paul's Letter to the Romans — and Others," in *The Romans Debate*, revised and expanded edition, ed. Karl Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 5.

²⁰⁰ Dunn, 22.

²⁰¹ Fitzmyer, 227.

approach to Paul's letters²⁰² and finds each helpful but lacking.²⁰³ Viewing the opening through the epistolographic lens, he wonders what the original readers would have made of it:

No other known ancient letter from the Graeco-Roman or traditionally Jewish environment contains such an extensive letter opening. The hearers/readers, with even only some basic education in letter writing, must immediately have focused their attention on these conventionally strange expansions.²⁰⁴

Rather than taking ὁ προεπηγγείλατο “which he promised beforehand” as the beginning of a sweeping summary of redemptive history that defines εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ “the gospel of God,” – as the syntactical analysis above makes clear – Byrskog bisects the εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ, seeing it defined “salvation-historically” by ὁ προεπηγγείλατο “which he promised beforehand” and “christologically” by περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ “concerning his son”, and listing this dichotomy among “a number of peculiar expansions.”²⁰⁵

While Byrskog recognizes that εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ “carries a syntactical priority,”²⁰⁶ he sees the purpose of the “expansions” as supporting Paul's authority. Viewing the opening through the lens of rhetoric, he states: “It was not the gospel or the Christology itself that was at stake here, but Paul's right and authority to write or speak persuasively to the Romans.”²⁰⁷

But Byrskog misses the mark. The gospel *is* the point. Paul goes on to argue in 1:18-3:20 for its universal necessity (1:16-17) and tells his readers he is seeking their

²⁰² Byrskog, “Romans 1:1-7,” 27.

²⁰³ Ibid., 45.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 38.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 29.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 40.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

support for his upcoming mission to Spain (15:24) in order to spread the gospel (15:14-21).²⁰⁸ His exposition of the gospel and its implications flows naturally from this.²⁰⁹

That Paul follows, in general, an epistolary formula in his letters is evident not only from our knowledge of the conventions of ancient correspondence (not to mention the existence of our own modern-day conventions!) but from the structure of the letters themselves. And there is little doubt that he and other NT writers were influenced by the pervasive discipline of rhetoric.²¹⁰ But it is unlikely that one influenced Paul's letters to the exclusion of the other.²¹¹

The tradition of redemptive historical summary is a better lens through which to view the opening of the letter, which defines for both Jewish²¹² and Gentile²¹³ readers the gospel of which this former Pharisee²¹⁴ is now an envoy. These microcosms of the overarching story of God's interaction with his people appear across the canon and include Deuteronomy 26, 2 Kings 17, Nehemiah 9, and Acts 7, to name only a few.²¹⁵

Paul, given his saturation in the Scriptures, which is evident from both his background and writings, would no doubt have been well aware of the tradition. In fact, Luke depicts him as using this very approach in proclaiming the gospel at Pisidian

²⁰⁸ That is not to contend that Paul's stated purposes (cf. 1:11-15) are his only reasons for writing.

²⁰⁹ Contra Käsemann and others who see Paul's doctrine of justification as the theme and primary reason for the epistle. Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, trans. by W. J. Montague (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 171.

²¹⁰ Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 101-102.

²¹¹ Byrskog notes that neither approach he takes should be disregarded. Byrskog, "Romans 1:1-7," 45.

²¹² See 2:17-24; 3:9; 4:1 and 7:1.

²¹³ See 11:13-24.

²¹⁴ See Phil 3:5-6.

²¹⁵ Beside those I've mentioned above and discussed in previous papers, Williams identifies Deut 6:20-24; 26:5-9; Josh 24:2-13; 1 and 2 Chronicles; and Pss 78, 105, 135:8-12 and 136. While he does not include Rom 1:2-6, our simultaneous and sometimes collaborative examination of the redemptive historical summary as a microcosm of the larger story of the people of God is a developing study. Michael D. Williams, "Story Summaries," (Paper, Covenant Theological Seminary, Summer 2010), 2. Eaton, "Author Versus Speaker: An Approach for Exegesis of Redemptive Historical Summaries in Biblical Narrative" (master's thesis, Covenant Theological Seminary, 2010).

