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Victory, Atonement, Restoration, and Response: The Shape of the New Testament Canon and the Holistic Gospel Message

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Introduction

When Christians and Bible scholars discuss the gospel, defining the word "gospel" is just as important as the many discussions about its implications in politics, church life, or the environment. We often hear distinctions between *Christus Victor* and penal substitutionary atonement, between a soterian gospel and a Kingdom gospel, and between a gospel that has implications for all of creation and one that applies to only individual souls.[1] In the midst of this conversation, though, and especially in the midst of these important distinctions, we must ask if we are actually distinguishing between what is contained in the definition of "gospel" and what is not. Is it entirely correct to divide between a *Christus Victor* gospel, a soterian gospel, and a restorative gospel? Can we separate Christ's victory over evil from his restoration of creation and from penal substitutionary atonement?[2] The argument here is that the biblical account does not divide between these three different aspects of the gospel – victory, atonement, and restoration – but that each are a part of Jesus' work in his life, death, resurrection, ascension, Pentecost, and return.[3] This threefold work of victory, atonement, and restoration,[4] coupled

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[1] For an introduction to some of these distinctions and for a slightly different perspective than the one taken in this essay, see Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), esp. pp. 28–33. For an example of those that would distinguish between a gospel of the Kingdom of God, a gospel of transactional (or substitutionary) atonement, and a gospel that is rooted in salvation history, see Frank Stagg, "Reassessing the Gospels," in *Review and Expositor* 78/2 (1981), pp. 190–99. Stagg argues that the Gospel writers only portray Jesus as teaching that salvation is rooted in union with him, the representative and means of union with God, and not in salvation history or substitutionary atonement.

[2] I am using the phrase "victory over evil" as both an indication that Jesus has conquered all principalities and powers (cf. Eph. 1:21; Col. 2:15) and in a more positive sense that Jesus is the incarnate Lord reigning over his people and his world. It is, in other words, a phrase that is indicative of the coming of the Kingdom of God, and one I use to speak of the "reign of the Lord God in the messianic age." Meredith G. Kline, "The Old Testament Origins of the Gospel Genre," in *WTJ* 38/1 (1975), pp. 24–25.

[3] For an explanation of how each aspect of Christ's work – incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, sending of the Spirit, return – is part of the gospel, and particularly of the "victory" aspect of it, see Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 120–92.

with the church's proclamation of it both as an announcement of Christ has done and as a call to repent and believe to the nations,[5] are all included in a holistic view of the term "gospel." More particularly, the thesis of this essay is that this holistic view of the gospel is supported by the shape[6] of the biblical canon and for the purposes of this paper the shape of the New Testament.

The canonical shape of the New Testament aids the reader in understanding the biblical gospel as a threefold work of victory over evil, restoration of creation, and redemption from sin through Christ's life, death, and resurrection, as well as the proclamation of the church of that work both in announcing it and calling the nations to respond to it. This will be demonstrated through attention to the shape of the fourfold gospel corpus and Acts, the placement of Revelation at the end of the canon, and the shape of the epistles. In searching the biblical material, primary emphasis will be placed on demonstrating that Christ's work, and therefore the gospel, includes victory, atonement, and restoration. Some brief concluding thoughts on the need for a personal response to Christ's message, and that response's part in the gospel, will also be offered.

The Holistic Gospel in the Gospels and Acts

This essay follows a canonical approach to the New Testament, and therefore traces the shape of the NT[7] by starting with the beginning and the

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[4] For the different ways in which all of the Christ events, from incarnation to return, touch on these three aspects of the gospel, see Robert Peterson, *Salvation Accomplished by the Son: The Work of Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011).

[5] François Bovon refers to this as the two faces of the gospel: "gospel as Christological event and the gospel as apostolic proclamation." François Bovon, "The Canonical Structure of Gopsel and Apostle," in *The Canon Debate* (eds., Lee MacDonald and James Sanders; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), p. 518. Bovon argues not only that these are the two faces of the NT gospel but that they are the two faces seen explicitly through the shape of the New Testament as first historical witness to the Christ event in the gospels and then in the apostolic proclamation of that event in Acts and the epistles. I will argue for a similar definition of "gospel" in this paper but from a slightly different approach to the shape of the NT canon.

[6] Shape refers to the ordering of material within a book or, for our purposes, within an arrangement of books. For the ordering of material within books, see Brevard Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 10. For the ordering of books within the canon, see Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (NSBT; ed., D. A. Carson; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), p. 34; Idem, "Torah, Torah, Torah: The Emergence of the Tripartite Canon", in *Exploring the Origins of the Bible: Canon Formation in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective* (eds., Craig Evans and Emanuel Tov; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), p. 104; Rolf Rendtorff, *The Canonical Hebrew Bible Bible: A Theology of the Old Testament* (trans., David E. Orton; Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2005), p. 718; Idem, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), p. 290; John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), p. 97, p. 223.

[7] It should be noted here that there are at least two primary orders of the New Testament canon. The first, found in antiquity, is the order in which the books circulated through their collections within codices. The fourfold Gospel corpus, the Pauline epistles, Acts and the

end, which in this case includes the Gospels and Revelation, to determine the focus of the corpus.[8] For the four Gospels, as Scot McKnight has shown, the word *gospel* primarily refers to a narrative, and specifically the story of Christ.[9] The Gospels continue the story of the Old Testament,[10] and that story is one in which the threefold gospel of redemption from sin, victory over evil, and restoration of creation[11] is prominent and well attested throughout.

