

How Did Luke Understand “the Name of Jesus” and “in the Name of Jesus”?

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Abstract

“The name of Jesus” in Acts studied against the ubiquitous backdrop of magic in the first-century world shows that while Luke was aware of magical practices, his usage of “the name of Jesus” is more akin to the Old Testament use of the name of Yahweh to express the very person or presence of Yahweh. Far from being a magical incantation, “the name of Jesus” reminds the readers of the active presence of Jesus, who validates the apostolic ministry and is the source of saving authority-power, disclosed in the the formula, “in the name of Jesus.”
(*Keywords: Luke-Acts, Greco-Roman World, magic, name, power, authority*)

I. Introduction

The use of “the name of Jesus,” particularly its connection with salvation, is one of the major themes in Luke-Acts.¹ After returning from their missionary journeys with joy, the seventy report and say to Jesus, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name” (Luke 10:17). As the risen Lord Jesus Christ commissions his disciples to proclaim repentance for the forgiveness of sins ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ² (Luke

¹ In the New Testament, the term ὄνομα occurs 234 times in 214 verses. The term ὄνομα occurs dominantly in Lukan writings. In Luke, ὄνομα refers to Jesus eight times (1:31; 2:21; 9:48, 49; 10:17; 21:8, 12, 17) and to God (1:49) and only one time does it refer to the risen Lord (24:47). Out of 34 times, in Luke, ὄνομα refers to God four times (1:49; 11:2; 13:35; 19:38). In Acts, interestingly, ὄνομα occurs mostly in chapter nine, Paul’s conversion story. It applies to Jesus Christ 31 times, to the name of a person 25 times, and is used for persons twice (1:15; 18:15). Out of sixty times, however, ὄνομα refers to God only twice (15:16, 17). See further R. L. Mowery, “Lord, God, and Father: Theological Language in Luke-Acts,” *SBL Seminar Papers, 1995* (ed. E. Lovering Jr.; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 82-101.

² The phrase ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ literally means “on the basis of his

24:47), they indeed proclaim the message of salvation ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Acts 2:38). Not only do they speak (Acts 4:17; 5:40) and teach (Acts 4:18; 5:28) and baptize ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Acts 2:38),⁴ but they also perform “miracles” ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ (Acts 3:6; 4:10). As signs and wonders took place *through* (διὰ) the name of Jesus (Acts 4:30), so also salvation is received *through* (διὰ) the name of Jesus (Acts 10:43). Philip, too, performs miracles and proclaims “the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12). Furthermore, Paul speaks (Acts 9:27, 28) and performs miracles (Acts 16:18) ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ Ἰησοῦ. Not only do they speak and act “in the name of Jesus,” but they also suffer “for the name.”⁵ Why would they speak and act *in* the name of Jesus, and even suffer *for* the name of Jesus? They believed that salvation would come *through* the name of Jesus Christ.⁶ Peter proclaims, “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Significantly, salvation is no longer limited to the Jews only, but is expanded to the Gentiles⁷ by calling “on the name of the Lord.” As Peter announces, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21). Apparently, the name of Jesus functions as the foundation of the words and actions of the early church because the name of Jesus saves. However, what does “the name of Jesus” or the phrase “in the name of Jesus” signify?⁸

Some scholars have argued that Luke’s use of “the name of Jesus” and the phrase “in the name of Jesus,” particularly its use in healings and exorcisms, is to be understood within the framework of magic. In his article, “The Name of Jesus in the Acts of the Apostles,” Zeisler argues that the name of Jesus has some sort of magical power, particularly in relation to healings and exorcisms, which he calls the “very powerful name to be approached with caution and even awe.”⁹ Since it has

name.”

³ B D 945. 1789. 1891 *pc*; I^{lat} Did read ἐν instead of ἐπί in Acts 2:38. J. A. Zeisler, “The Name of Jesus in the Acts of the Apostles,” *JSNT* 4 (1979): 29, thinks that ἐπί is a better reading since it is used in both Luke 9:48 and 24:47. However, F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 98, prefers ἐν as in Acts 10:48.