Antioch (Acts 13). Despite the differences of framework, function and length, there are many points of similarity between Rom 1:2-6 and Acts 13:16b-41. They include:

Table 5.1: Similarities between Rom 1:2-6 and Acts 13:16b-41

Davidic Covenant	Rom 1:3	Acts 13:22
Jesus the promised Messiah	Rom 1:3-4	Acts 13:23
Prophesied in Scripture	Rom 1:2	Acts 13:27, 40-41
Jesus resurrected	Rom 1:4	Acts 13:29-31
Appointment tied to Resurrection	Rom 1:4	Acts 13:33
Apostleship	Rom 1:5	Acts 13:32, 38
Ongoing story ends with the audience	Rom 1:6	Acts 13:38

This all goes to show that Paul defined the gospel in terms of redemptive history in a tradition of summarizing the larger story that stretches back to the first books of the canon. As N. T. Wright observes:

First-century Judaism is an excellent example of a culture which quite obviously thrived on stories, which we may for simplicity divide into two categories: the basic story, told in the Bible, of creation and election, of exodus and monarchy, of exile and return; and smaller-unit stories, either dealing with a small part of the larger story, or running in parallel to some or all of it. In each case, we gain a powerful index of the Jewish worldview, which then opens up to create the context for the symbols and the praxis.²¹⁶

Paul's use of this device in the opening of Romans: 1) grounds his readers in their identity as members of the people of God; 2) establishes their time in the ongoing story of that people; and 3) prepares them for his charge to take up their role in the story.

Identity

First of all, Paul takes care to ensure that his readers understand themselves to be heirs of God's promises. He defines the gospel in terms of redemptive history set out in

²¹⁶ N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 215.

story form, touching on historical highpoints involving Israel's long-awaited Messiah, which he identifies as Jesus (vv. 3-4), then ending his narrative in a climax that makes clear to his readers that they are part of this ongoing story: ἐν ... ὑμεῖς "including you" (v. 6). David Beck observes in his study of anonymity in the Gospel of John, "By entering into the narrative, the reader may experience a re-formation of her/his own self-identity and become part of the narrative."²¹⁷

This device has a long tradition in the canon. Moses, in his charge to the Israelites about to enter into the Promised Land, recounts to a new generation (Num 26:63-65; Deut 1:3; 2:14) the history of God's people as though it had happened to them (Deut 1:6-2:7). He commands them to fortify their identity by reciting before God a redemptive historical summary that ends with their honoring God with firstfruits (Deut 26:5-10). Passover, a reenactment of the LORD's redemption of his people from Egypt, served much the same purpose (Exod 14-17), drawing later generations into the story. In Nehemiah 9, the Levites lead the remnant in a redemptive historical prayer that extends from the creation to the situation of the worshippers themselves. This function of imparting identity extends to the readers of the episode. As Williamson observes:

There can be little doubt that Neh 8-10 is to be seen as the climax ... and that these chapters were intended by the editor to function paradigmatically within his own later community as it struggled to maintain its identity and sense of religious purpose.²¹⁸

Paul's interest in instilling in his readers a sense of identity is also clear in the body of Romans when he discusses that all believers are heirs of Abraham (4:13-25), and

²¹⁷ David R. Beck, "Narrative Function of Anonymity in the Fourth Gospel Characterization," *Semeia* 63 (1993): 155.

²¹⁸ H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), xxxiv.

that believing Jews and Gentiles are equal in God's sight (10:12-13) – a mystery now revealed (16:25-26).

Time

Secondly, Paul uses the redemptive historical summary to establish for his readers that God has set them in the last days: the eschatological period that began with the inauguration of the Davidic heir (1:3-5; 8:11, 23) and will end with the restoration of creation (8:21-25).

Paul underscores this point by beginning (1:1-7) and ending (16:25-27) his letter repeating such words, phrases and concepts as εὐαγγέλιον “gospel” (1:1; 16:25),²¹⁹ διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ “through his prophets” (1:2; cf. διὰ ... γραφῶν προφητικῶν “through the prophetic writings” 16:26), πᾶσιν ... ἔθνεσιν “all the nations” (1:5; cf. πάντα τὰ ἔθνη; 16:26), and εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως “to bring about [the] obedience that is faith” (1:5; 16:28).