General epistles, and Revelation each circulated in their own codex. At some point (possibly with Jerome's translation of the Bible into Latin) the General epistles were shifted to come after Paul's letters and Hebrews was moved from the middle (usually between 2 Thessalonians and 1 Timothy) to the end, to reflect the order we see today in our English Bibles. It is important to understand that this article is *not* arguing for the primacy of either order, but instead is embarking on a literary exercise that notes the importance of order in understanding the content of any body of literature. This hermeneutical strategy could just as easily be employed using the ancient Greek order. For the Greek order seen in antiquity and its organization into codices, see David Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), e.g., p. 6, p. 10, p. 37, p. 60, p. 64. For early and later canonical lists of the New Testament, see Arthur G. Patzia, *The Making of the New Testament: Origin, Collection, Text, and Canon* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), pp. 155–56. According to Patzia's lists, the Council of Carthage appears to be one of the first instances where Paul's letters are placed before the General epistles.

This decision to read from the later and not earlier order will come into play at two crucial points in the essay. First, through the later order's placement of Paul's letters next to Acts and of Acts next to John, the tie between John, Acts, and Romans, is made much stronger. John is still read with the fourfold Gospel corpus, but the fourth Gospel's role as a theological bridge to Acts is now highlighted as well. Second, the Pauline and General epistles are connected not by Jude and Romans but by Hebrews and James. Again, I am not arguing for the primacy of this order in hermeneutics, but am only recognizing that order matters in interpretation and then arguing for what we see theologically from this particular order. The order referenced here is one that has influenced the Church's liturgy and doctrine since at least the Reformation, but has not been determinative in either use.

[8] For instance, Brevard Childs, speaking of the structure of the Pauline epistles, says, "The structure of these books [Romans and the Pastorals] at the beginning and end of the corpus *sets the canonical context for interpretation*" (emphasis mine). Brevard S. Childs, *The Church's Guide for Reading Paul: The Canonical Shaping of the Pauline Corpus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), p. 76.

[9] Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel,* pp. 36–41, pp. 53–56, pp. 78–112.

[10] G. K. Beale, A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), pp. 1–28, pp. 117–86.

[11] For an overview of the biblical narrative and the contention that the primary purpose for God's redemption in Christ is the restoration, or new creation, of the entire cosmos, see, for instance, T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008); G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology,* pp. 29–186 and esp. pp. 129–160; Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), pp. 13–86; Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), e.g., pp. 62–65; N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009; repr., London: SPCK, 2005), p. 114, pp. 119–22, pp. 130–53.

The Old Testament Background

The shape of the New Testament is canonically, and therefore textually and theologically, attached to the Old Testament and therefore to its gospel message. Beginning with creation, God creates his world as "good." This ontological status of God's handiwork is significant in its later redemption from the curse of Adam through Christ. Additionally, God creates Adam as a ruler in the Garden, telling him to "rule and subdue" it (Gen. 1:28) and to "cultivate and keep" it (Gen. 2:4). God has, in other words, given Adam authority that reflects the ultimate authority of the Trinity. In Genesis 3 both the created order and Adam's authority are affected by sin, and the redemption that follows clearly includes atonement, victory, and restoration. The *protoeuangelion* in Gen. 3:15 is victorious in its articulation of salvation, and this is made especially clear as the rest of Scripture unfolds. Further, the curse that will be reversed when the seed of woman crushes the serpent's head includes not only separation from God (Gen. 3:19b–24) but also the cursing of the creation itself (Gen. 3:17–19a). Redemption must encompass the scope of the curse, and the curse includes both separation from God and the cursing of the ground.[12] Thus, when Gen. 3:15 promises the serpent's defeat, that defeat must bring both atonement and restoration to reverse the entire curse. We see this promised reversal throughout the rest of the Old Testament as well.

This promised reversal is seen especially in the covenants of the Old Testament. Both of the post-Garden covenants in Genesis (Noah's and Abraham's) have atonement and victory overtones because they are both directly connected through the genealogies of Genesis to the promised seed of Gen. 3:15.[13] They and their lineage, and specifically the nation of Israel, are the line through which redemption from sin and the victory over evil will come. Noah's redemption from the flood, his placement back on the earth, and the covenant God makes with him have clear restorative and atonement overtones. Noah is redeemed from the judgment of sin by God's gracious act of salvation through the ark; the flood waters are textually connected to the "formless and void" waters in Gen. 1:2; and after Noah is placed back on dry land he is issued commands similar to those of Adam and Eve in Gen. 1:28 and 2:7.[14] Abraham's covenant likewise declares the restoration of creation along with redemption and victory. The promises of land, descendants, bless-

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[12] For the scope of the curse, see for instance Ken Mathews, *Genesis 1:1–11:26* (ed., E. Ray Clendenen; NAC 1A; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), p. 36; Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (eds., David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker; WBC 1; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), pp. 78–84.

[13] James M. Hamilton, "The Seed of Woman and the Blessing of Abraham," *TynBul* 58 (2007), pp. 253–73; idem, "The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10/2 (2006), pp. 30–54; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50* (WBC 2; eds., David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker; Waco: Word Books, 1994), p. 7; N. T. Wright, *Paul,* p. 23.

[14] Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1–15,* pp. 192–96, pp. 204–208.

ing, and kings from his line and in Israel function to bring back the goals of Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:28; 2:7).[15]

The Mosaic covenant also brings all three of these aspects into focus. The tabernacle and priesthood serve both as the avenue for atonement for Israel and as pictures of the restored Garden.[16] Additionally, the *telos* of the Mosaic covenant is the entering into and conquering of the land; its goal is the defeat of God's enemies and Israel dwelling in peace with God after this victory.[17] This is seen especially in the Levitical laws, where atonement is tied to land. The covenantal boundaries and the atonement necessary when one breaks them are directly tied to victory, the conquering of the land.[18]

The promise of conquering and ruling the land is most prominent in the Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17), but restoration and atonement are still present here as well. Atonement is seen again through the fact that David (and his descendants) is of the line of Judah, and thus of the redeeming Seed of Adam, but also in the work of Solomon on the Temple. Solomon's completion of the Temple is both for the purposes of atonement, since the Temple is where sacrifice is held, but also for the purpose of restoring the land. The imagery used in the Temple has the Garden and its restoration in mind.[19] David and Solomon are also focused on conquering the land in their respective kingships, bringing to mind again the victorious aspect of the gospel.[20]

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[15] James Hamilton, "The Seed of Woman and the Blessing of Abraham," pp. 253–73.