⁴ In Acts 10:48, people were baptized ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ and εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ in Acts 8:16 and 19:5.

⁵ Acts 5:41; 9:16; 15:26; 21:13; cf. Luke 6: 22; 21:12, 17.

⁶ Acts 10:43; cf. 2:38; 3:6; 4:12; 22:16.

⁷ Acts 10:45; 13:47; 28:28; cf. Luke 2:32; 24:47.

⁸ H. Bietenhard, “ὄνομα κλη,” *TDNT* 5:271, provides a review of the prepositional combinations in the NT. He understands that the expressions ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι and ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι are closely related and identical in meaning.

⁹ Ziesler, “Name of Jesus,” 34.

magical power, Ziesler claims that Jesus' disciples had used the phrase in the name of Jesus as a magical formula in their healings and exorcisms. Similarly, in his book, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition*, Hull contends that, of all the Synoptic Gospels, Luke is most strongly influenced by Hellenistic magical belief and practice. Hull argues that the magical episodes are representative of Luke's worldview, because Luke believed in magic, saying, "Luke wrote about magic because he saw and believed."¹⁰ Finally, in his article, "Magic in Early Christianity," Aune concludes that not only did Jesus use "magical" techniques, but his disciples also used them. They used the name of Jesus in healings and exorcisms because his name was very powerful.¹¹ This causes Aune to conclude that "'Acts' contains several examples of the magical use of the name of Jesus in healings and exorcisms."¹²

In his article, "Magic in the Biblical World," Yamauchi points out, "There can be no doubt that both the Old Testament and the New Testament were born in environments permeated with magical beliefs and practices."¹³ Indeed not only Pliny's description of magical beliefs and practices in *Natural History* and the second century Apuleius's *Apologia* against the charge of sorcery, but also the Greek Magical Papyri, the *tabellae defixionum* (curse tablets), amulets, ostraca, and "magical" apparatuses clearly disclose such beliefs and practices. In fact, even Origen himself regarded the name of Jesus as a very powerful name so that it was effective even when bad men used it.¹⁴ In the introduction to *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, Betz states, "Magical beliefs and practices can hardly be overestimated in their importance for the daily life of the people."¹⁵ Apparently, magic flourished in the Greco-Roman religions although its practices and practitioners were generally illegal throughout the history of the Roman Empire.¹⁶ In fact, Jesus of Nazareth himself was clearly charged or labeled as a practitioner of magic and sorcery by his contemporaries¹⁷ and by later critics.¹⁸

¹⁰ J. M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (London: SCM, 1974), 87.

¹¹ D. E. Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," *ANRW* 23.2:1539.

¹² Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," 1538. Cf. Acts 3:6, 16; 4:7, 10, 30; 16:18; cf. 9:34; 19:13.

¹³ E. M. Yamauchi, "Magic in the Biblical World," *TynBul* 34 (1983): 169.

¹⁴ *Contra Celsum* 1.6; Cf. Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," 1545.

¹⁵ H. D. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), xli.

¹⁶ Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," 1518.

¹⁷ Matt 9:15; 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15; John 7:20.

¹⁸ Celsus, as cited in Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.28.

Given the severe negative implications of being associated with magical practice, it was necessary for the authors of the New Testament to demonstrate that the activities of Jesus and his disciples were not magical in either character or form. This was particularly important for Luke, because Luke refers to the use of “the name of Jesus” and of the phrase “in the name of Jesus” in healings and exorcisms, which could look very much like magical practice.¹⁹ These resemblances require us to consider the problem of defining magic, if we are to provide a satisfactory account of the use of Jesus’ name in Luke-Acts. How do we define magic, and in particular, how do we distinguish it from miracles (and vice versa)? How did Luke and his readers understand magic? What do the name and the phrase “in the name of Jesus” signify? In this paper, we will study “the name of Jesus” and the phrase “in the name of Jesus” not from an outsider’s position (*etic*), but from an insider’s perspective (*emic*).