As Christopher J. H. Wright observes:

His theology is replete with his understanding of how the climactic work of God in the Messiah Jesus has now opened the way for people of all nations to come to “the obedience of faith” and into covenant righteousness before God.²²⁰

In fact, Paul speaks more to his readers' location in redemptive history in Romans than in any other epistle. One indicator is his eschatological use, ten times, of the term νῦν “now” – nearly twice as many times as in all his other epistles combined.²²¹

²¹⁹ Outside the NT, the use of the term εὐαγγέλιον connotes the announcement of that a pivotal event has occurred, such as the declaration of Vespasian as emperor (Josephus, *B.J.* 4.618, 656; cf. 2.420).

²²⁰ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 522.

²²¹ Paul uses the term eschatologically in 2 Cor 6:2; Eph 3:5; 3:10; Col 1:26; and 2 Tim 1:10.

Table 5.2: Paul's eschatological references in Romans using νῦν

God now shows his righteousness in Christ's sacrifice	3:21, 26
Believers are now justified by Christ's blood, saved from God's wrath	5:9
Believers are now reconciled to God through Christ	5:11
There is now no condemnation for those in Christ	8:1
Now a remnant is chosen by grace	11:5
Gentiles, formerly disobedient, now receive mercy	11:30
Jews, now disobedient, will receive mercy	11:31
It is time to wake up; salvation is nearer now	13:11
The mystery of the gospel is now revealed	16:26

Paul's temporal emphasis is also evident in the flow of thought of the first three chapters. Paul begins by stating that God's wrath is being revealed (1:18), notes God's authority as Creator (1:20) and man's rebellion (1:21), recounts the unrighteousness of Gentiles (1:18-32) and Jews (2:1-3:8), and notes no one is justified (3:19-20). He ends in discussing δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ "the righteousness of God" now revealed (3:21-26), which includes God's judgment and covenant faithfulness – God has punished sin and saved his people through the work of Jesus Christ.

Mission

Finally, Paul uses the summary to urge his readers to take up their part in the story by mirroring God's glory and by supporting his ministry to spread the gospel in Spain.²²² Elsewhere in Romans, Paul draws on OT narrative and prophecy to underscore that God's purpose to restore his creation (Rom 8:21-23) will unfold with the participation of his readers. One similar passage that conveys this is Chapter 15.

²²² That is not to say that Paul did not expect the churches and individual members to participate in active evangelism, but that does not seem to be a focus in this letter.

Table 5.3: Repetition of phrases, word and concepts of 1:2-6 in Chapter 15

εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ “gospel of God”	1:2
εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ “gospel of God”	15:16
τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ “the gospel of Christ”	15:19
ὁ προεπηγγείλατο διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν γραφαῖς ἁγίαις “which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures”	1:2
ὅσα γὰρ προεγράφη “for whatever was written beforehand”	15:4
τὰς ἐπαγγελίας τῶν πατέρων “the promises made to the fathers”	15:8
περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ; υἱοῦ θεοῦ “concerning his son”	1:3
υἱοῦ θεοῦ “Son of God”	1:4
Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν “Jesus Christ our Lord”	1:4
πατέρα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”	15:6
ὕπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν “for the sake of his name among all the nations”	1:5
τὰ δὲ ἔθνη ὑπὲρ ἐλέους δοξάσαι τὸν θεόν “and that the nations might glorify God”	15:9
ἐξομολογήσομαί σοι ἐν ἔθνεσιν “I will praise you among the nations”	15:9
ἀποστολὴν εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ὕπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν “apostleship to bring about [the] obedience that is faith for the sake of his name among the nations”	1:5
λειτουργὸν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ εἰς τὰ ἔθνη “minister of Christ Jesus to the nations”	15:16
κατειργάσατο Χριστὸς δι’ ἐμοῦ εἰς ὑπακοὴν ἐθνῶν “which Christ has accomplished through me to bring about [the] obedience of the nations”	15:18

Paul admonishes his readers to reflect God's glory (15:7) and the character of Christ (15:3) through the power of the Spirit (15:16). He gives them concrete examples, such as living in harmony by bearing with and encouraging one another (15:1-6). By exhibiting this love, the church at Rome would fulfill the mission to which the LORD had called Israel (15:8), to be a blessing to the nations (Gen 12:3) and a kingdom of priests, a holy nation in the midst of the Gentiles (Exod 19:6). It would participate in the eschatological ingathering of the nations as Christ led them in incorporating the Gentiles into his kingdom (15:9). Paul, who alluded to this in his opening by noting Jesus' decendancy from David (1:3), underscores it in Chapter 15 with a series of evocations of OT prophecy concerning the Gentiles praising the LORD (15:9-11), ending with a citation from Isa 11:10-11 concerning the rule of ἡ ῥίζα τοῦ Ἰεσσαὶ "the root of Jesse" over the Gentiles (15:12). As Christopher Wright notes:

So the centrifugal mission of the New Testament church had its centripetal theology also: the nations were indeed being gathered in – not to Jerusalem or to the physical temple or to national Israel – but *to Christ* as the center and *to the new temple of God* that he was building through Christ as a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. [Emphasis his.]²²³

Additionally, Paul, who notes his own priestly role in the ingathering of the Gentiles (15:16), informs the church at Rome of his plans to travel to Spain to spread the gospel there and states that he is counting on their support to help him in this mission (15:24; cf. 15:28). In providing for Paul's ministry in Spain, the church would be participating in that work. Notes Stenschkel:

²²³ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 524.

As the missionary evangelized, the congregations were able – by virtue of their continued support and prayer for the functionary – to express their own commitment to (or, ‘partnership’ for) the advancement of the gospel.²²⁴

Conclusion

Paul, a former Pharisee turned apostle of the gospel of Jesus Christ, opens his letter to the Romans with a redemptive historical summary, a short story that encapsulates some key elements in the history of God’s interaction with his people, and has a long tradition that stretches to the beginning of the Hebrew canon and continues into the New Testament. Paul defines the gospel using this device, helping his largely Gentile audience to understand that they are by faith, just as are Jewish believers, full heirs of Abraham and the promises God made to the patriarchs, that they are living in the long-awaited time during which those promises are being fulfilled and that they have a responsibility to participate in the fruition of those promises. Far too often, the gospel has been reduced to only one of its many facets – that of justification by faith alone. Though justification clearly plays an important role in the book of Romans, Paul is careful to set the gospel in a broader context.

Recognizing that Paul is using the tradition of redemptive historical summary in Rom 1:2-6 to define εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ “the gospel of God” will help modern-day readers to avoid abridging the gospel and will open their eyes to a fuller and more accurate understanding of Paul’s message to the church at Rome.

²²⁴ Christoph Stenschke1, “Ursprünge und Gestalt der Evangelisation in den paulinischen Missionsgemeinden: Ein Rezensionsartikel zu,” *European Journal of Theology* 15 (2006):129. The above quotation is from the author’s own English translation.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This work's detailed exegesis of Deut 26:1-11, 2 Kgs 17:6-23, Acts 13:13-43 and Rom 1:1-7 has demonstrated that while each employs different elements of the overall biblical story in very different circumstances, all do so for the same ultimate purpose – to instill in the people of God their identity as inheritors of the story, to situate them along its ongoing timeline, and to engage their participation in the fulfillment of its goal of the redeeming of God's good creation.

Summary of argument

In Deut 26:1-11, the redemptive historical summary Moses commands to be recited in the offering of firstfruits serves to reinforce for the original readers and their descendants their identity as inheritors of the promises to Abraham and their responsibility to bless the world with the blessings they have received from the LORD. This responsibility extends from the situation of the original readers – Israelites in the epoch²²⁵ of the Mosaic covenant – through that of exilic readers, who are to live as faithful members of the covenant as they await their restoration to the land, and to those of the post-exilic period, who must reinstitute the proper worship of the LORD that their predecessors failed to express throughout most of the Davidic period. Under the New Covenant instituted by Jesus Christ at the inauguration of his reign, the readers' mission to be a blessing to the surrounding nations expands, as the promised inheritance of land expands with Christ's kingdom, to the whole of creation (Romans 4).

²²⁵ Pratt's scheme of epochal development based on the covenants recounted in Scripture is helpful to the discussion here of the biblical timeline. Richard L. Pratt Jr., *He Gave Us Stories: The Bible Student's Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1990), 336-346.