[16] See especially G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004) and Andrea Spatafora, *From the "Temple of God" to God as the Temple: A Biblical Theological Study of the Temple in the Book of Revelation* (Tesi Gregoriana Serie Teologia 27; Rome: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1997). For the textual evidence that Israel's Temple, as well as John's New Jerusalem and New Temple, allude to the Garden of Eden, see G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, pp. 66–80, p. 190, p. 360. See also T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, pp. 13–73. Finally, see Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (New Testament Theology; ed., James Dunn; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 133–35, for the idea that John's Temple in Revelation 21–22 reflects the Garden.

[17] This is especially true of the blessings and cursings in Deuteronomy 28. See J. Gordon McConville, *Deuteronomy* (eds., David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham; AOTC 5; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), pp. 397–410. Although I disagree with their conclusions about a later, post-Mosaic date for the composition of Exodus and Deuteronomy, both Martin Noth and Gerhard von Rad tie the giving of the Mosaic law to concerns about ruling the land. See Martin Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary* (eds., Peter Ackroyd et al.; The OT Library; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 174; Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (eds., Peter Ackroyd, et al.; The OT Library; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), pp. 23–30.

[18] This is most notably seen in the cursings section of Lev. 26:14–29. See R. K. Harrison, *Leviticus* (TOTC; ed., D. J. Wiseman; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1980), pp. 29–35, pp. 232–34.

[19] G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, pp. 66–80, p. 190, p. 360.

[20] To take one example, the writer of Chronicles sees David's purchase of Ornan's land in 1 Chron. 21:18 as parallel to Abraham's purchase of Machpelah, the first act in conquering the land. See Jacob M. Meyers, *I Chronicles: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (eds., William

Finally, the new covenant (Deuteronomy 30; Jeremiah 31; Ezekiel 36) and the prophecies concerning its inauguration (e.g., Isaiah 9) have these three elements as well. Atonement from sin is the avenue through which one enters the covenant and its inauguration results in the restoration of creation (e.g., Isa. 40:1–11, and esp. vv. 3–5) and victory over evil (e.g., Day of the Lord imagery in the Prophets). The renewal of the land is clearly an element of the restoration of creation as well (e.g., Num. 24:3–9; Isa. 35:1–2; 40:3–4; 51:1–4; Hos. 14:6–7). Thus, the Old Testament and specifically the history, nature, and function of Israel looks forward to a day when God will appear and bring with him atonement for sin, victory over evil, and the restoration of all creation.[21]

The Holistic Gospel in the Synoptics

In the shape of the New Testament, the Synoptics begin with the story of the Messiah.[22] Jesus comes as the fulfillment of the Old Testament narrative and covenants, as the culmination and consummation of Israel's history. He is the Messiah, the long awaited Prophet-Priest-King who will finally and decisively lead Israel out of exile and back into their inheritance.[23] This is seen primarily in the portrayal of Jesus as the fulfillment of major Old Testament narratives. Matthew portrays Jesus as the New Moses leading Israel out of captivity;[24] Mark portrays Jesus as leading the New Exodus of Isaiah 40–66;[25] and Luke uses both the Samuel-David and the Elijah-Elisha narratives

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Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman; The Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 1965), pp. 148–50.

[21] For a broader discussion of the New Testament's interpretation of the Old and specifically of the covenants as pointing primarily to the reversal of the curse of Genesis 3 and therefore to victory over evil, atonement for sin, and restoration of creation, see N. T. Wright, *Paul,* pp. 22–39.

[22] Because the placement of John at the end of the fourfold Gospel corpus and before Acts is such a significant canonical issue (see below), I will unfortunately spend less time on the shape of the Synoptics in order to focus on John and Acts. Much more could be said about their order than is said here.

[23] N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 2; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), particularly pp. 147–97.

[24] While Matthew uses other OT imagery besides comparing Jesus to Moses, the New Moses imagery is more prominent in Matthew than in the other Gospels. This is not to say that New Moses imagery is absent from the other Gospels, but simply that it is more prominent in Matthew. For an in depth study of this imagery, see Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

[25] See Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (London: T & T Clark, 1992), p. 12; Thorsten Moritz, "Mark," in *Theological Interpretation of the New Testament: A Book–by–Book Survey* (ed. , Kevin J. Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), pp. 42–44; Rikki Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997); and Idem, "Mark", in *Commentary on the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament* (eds., G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), pp. 114–20.

of Samuel-Kings to show that Jesus is the Prophet-King of Israel.[26] Each of these Old Testament narratives are tied to the covenants spoken of in the last section and thus have the same implications. Further, the teaching, miracles, and work of Jesus all point to these three aspects of the gospel. Many of Jesus' teachings focus on demonstrating who is and what it means to be a part of the restored people of God; his healings and exorcisms restore not only the spiritual realm but also the physical creation; and his life, death, and resurrection bring atonement for sin. His teachings, healings, and life, death, and resurrection also point to the consummation of his work in the future, where there will be no more crying, sickness, or pain (Rev. 21:4). Jesus did not simply perform miraculous works that had no connection to the created order, but instead performed those that were precisely to show the breaking in of God's restored Kingdom into the space-time continuum. The substitutionary death of Jesus is of course central to this, as it is through that penal substitutionary death that sin is atoned for[27] and that evil is conquered,[28] and it is through his resurrection that creation is restored. Thus, the Synoptics, both in their use of Old Testament narratives and in their record of Jesus' teaching, miracles, and work, point to the gospel being a threefold work of atonement, victory, and restoration.