II. What Is Magic?

The word “magic” comes from the Greek μαγεία. Delling has defined μαγεία as the “activity of the μάγος,” and μαγεύω (Acts 8:9) as “to belong to the order of μάγοι” (Matt 2:1) and “to do the work of the μάγος” (Matt 2:7, 16; Acts 13:6, 8),²⁰ and so it might be helpful to recount the nature and function of μάγος.

In general, the magician is portrayed negatively in the Bible, and understood figuratively as a “deceiver” and “seducer.”²¹ Yamauchi observes that as early as the fifth century B.C. the word μάγος came to have the pejorative sense of “sorcerer” or “quack,” and was thus applied to the activities of Simon in Acts 8:9-11, and of Elymas in Acts 13:6-8.²² Betz views the term “magician” negatively, and writes, “People want to believe, so they simply ignore their suspicions that magic may all be deception and fraud. . . . In many crucial areas and in many critical situations of life, deception is the only method that really works. . . . Of course, it is all deception.”²³ However, it is important to note that the activity of the μάγοι is portrayed positively in Matthew 2:1, where the μάγοι demonstrate supernatural insight or power(s).²⁴ Charlesworth

¹⁹ See S. R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 3.

²⁰ G. Delling, “μάγος κλη.,” *TDNT* 4:359.

²¹ Delling, *TDNT* 4:356.

²² Yamauchi, “Magic in the Biblical World,” 175.

²³ Betz, *Magical Papyri*, xlvi.

²⁴ During the Hellenistic period the word *magi* came to denote astrologers (Yamauchi, “Magic in the Biblical World,” 175).

notes that Matthew himself, or another Jewish Christian before him, was influenced by astrological predictions.²⁵

In other contexts, the μάγοι were "members of the Persian priestly caste," showing that the term can be used in a positive sense.²⁶ A third use of the term "magician" refers to a person who exercises "magic," and whose arts are connected with the name of a Persian magus, Ost(h)anes.²⁷ A fourth use is provided by Bauer, who defines μάγος as "a wise man and priest, who was an expert in astrology, interpretation of dreams and various other secret arts."²⁸ Yet Gordon views the "magician" sociologically, and believes that the aims of the "magician" are entirely anti-social. He writes, "[The magician] destroys decency, custom and law; he offends the gods; but most of all he threatens the hierarchy of the politico-social order."²⁹ Finally, μάγος is generally defined as "a possessor and user of supernatural knowledge and ability."³⁰ It is noteworthy that, whether the term is understood positively or negatively, *all* scholars mentioned above acknowledge the existence of magic and its practice(s), as if the invisible knowledge or power(s) of magic and its operational space can be visualized and do unfold within the visible world. This shows that magic cannot merely be explained etymologically and linguistically, but must be understood phenomenologically.

III. How Is Magic Perceived in Luke-Acts?

Perhaps a brief account of recent studies on this subject will shed light on how Luke and his readers understood magic. First, though he contends that Luke used "the name of Jesus" as a magical power and the phrase "in the name of Jesus" as a magical formula,³¹ Ziesler fails to show how Luke understood magic, and why he used "the name of Jesus" and "in the name of Jesus" in the way that he did. Ziesler simply relies on Hull's view of magic, without closely examining his magical materials.

Hull defines magic as a belief in invisible powers which are linked by invisible bonds of sympathy to visible symbols, and that knowledge of these powers, sympathies, antipathies and symbols makes it possi-

²⁵ OTP 1:478.

²⁶ Delling, *TDNT* 4:356.

²⁷ Delling, *TDNT* 4:357.

²⁸ BDAG 484.

²⁹ R. Gordon, "Religion in the Roman Empire: The Civic Compromise and Its Limits," in *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World* (ed. M. Beard and J. A. North; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 255.

³⁰ Delling, *TDNT* 4:357.