In 2 Kings 17:6-23, the narrator uses tradition of redemptive historical summary, to set in bold relief the actions of the people of the Northern Kingdom and their kings against the covenant laws of the LORD, demonstrating the justice of the LORD's judgment and foreshadowing the similar fate of Judah. In doing so, he underscores for his exilic or post-exilic readers the difference between the false worship of Jeroboam and their predecessors and the true worship of the LORD that they must reinstitute, a worship imbued with reinforcing in the covenant people an understanding of their identity as inheritors of God's promises to Abraham and which points to the redemption that is to come in Messiah. The narrator ends his book with the hope (2 Kgs 25:27-30) that despite the devastating judgment of exile, God remains faithful to his promise of this coming Davidic king who will lead them in their mission to expand his kingdom to incorporate the Gentiles. The story serves to warn those situated in that kingdom against replacing the LORD's mission of redeeming his whole creation with the false system of worship that comes with self-focused salvation.

In Acts 13:13-43, Paul uses redemptive historical summary in proclaiming the gospel to those gathered at the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch and warning against its rejection, while Luke uses it to underscore the gospel message for his audience. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of God's promises to the patriarchs and through the prophets. He is Messiah, the long-awaited Davidic king. Through his substitutionary atonement, God has provided vindication and salvation for his people. In his resurrection and ascension, Jesus Christ has been installed king. All who trust in him are members of God's covenant people, inheritors of his covenant promises, subjects of the kingdom. Their mission is to follow their king as he now expands his kingdom to the ends of the earth.

In Rom 1:1-7, Paul again defines the gospel using the device of redemptive historical summary, helping the recipients of his letter to understand that whether Jewish or Gentile, if they trust in Jesus Christ, they are heirs in equal standing of the promises God made to the patriarchs. Privileged to be living in the long-awaited time during which those promises are being fulfilled, they are called to participate in the fruition of those promises, including supporting his upcoming trip to spread the gospel to Spain. In contrast to the modern reductionistic tendency of defining the gospel as justification by faith alone, Paul sets it in its redemptive historical context, using the long-standing tradition of summarizing the biblical story, and so demonstrating that its scope encompasses identity, time and mission.

This purpose is not unique to those pericopes. The exegesis of Neh 9:1-10:40 and Acts 6:8-8:3 in my previous work, “Author Versus Speaker,”²²⁶ points to the same purpose. In Nehemiah 9, the Levites lead the remnant in a redemptive historical prayer of confession and covenant renewal that reinforces both their identity and the identity of the readers of the account as they struggle to fulfill their mission to reinstitute the proper worship of the LORD and await the promised Davidic heir. In Acts 7, the Spirit-filled Stephen speaks for God as he answers charges before the Sanhedrin, indicting the Jewish leadership for its blind rebellion against God’s purposes. Luke shows that the gospel’s trajectory from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, to the ends of the earth was fueled by a persecution sparked by Stephen’s death, and uses the account of his speech to further its world-wide spread, enlisting his believing audience in the fulfillment of God’s saving purposes.

²²⁶ Cheryl Eaton, “Author Versus Speaker: An Approach for Exegesis of Redemptive Historical Summaries in Biblical Narrative” (master’s thesis, Covenant Theological Seminary, 2010).

Implications for Further Study

The use of redemptive historical summary in Scripture is a pervasive phenomenon, extending beyond genre. This is evident in a cursory look at other instances of summary in the canon.

Ezekiel 20 contains a redemptive historical summary (vv. 5-28) recounted by the LORD himself in rebuking the double-minded (vv. 30-32) leaders of exiled Judah who have presumed to inquire of him through his prophet Ezekiel. The summary emphasizes God's graciousness, as his mercy and faithfulness to the covenant is contrasted with the rebellion, faithlessness and idolatry of his people:

Table 6.1: Cursory outline of Ezek 20:1-44²²⁷

I. Judean leaders inquire of the LORD (v. 1)		
II. The LORD's rebuke (vv. 2-28)		
	A.	Introduction (vv. 2-4)
	B.	Redemptive Historical Summary (vv. 5-28)
	1.	Abrahamic Covenant (vv. 5-6)
	2.	Rebellion in Egypt (vv. 7-8a)
	3.	LORD's merciful abeyance of judgment; redemption (vv. 8b-10)
	4.	Mosaic Covenant (vv. 11-12)
	5.	Rebellion in the Wilderness (v. 13a)
	6.	LORD's merciful abeyance of judgment in part (vv. 13b-17)
	7.	Covenant Renewal (vv. 18-20)
	8.	Rebellion in the Wilderness (v. 21a)
	9.	LORD's merciful abeyance of judgment in part (vv. 21b-26)
	10.	Rebellion in the Promised Land (vv. 27-28)
	C.	Conclusion (vv. 29-32)
III. The LORD's promise of restoration (vv. 33-44)		

²²⁷ A thorough exegesis of this passage would provide a better understanding of the outline, whose structure is much debated. Block, for example, sees a preamble (vv. 1-4) and a "lengthy divine speech" (vv. 5-44). Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 1:612.