The Holistic Gospel in John-Acts

The Gospels climax with John, the canonical finale to the fourfold Gospel corpus. One of the main emphases[29] in the fourth Gospel is new creation, and it makes explicit what Matthew, Mark, and Luke's use of Moses, Exodus, Elijah, and David imagery said more implicitly: Jesus is bringing restoration to Israel and to the entire creation. This new creation emphasis can be seen beginning with John's reference to Genesis 1 (and Isaiah 40, the beginning of Isaiah's New Exodus/New Creation section) in John 1 and ending with the New Man, the resurrected Christ in John 20. The Genesis 1 references in John 1 (e.g., the explicit allusion to Gen. 1:1 in John 1:1 and the contrast between light and darkness in John 1:5, 9) place John's entire Gospel and thus Jesus' life, death, and resurrection thoroughly within the framework of the restoration of creation. The Passion and Resurrection scenes of John 18–19

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[26] Thomas L. Brodie, *The Birthing of the New Testament: The Intertextual Development of the New Testament Writings* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2004), pp. 284–382.

[27] See, for instance, Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced For Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), esp. pp. 67–72 for penal substitution in Mark. Although this work has received criticism for deriding other models of the atonement, it does here present a legitimate exegetical defense of penal substitution. See also ibid., pp. 73–76, for penal substitution in the Gospel of John.

[28] John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006; repr., 1986), pp. 223–48.

[29] Faith is obviously another large emphasis of John (cf. John 20:30–31). The faith that John pushes his readers to have is faith in Jesus, though, and in John Jesus is primarily presented as the bringer of the new creation.

are also filled with allusions to the creation story and thus imply new creation. Jesus prays before his arrest in a garden (John 18:1), he is called "the man" by Pilate (John 19:5), he alludes to both the creation of the world and of Israel with his last utterance of "it is finished" on the cross (John 19:30; cf. Gen. 2:1; Exod. 40:33), and when he is resurrected we first see him in a garden with a woman being mistaken for a gardener (John 20:1–18). He, then "breathes life" into his disciples in John 20:22, a clear allusion back to God breathing life into Adam in Gen. 2:7.[30] All of these are clear narrative allusions to, and sometimes are explicit quotations of, aspects of the creation narrative in Genesis 1–2. Following these allusions to new creation, the disciples, and especially Thomas, are called to faith (John 20:24–31) and then sent out to "be fruitful and multiply" through feeding Christ's sheep (John 21). The narrative of the new creation is culminated with the faith that brings new life and the commission to spread that faith through the earth. Thus John begins and climaxes his Gospel with a focus on Jesus' work of restoration, or new creation, in his life, death, and resurrection.

John also focuses on new creation not merely in the introduction and conclusion, but also in the body of the Gospel. For instance, the seven signs of Jesus in the first eleven chapters evoke ideas of new creation, from water being turned into wine to a dead man, Lazarus, being raised from the dead.[31] The contrast between light and darkness throughout the Gospel (perhaps most explicitly seen in the story of Nicodemus in John 3) and the "I am" statements of Jesus are other examples of restoration imagery and language used in John.

Thus, John, from beginning to end, focuses on Christ as the restorer of humanity and of his creation through his life, death, and resurrection and by the faith of those who hear of his work. Furthermore, the broad narrative of John begins with an allusion to the initial act of creation, and towards the end of his Gospel (John 20:19–23) there is an allusion to the creation of man. This suggests a broad parallel the narrative pattern of Genesis 1-2. In the original creation of Adam, we see God make Adam and then breathe life into him. In John, we see Christ as the second Adam, recreating his fallen creation, and then he, both as the divine Word and as the new Adam, breathes the life-giving Spirit into his disciples, both his new people and corporately with him his new Adams. Expected of Adam in Genesis 2 is that he will "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28) and "rule over and subdue" the Garden (Gen.

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[30] For the references to the garden imagery in John 20:1–18 and for the "breath of life" in John 20:22, see Andreas Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son of God* (Biblical Theology of the New Testament Series; ed., Andreas Köstenberger; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), pp. 351–54.

[31] N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God III* (Christians Origins and the Question of God; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), p. 440. Again, this is not to say that these are the signs' only function; as stated in note 28 above, faith is also a prominent purpose for the signs. These two things are not separate, but go hand in hand. The signs should produce faith in Jesus, who is Messiah bringing new creation.

2:15). Because of the narrative parallels between John and Genesis 1–2, the expectation for rest of the story is that the disciples, who have just received the breath of life, should "be fruitful and multiply" and "rule over and subdue" the rest of creation. We see this proleptically in John 21 with the command of Peter to feed Christ's sheep, as well as with the sending motif in John's Gospel, but we see it fully in Acts where the church goes into all the earth with the gospel of Jesus.

The fact that Acts follows John and not Luke is, as Childs notes, *the* "major canonical issue" in the New Testament.[32] If there ever were a place where the shape of the canon ought to surely tell us something about its message, it is here. John splitting Luke and Acts virtually cries out for theological explanation. It is my contention that part of the purpose[33] for this lies in Acts' narrative continuity with the new creation theme seen so prominently in John, and especially at the end of the fourth Gospel. As noted, we should expect the disciples to begin to "be fruitful and multiply" after receiving the breath of the Spirit in John 20:22, and this is exactly what happens in Acts. The church is to spread the gospel "in all the earth" (Acts 1:8), and the narrative structure is a concentric pattern moving outward from Jerusalem to the entire globe. This parallels Adam and Eve's commission to "be fruitful and multiply and fill all the earth," which started in the Garden and presumably would have moved outward from there. The reversal of Babel (Gen. 11:1–9) at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–13), the references to the blessings of Abraham (Acts 2:39; 3:25), and the descriptions of the church as the embodiment of the "message of new life" (Acts 5:20; cf. Acts 4:32–35) all point to the church and its evangelistic mission as the agent of God's new creation in Christ.[34]

Most importantly, Luke writes of the church's expansion in Acts using clear allusions to Gen. 1:28. In Acts 6:7, 12:24, and 19:20,[35] the church grows because the Word of God *increases* and *multiplies*. In other words, the purpose of the book of Acts is to show how the church is fulfilling the cultural man-

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[32] Brevard S. Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1994), p. 53.