³¹ Ziesler, "Name of Jesus," 32.

ble to influence the supernatural world. He writes, “The art of magic is to collect such knowledge and apply it correctly so as to swing the enormous forces of the universe in the desired direction.”³² After examining various examples of invocation and ritual performance from the Hellenistic period and from magical papyri, he claims that Luke, of all the gospel writers, was most strongly influenced by Hellenistic magical belief, and that he put strong emphasis on the existence of angels and demons, and particularly on the power of demons. Hull therefore claims that Luke’s worldview was magical.³³ Hull seems to be right in claiming that Luke believes in invisible powers and its operational (visible) spaces. But as others point out, Hull’s study is problematic in many areas.³⁴ Hull mainly probes how “magical” belief and practice influenced the transmission and redaction of the miracle stories in the gospels, but he fails to prove that any link exists. He disregards the worldview of all sorts of participants as “irrelevant” and “unimportant.”³⁵ That is, he ignored the important function of *all* participants who actually modified and redacted the synoptic traditions based on their magical understanding of the world.

Aune has taken a somewhat different approach to Hull. He rejects the concept of magic defined “in opposition to religion as ritual procedures for manipulating and coercing supernatural beings for utilitarian

³² Ziesler, “Name of Jesus,” 37-8. Generally, magicians used various forms of ritual and pronounced all kinds of names of gods. H. Koester, *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age I* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1982), 380.

³³ Garrett observes that Hull’s notion of a magical worldview goes back to the works of Edward B. Tylor and James G. Frazer. Garrett, *Demise of the Devil*, 27-8, also notes that Hull works mainly with an observer-oriented (“etic”) definition of magic, which is imposed from the outside, by the modern observer, in contrast to a subject-oriented (“emic”) definition of magic, which is imposed from the inside. Hull also totally ignores the apocalyptic worldview of Luke, who believed and waited for the kingdom of God and salvation of his faithful people (Luke 4:43; 9:2; 11:20; 18:24; Acts 1:3; 14:22; 28:28, 31).

³⁴ P. J. Achtemeier, “The Lucan Perspective on the Miracles of Jesus: A Preliminary Sketch,” *JBL* 94 (1975): 558, rejects such claims and argues, “The Jesus of Luke appears less influenced by magical practice than the Jesus in Mark.” He also dismisses the idea that Luke puts special emphasis on the demonic (cf. pp. 556-58). Also note that the nature and function of the angels and demons in the Old Testament seem not to be coercive and manipulative, which was how they were viewed in the second and third centuries. See H. C. Kee, *Medicine, Miracle, and Magic in New Testament Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 118; Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity,” 1543; Garrett, *Demise of the Devil*, 26-29.

³⁵ Hull, *Hellenistic Magic*, 59.

ends,"³⁶ and instead adopts a sociological model. By using such a model, Aune argues, "Magic can be understood neutrally in terms of religion. That is, 'magic' is a form of religiosity which is generally disapproved and which is the object of social stigma and social control."³⁷ Aune defines magic as a "form of religious deviance whereby individual or social goals are sought by means alternate to those normally sanctioned by the dominant religious institution," and argues that "goals sought within the context of religious deviance are magical when attained through the management of supernatural powers in such a way that results are virtually guaranteed."³⁸ Such a definition characterizes magic as a form of social deviance, and incorporates many of the observations of W. J. Goode within the theoretical framework of a structural-functionalist approach to social deviance. Indeed, magic was viewed as a form of social deviance in antiquity. David Gill notes that in the first-century Roman world, magic was perceived as being the opposite of "normal" Roman religious practice.³⁹ For example, Lucan records the case of the female magician, Erichtho, who subverted normal sacrifices by using dead animals and by eating the flesh of a corpse.⁴⁰

For Aune, magic is also a way of exercising social control over something regarded as undesirable. However, we must question his definition of magic, because he assumes that the charges of "magic" were always made by "those within the dominant social structure to label and exert control on those in the ambiguous and unstructured areas of society."⁴¹ Likewise, he assumes that there is always a clear-cut distinction between someone who was a member of "the dominant religious institution" and someone who was "socially deviant."⁴² In this respect, Loren Stucken-

³⁶ D. E. Aune, "The Apocalypse of John and Graeco-Roman Revelatory Magic," *NTS* 33 (1987): 482.