The author of Psalm 135, incorporates a redemptive historical summary into his liturgical, praise-filled hymn. The psalm calls on his covenant people to worship, recounts the LORD's omnipotence, his mighty acts on their behalf, contrasts his faithfulness with worthlessness of idols, then closes in antiphonal praise:

Table 6.2: Cursory outline of Psalm 135²²⁸

I. Call to worship (vv. 1-4)		
II. The LORD's omnipotence (vv. 5-7)		
III. Redemptive historical summary (vv. 8-12)		
	A.	Redemption from Egypt (vv. 8-10)
	B.	Protection in the Wilderness; Conquest (v. 11)
	C.	Gift of the Promised Land (v. 12)
IV. The faithfulness of the LORD's vs. worthlessness of idols (vv. 13-18)		
V. Antiphonal Praise (vv. 19-21)		

Besides these and other more obvious instances of redemptive historical summary across genre that have been mentioned but not exegeted in this work, other possible examples include: Zachariah's prophecy concerning John the Baptist in Luke 2:68-79; the LORD's response to Job concerning creation in Job 38:4-1; and the personification of the LORD's wisdom in creation in Prov 3:19-20.²²⁹ In addition, genealogies, especially those in the gospels of Matthew and Luke, might be considered redemptive historical

²²⁸ Again, the structure is debated and a thorough exegesis would provide a better understanding of its incorporation of the summary. Kidner, 455-56, who calls it an "anthology of praise", sees a different five-section division (vv. 1-4, 5-7, 8-14, 15:18, 19-21). Kraus, 491, who also categorizes it as a praise psalm, divides it by meter into four sections (vv. 1-4, 8-10, 12-14, 18-19) but sees it as the combination of two "totally different hymnic forms." Goldingay, who characterizes it as a call to worship, sees five sections as vv. 1-2, 3-5, 6-12, 13-14, 15-19. Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973). Hans-Joaquim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, A Continental Commentary, trans. by Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993). John Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 3.

²²⁹ Despite the lack of reference in Wisdom Literature to the people and events highlighted in the history of redemption, Rosner sees a connection through Solomon in I Kings 3-10. He observes, "[I]n midpericope about Solomon's wisdom is the account of the building of the temple. Only when Israel is firmly planted in the land with God in the midst and the anointed king on the throne does wisdom flower." Brian S. Rosner, "History of Salvation" in *History of Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 714-15. Rosner cites Graeme Goldsworthy, *The Goldsworthy Trilogy: Gospel and Wisdom* (Exeter, England: Paternoster Press, 2000), but gives no page number.

summaries, and Jesus may be recounting a redemptive historical summary in his unrecorded interpretation ἐν πάσαις ταῖς γραφαῖς τὰ περὶ ἑαυτοῦ “in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” ἀρχάμενος ἀπὸ Μωϋσέως καὶ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν προφητῶν “beginning with Moses and all the prophets” for Cleopas and the other believer on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35, see especially vv. 26-27).

In light of the findings of this work, other redemptive historical summaries should be exegeted to determine whether their purpose is to shape identity of their audience or audiences, situate them along the biblical timeline and engage them in mission. As I observed in my previous study, the tradition of redemptive historical summary “bridges generations,”²³⁰ and so a better understanding of their use would enable modern believers to fulfill our roles in the ongoing story, participating in the expansion of Christ’s kingdom as we await his return.

As Hasel notes:

Secular history and salvation history are not to be conceived as two separate realities. Particular historical events have a deeper significance, perceived through divine revelation; such events are divine acts in human history. The course of salvation history was inaugurated for man after the fall and moved from Adam and all mankind through Abraham to Christ, and from him it moves to the goal of history, the future consummation in glory. If properly conceived, these multiple interrelationships between the Testaments may be considered to elucidate the unity of the Testaments without forcing uniformity upon the diverse Biblical witnesses. There is unity in diversity.²³¹

²³⁰ Eaton, “Author Versus Speaker,” 71.

²³¹ Gerhard F. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, 193.

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