[33] Other possible purposes include keeping the Synoptics together and John's late date of writing. Again, though, the fact that John splits Luke and Acts is a major canonical issue that cannot be explained away simply by chronology or the similarity between the Synoptics. If the latter was a predominant factor, John could have been circulated at the beginning of the Gospel corpus, thus keeping Luke at the end and thereby together with Acts. The former does not appear to be a predominant factor elsewhere in the canon (e.g. the Pauline epistles are not ordered according to chronology), so one wonders why it would be a factor here.

[34] G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, pp. 644–48, pp. 769–72.

[35] Acts 19:20 contains the same word for "increased" or "grew" (*euxanen*) as Acts 6:7 and 12:24, but whereas the former two verses follow with "multiplied" (*eplethuneto*) Acts 19:20 follows with "strengthened" (*ischuen*). The wording otherwise is the same in all three verses, though, with the one other exception that Acts 6:7 says "the word of God" and Acts 12:24 and 19:20 say "the word of the Lord." In other words, "strengthened" in 19:20 appears to be parallel to "multiplied" in 6:7 and 12:24.

date given to Adam and Eve in Gen. 1:28.[36] They are Christ's agents of new creation, spreading redemption and restoration throughout the earth through their testimony to Christ's death and resurrection. Further, the church's mission is directly tied to Christ's ascension; it is as the ascended Lord who reigns over all things that Christ directs his church to be fruitful and multiply. Thus they are not only fulfilling the Adamic commission to be fruitful and multiply but also to rule and subdue. The church is restorative and victorious in its mission in Acts.

What we seen, then, through the unusual shaping of the NT canon with the transplant of John between Luke and Acts, is that at the end of the fourfold Gospel corpus and in the transition to the narrative of the church in Acts, the theme of new creation is heavily emphasized. To say then that the gospel is *not* the story of God's creation, man's fall, redemption through Christ, and the restoration of all things in him is to ignore this canonically shaped focus of the NT canon. To put it positively, the shape of the fourfold Gospel corpus and Acts demands that we see the gospel both as the penal substitutionary atonement for sin in Christ's life, death and resurrection *and* as the restoration of all creation and victory over evil through that same work of Christ. The gospel therefore does not end with atonement, but instead atonement is the central work in which the robust gospel of restoration, victory, and forgiveness is achieved.

The Holistic Gospel in Revelation

Revelation is perhaps even more explicit in bringing these three aspects of the gospel together. Our attention will be given especially to Revelation 21–22, since, as G. K. Beale notes, Genesis 1-3 and Revelation 21–22 are canonical bookends that " . . . interpret everything between them."[37] Thus Revelation 21–22 sum up Christ's work and why it was accomplished. In short, Revelation 21–22 contains a holistic gospel message, with restorative, victorious, and substitutionary atonement elements.

First, these last two chapters of the Christian Bible have a clear focus on atonement. The absence of the sea (21:1) and the absence of the effects of sin (21:3) are both indications that sin has been eradicated. Atonement is also the background of other imagery in these two chapters. The river from the throne is for the "healing of the nations" (22:2) and it is also how the King on the throne, Christ, has "secured payment" (21:6) for the new heavens and new earth. The New Jerusalem that comes down from heaven is the bride of Christ, washed spotless and without blemish (21:1-2). He also gives his saints washed garments when they overcome (22:14), another indication that they will be forgiven and cleansed of sin. Finally, the fact that some are thrown

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[36] G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission,* p. 266.

[37] Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology,* p. 59.

into the lake of fire (21:8) indicates that there are those to whom atonement has not been applied.

Second, there are also clear restorative elements in these two chapters. Most explicit are the references to the new Garden, Temple,[38] and City. Further, the fact that there is a city here indicates that the social and cultural aspects of human life are redeemed and restored, along with humanity and the created order. Also indicative of creational restoration is the reference to the healing of the nations; healing not only results in forgiveness but in restoration of people.

Finally, Christ is pictured as the victorious king in these two chapters. The narrative immediately preceding the new heavens and new earth in Revelation 19 and 20 is explicit concerning this matter. There, the harlot, the beast, the false prophet, and the dragon (Satan) are all defeated and evil is eradicated from the earth. Thus the narrative predication for the final salvation of Christ's followers, the restoration of the earth, and the absence of evil is *Christus Victor*. The absence of the sea (21:1) and of sin's effects (21:3) is not only an image of atonement but also victory. The absence of sin and evil indicates that its effects *and* its source have been fully and completely defeated. The sea in Revelation is the dwelling place for the dragon, beast, and false prophet, so the fact that it is gone indicates that those who dwell there are eradicated as well. The lake of fire is also an image of atonement and victory; those in it are there not only because atonement is not applied to them but also as a sign that Christ has ruled and subdued his enemies in his creation. Further images of this victory are seen in the fact that the nations come to him (21:24–27) and that the people can now enter the city freely (21:25). There is a peace that pervades the new creation, and it is a peace that is achieved through Christ's victory over evil.

What we see in Revelation, then, is that the entire cosmos has been recreated and restored to its original intent but also in its teleological format. Adam and Eve were never intended to stay in the Garden but were told to "be fruitful and multiply and *fill all the earth*" (Gen. 1:28; emphasis mine). Here in Revelation 21–22 God does not merely return the saved to the Garden but the New Garden-City-Temple fills the whole earth with worshipers from every tribe, tongue, and nation. The more important point here, though, is that God *restores creation*[39] through Christ's *victory over evil,* which is fundamentally accomplished through his *atonement for sin*. Again, these three aspects of the gospel cannot be separated; they are integral to one another.

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[38] See especially Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission and Andrea Spatafora, From the "Temple of God" to God as the Temple.* See also T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, pp. 13–73; and Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, pp. 133–35.

[39] The use of "restore," especially in this discussion on Revelation, does not mean that God's renewal of creation stops at a point where it simply reverts to Genesis 1–2, but that in God's final restoration of creation in Revelation 21–22 it has finally achieved the teleological goal given to it in the initial creation and thus surpasses that initial creation.

The Holistic Gospel in the Epistles

What, then, does the "middle" of the New Testament, the epistles, tell us about the gospel? Do they confirm, add to, or contradict what we have seen in the Gospels and Revelation? We will examine four epistles as a test case: Romans, Colossians, Hebrews, and James.[40]

The Epistles and Atonement

Atonement is a clear focus of Romans, and especially Romans 1–8. The pervasiveness of sin (Romans 1–3), the necessity of Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. 3:21–26), the inability of heritage to save (Romans 4), the place of Christ as the reversal of Adam's curse (Rom. 5:12–21), and the ability of Christ's death and resurrection to both justify (Rom. 5:1–11) and sanctify (Rom. 6:1–8:17) are the dominant features of Romans 1–8. Especially prominent in Romans, as well as in Galatians and Ephesians, is the fact that atonement cuts through racial and ethnic (Jew–Gentile) boundaries. Colossians also has a focus on atonement; the description of Christ's work in Col. 1:13–23 begins and ends with the forgiveness of sins. The description of the believer as alive with Christ in Col. 2:6–15 is also grounded in atonement (Col. 2:13–14), as is new life in Christ (Col. 3:1, 3). Finally, although Hebrews is focused on perseverance of the saints, the nature of the atonement and its effects are still clearly in view in motivating those saints to perseverance (e.g. Heb. 2:5–13; 4:14–5:10; 7:11–10:18).

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[40] The choice of Romans, Colossians, Hebrews, and James comes as a result of their placement in the order of the NT canon used in this article. Again, though, I am arguing from *an* order of the NT canon, not *the* order. In the order of the NT canon referenced in this article, these four letters are among the most significant epistles when discussing the shape of the NT letters because they stand at canonically important places within the NT epistolary corpus. Romans' importance is rather obvious; its placement first among the epistles should not only be explained by its prominence in terms of length but also by the fact that it most thoroughly explains Paul's understanding of the gospel (see Brevard Childs, *The Church's Guide for Reading Paul*, p. 69, p. 235, p. 254). Colossians stands at the end of the section of the NT epistles focusing on theological explanation of the gospel and its impact on Christian living begun by Romans, and thus serves as the end of the narrative for that group. Hebrews and James, although in the "middle" of the section of 1 Thessalonians–Jude, are canonically significant because of Hebrews' placement at the end of the Pauline corpus and James' placement at the beginning of the General Epistles corpus. Although there is a seamless transition in our Bibles between Hebrews and James, and although Hebrews is generally discussed with James-Jude, this was not the case in the initial circulation of the NT books (see David Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament,* pp. 26–34, p. 60, p. 80. See also Idem, *Paul's Letter Collection: Tracing the Origins* (Bolivar: Quiet Waters Publications, 2001)). Thus these four books stand at canonically important places and that particular shaping guides the reader in their understanding of the gospel. See Matthew Emerson, "Christ and the New Creation: A Canonical Approach to the Theology of the New Testament" (unpublished Ph.D. diss.; Wake Forest, NC: Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), pp. 95–189, esp. p. 129, pp. 151–55, pp. 186–89.

The Epistles and New Creation

Like atonement, restoration is also a focus of Romans and Colossians. In Romans, the gospel that includes justification and sanctification through atonement finds its goal in the glorification of the believer at Christ's return and the restoration of all creation (Rom. 8:18–39). Thus the entire point of the atonement described in Rom. 1:18–8:17 is the restoration of the believer and of the entire cosmos. The explanation of the atonement in Romans 1–8 also includes implicit references to the new creation or restoration.[41] The inclusion of Gentiles in the people of God in Romans 9–11 is a new creation of the people of God, and the ethical commands to the believing community in Romans 12–16 are tied directly to the explanation of the restorative atonement in Romans 1–11 (Rom. 12:1; "therefore . . . by the mercies of God," i.e., because of Romans 1–11).

Colossians also sees the result of atonement as not only the forgiveness of sin but the renewal of believers and the entire cosmos. The description of the redemption Christ has in mind not only includes his death and resurrection but also that work of salvation in the context of all creation. He is the creator and sustainer of "all things" (Col. 1:14–15) and "all things" are reconciled (Col. 1:20) to himself through the cross.[42]

In Hebrews the new creation is what the reader is exhorted to pursue and persevere for; he is told to strive to seek "his rest (4:1)," the "'city which has foundations whose architect and builder is God' (Heb 11:10), 'the city of the living God' (Heb 12:22), 'the city which is to come' (Heb 13:14), . . . a city which God has prepared (Heb 11:16) . . . 'a better [fatherland], that is a heavenly one' (Heb 11:14, 16), 'the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22),'"[43] and "the city that is to come (13:14)." For the audience of Hebrews, the restoration of all things by Christ at his return, and specifically a restoration that is earthly in its content, is the hope for which they persevere in faith. This hope is found especially throughout the latter part of the Pauline epistles (1 Thessalonians–Philemon) and the General epistles as well. Each of these letters exhorts their readers to live ethically (e.g., the Thessalonian epistles, the Petrine epistles) and to model their lives on the gospel (e.g., the Pastorals and Philemon) because of the reality and imminence of Christ's return. Hebrews stands as a

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[41] For instance, the allusions to the creation and fall in Rom. 1:18–32 and the use of the Adam comparison in Rom. 5:12–21. See, for instance, Edward Adams, "Paul's Story of God and Creation: The Story of How God Fulfills His Purpose in Creation," in *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (ed., Bruce Longenecker; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), pp. 26–28, pp. 33–35, p. 37.

[42] Clearly "all things" here refers to everything in creation. The phrase is repeated four times in vv. 16–17 and each time refers to the entire cosmos. It would be logically inconsistent to think the phrase means anything else in v. 20.

[43] Dale Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations of Hebrews: A Study in the Validity of the Epistle's Interpretation of Some Core Citations from the Psalms* (NABR Dissertation Series 10; Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1994), pp. 136–37.

lynchpin in the middle of that section, making explicit the fact that what they are waiting for at that return is not just avoiding judgment but living in the new creation with Christ.

Finally, in James the coming judgment is used as exhortation (e.g., James 5:7–12), but so is the goal of redemption: restoration, specifically of the believer (James 1:2–4; also 1:17–18).[44] Notice also that the restored person in James is a person who acts. Faith and works are tied together prominently in this epistle, and this is because James wants to demonstrate the practical outworking of being made new in Christ (James 2:14–26). Further, this outworking of faith is related often to social justice, ministry, and equality in James (esp. 1:27; also 2:1–9, 15–16; 5:4, 13–15). Once again this expectation that God will apply Christ's work not only sinners reconciled to himself but also the effects of sin is found clearly elsewhere in Scripture (e.g., Isaiah 61; Rev. 21:4). Thus the gospel for James has restorative effects in the believer's life[45] and specifically in his relationship with society and culture.

The Epistles and the Defeat of Evil

Lastly, the gospel includes victory over evil in the epistles. The book of Romans ends with a promise that God "will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Rom. 16:20), a clear allusion to Gen. 3:15 and the promise that the seed of woman will crush the serpent's head.[46] Here in Romans, not only has Christ crushed the serpent but also now the church participates in that victory.[47] Specifically, they crush Satan's head through watching out "for those who cause division" (Rom. 16:17) and by being obedient and being wise "as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil" (Rom. 16:19; another phrase that has clear overtones of Gen. 3). Thus the very end of the restoration begun by the atonement of Christ in Romans comes with the victorious crushing of God's enemies by the church through the power of Christ.

Colossians also has an explicit focus on Christ's victory over his enemies. Christ's work of atonement is again directly related to another aspect of the gospel, his victory over evil. He rescues his people from darkness in 1:13; both creates and has authority over all things in 1:14–15; is the "head of all rule and authority" in 2:10; and disarms the rules and authorities and puts them "to open shame, by triumphing over them" in 2:15. Further, each of these references to Christ's authority over all things is directly related to his

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[44] Although the entire cosmos is not in view here, we should remember Rom. 8:23; the restoration of human beings is the firstfruits, or promise, that all of creation, too, will be restored.

[45] Interestingly, James ends in 5:19–20 with the physical restoration of the believer, something that in the Gospels points to God's restoration of creation. See Christopher Morgan, *A Theology of James: Wisdom for God's People* (Explorations in Biblical Theology; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), pp. 165–68, and esp. p. 167.

[46] G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology,* p. 99.

[47] See also Rev. 12:17; the phrase " … her offspring, keep the commandments …" is a direct allusion to Gen. 3:15 in the LXX.

death and resurrection in each case. Thus his work of atonement, and specifically his forgiveness of "all our trespasses" and canceling "the record of debt" through "nailing it to the cross" (2:13–14), is the means by which he defeats the enemies of God and his people. The beginning of Hebrews is especially full of references to Jesus' victory over evil and place as the ruler of all creation through the citations of and allusions to Num. 24:14–20; Ps. 2:8–9; and Psalm 8.[48] James is less explicit about Christ's defeat of evil,[49] although the eschatological trajectory of 1 Thessalonians–Jude includes Christ's return as the final defeat of the church's and God's enemies (see esp. 2 Peter 2; Jude).

In the epistles, then, and especially in key places in the shape of the NT letters, the three major aspects of the gospel are found. Interestingly, Romans and Colossians, so pivotal for the Pauline corpus, contain all three. Hebrews focuses on atonement as the motivation for ethical living, and Hebrews and James note how the work of Christ is the means by which all things will be restored. The picture presented by this exploration is that the epistles, and especially those in prominent canonical positions, agree with the Gospels and Revelation: the gospel is a threefold work of atonement, victory, and restoration, with restoration as the goal, victory as the consequence, and atonement as the means of redemption.

Conclusion

The Need for a Response

To this point, not much has been said about the individual aspect of the gospel. The fact that this has not been mentioned does not mean that it is not prominent, though. To the contrary, the need for a personal response by each individual who hears the announcement of Christ's work is clear throughout the NT and in each of the canonical points that have been discussed thus far. The gospel is not only the threefold work of Christ; it is also the means by which one responds to what the Lord has done, the invitation and means to become a part of the people of God.[50] We see the authors of the Gospels (e.g., John 20:30–31) and Jesus in those Gospels calling for a response to his

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[48] G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Theology*, p. 142.

[49] Though see 1:9–11, 15; 2:8–13; 4:11–12; 5:1–6, 7–12 for implicit language about Christ's victory and its implications for believers. Thanks to Chris Morgan for his help in working through James' view of the gospel.

[50] "[The Gospel] is the Good News about the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14–15). It is the Good News concerning God's Son, Jesus the Messiah, who is Saviour and Lord (Rom. 1:3–4; II Cor. 4:3–6). It is the Good News about the historical Jesus – his death for our sins and his resurrection on the third day (I Cor. 15:1–5). And it is the Good News about a radically new kind of community, the people of God, who are already empowered to live according to the standards of the New Age (Eph. 3:17)." Ronald J. Sider, "Evangelism, Salvation, and Social Justice: Definitions and Interrelationships," in *International Review of Mission* 64/255 (1975), pp. 251–67.

message in the Gospels (e.g., Mark 1:14–15) and exhorting his hearers to hear and respond carefully (e.g., Luke 8:7–19). The church in Acts, from its inception to Paul's imprisonment, calls for responses from those who hear the announcement of Christ's work (e.g., Acts 2:17–41, esp. vv. 38–40; 28:23). The epistles again recognize the necessity of an individual response to the gospel work of Jesus (e.g., Rom. 10: 5–17), as does Revelation (e.g., Rev. 13:9–10 and its exhortation to turn away from the beast and to turn to Christ). Thus, from beginning to end the NT affirms the gospel as not only the announcement of what Jesus has done but also the call for a response to that announcement.

The Narrative Gospel

The Gospel and the New Testament Narrative

In the exploration of the shape of the New Testament, we have seen that at every point the gospel is defined as the restoration of all things brought about by God's victory over evil through his Son's payment for sin on the cross and vindication of new life in his death and resurrection. It is, in other words, the narrative of God's redemptive act through his Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. The beginning of the NT, the Gospels and Acts, points to this threefold work through the use of Old Testament narratives, the nature of Jesus' life and work, and especially through the canonical placement of John prior to Acts because of the narratively continuous focus on new creation. Likewise, Revelation at the end of the NT shows that Christ's work of atonement both defeats Satan and his servants and also restores the entire cosmos in Revelation 21–22. Finally, the epistles, and especially those placed at canonically significant points, clearly teach that Christ's death and resurrection accomplishes victory over evil, allows the church to participate in that victory, and restores individual believers, the collective people of God, and the entire cosmos including society and culture. Furthermore, the narrative includes not only the announcement of Christ's work but also the call to hear it and respond (e.g., Rom. 10:5–17). This is the entire point of the epistles: Christ has done his work and will complete it when he returns, and you who have responded ought to live accordingly. The fact that the church responds to and calls others to respond to the announcement of Jesus' work cannot be separated from that work itself. Jesus did not come to claim victory, forgive sin, and redeem creation simply to do it, but so that he might, through that work, claim a people for himself. Thus not only Christ's work but also the need for and actual response to it is included in the biblical gospel.[51]

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[51] John Dickson, *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission: Promoting the Gospel with More Than Our Lips* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), pp. 139–40.

The Gospel and the Old Testament Narrative

Furthermore, defining the gospel as including atonement, restoration, and victory fits with the Old Testament covenants and the narrative of the Bible as a whole. As Roy Ciampa has argued, the Scriptures move from creation to sin and exile to redemption to new creation.[52] Thus, the narrative of the Bible along with the canonical shape of the New Testament points to the gospel including not only forgiveness of sin but also restoration of all things and victory over evil through that payment for sin.

The Goal of the Narrative

A final, and perhaps the most important, aspect of the shape of the New Testament canon and the implications of the gospel message is the stated goal of Christ's work. At every stage of the biblical story, the purpose of redemption is so that God's people can dwell with him for eternity. God says again and again, "I will be their God and they will be my people" (e.g., Exod. 6:7; Lev. 26:12; Ruth 1:16; Isa. 52:6; Jer. 31:33; Matt. 1:23; John 1:14; Rev. 21:3). In terms of the shape of the New Testament canon, notice that "God with us" occurs at the beginning of the first Gospel (Matt. 1:23) and the repetition of the Old Testament refrain quoted above occurs in the final chapters of the last book of the New Testament. The purpose of the coming of Christ, both the first time (Matthew 1) and the second (Revelation 21), is so that God's people can finally and complete dwell with him without the hindrance of sin and evil. As one popular writer has put it, "God is the Gospel."[53]

Thus when defining "gospel" through the lens of the canonical shape of the NT, we see that Christ's life and work, its proclamation by the church, and the call for an individual response are all part of that definition. The term "gospel" therefore " . . . embraces both the objective content that forms the substance of the Christian faith (Jesus' person and work as saving event), the present effectiveness of that substance as a living determinant of the human situation, and the proclamation of the content and its effect."[54] It is the an-

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[52] Roy Ciampa, "The History of Redemption," in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity* (eds., Scott Hafemann and Paul House; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), pp. 254–308. See also T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*; G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology,* pp. 29–186 and esp. pp. 129–160; Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained,* pp. 13–86; Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God,* e.g. pp. 62–65; N. T. Wright, *Paul,* p. 114, pp. 119–22, pp. 130–53.

[53] John Piper, *God is the Gospel: Meditation on God's Love as the Gift of Himself* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005); see also Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel*, pp. 92–93.

[54] John Webster, "Gospel," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (ed., Kevin J. Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), pp. 263–64. See also Graeme Goldsworthy's definition: "The word *gospel*, then, is used in several ways. First, the NT uses it to describe the heart of the OT promises of salvation. Secondly, it is used of the saving event of Jesus of Nazareth as the grounds of salvation for all who believe. Thirdly, it designates the proclamation of that saving event as the means by which people are confronted with the truth about Christ." Graeme Goldsworthy, "Gospel," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring*

nouncement that Christ has conquered evil, atoned for sin, and restored creation through his life, death, resurrection, ascension, and future return. And it is the call of all those who hear that announcement to turn in repentance and faith in acknowledgment of King Jesus so that in doing so they may be forgiven of sin and therefore become part of his church, kingdom, and restored creation.

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the Unity and Diversity of Scripture (eds., T. Desmond Alexander et al.; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2000), p. 524.