³⁷ Aune, "Apocalypse of John," 482.

³⁸ Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," 1515. W. J. Goode, *Religion among the Primitives* (intro. K. Davis; Glencoe: Free Press, 1951), 50-55, has formulated eleven "non-dichotomous empirical differences" between magic and religion. See also W. J. Goode, "Magic and Religion: A Continuum," *Ethnos* 14 (1949): 172-82.

³⁹ D. W. J. Gill, "Acts and Roman Religion: A. Religion in a Local Setting," in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting* (ed. D. W. J. Gill and C. Gempf; vol. 2 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, ed. B. W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 91; cf. Gordon, "Religion in the Roman Empire," 253.

⁴⁰ Gill, "Acts and Roman Religion," 91; cf. Lucan, *Pharsalia* 6.413-830.

⁴¹ Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," 1523.

⁴² A. F. Segal, "Hellenistic Magic: Some Questions of Definition," in *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions: Presented to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (ed. R. van den Broek and M. J. Vermaseren; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 370.

bruck raises several important questions regarding Aune's attempt to find "meaningful parallels within early Christianity:" (a) "How can concepts such as 'religious deviance' and 'dominant religious institution' be properly defined?" (b) "Is it the broader or more immediate context which determines whether an activity is understood as 'magic'?" (c) "Does Aune's distinction between dominant and deviant practices actually describe the different social contexts for 'magic' in antiquity?"⁴³

In her book *The Demise of the Devil*, Susan Garrett has taken a new approach to the subject of magic. She rightly asserts, "Because Luke's 'discussion' of magic consists of a series of stories set within a narrative framework, the primary context for interpretation must be the narrative world."⁴⁴ She then attempts to show that Luke portrayed magicians such as Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-13), Elymas (Acts 13:6-12), and the seven exorcist sons of Sceva (Acts 19:13-20) as impotent allies of a defeated Satan by using literary criticism within the narrative world. She claims, "Every healing, exorcism, or raising from the dead is a loss for Satan and a gain for God."⁴⁵ Throughout her book, she also illustrates the idea that "Luke regarded Satan as the authority behind all acts of magic, including the summoning of demonic spirits,"⁴⁶ in opposition to the authority-power of God who is behind all acts of the Christian miracle workers. She insists that distinguishing the authority-power of God from that of Satan is the key to understanding how Luke viewed magic, and so she argues that the issue is not about the nature of the exorcisms or healings themselves, but about the source of authority-power by which they are performed (cf. Acts 4:7). Thus she proposes that the source of authority-power can either be good, in which case God is with the exorcist, or evil, in which case the exorcist is himself evil because he has invoked either the spirit of a dead human or a demon for help.⁴⁷ In her conclusion, Garrett offers her own definitions of magic: (1) "magic is the routine mode of action by the antagonists in a spiritual world that is present on all sides at all times;" (2) "magic is a gauge that indicates by its success or failure the strength or weakness of Satan and his forces."⁴⁸

Yet, although Garrett's literary criticism approach to the narrative world of Luke-Acts has made an important contribution to the scholarly discussion of magic, a number of her primary assumptions must be questioned. Because she believes that discerning the source of authority-

⁴³ Loren Stuckenbruck, "Some Thoughts on Magic, Religion, and the New Testament," from his unpublished notes.

⁴⁴ Garrett, *Demise of the Devil*, 35.

⁴⁵ Garrett, *Demise of the Devil*, 45.

⁴⁶ Garrett, *Demise of the Devil*, 66.

⁴⁷ Garrett, *Demise of the Devil*, 44.

⁴⁸ Garrett, *Demise of the Devil*, 107.

power, whether from God or from Satan, is the key to understanding how Luke viewed magic, Garrett proposes that if it is good, then it is from God, and if it is evil, then it is from Satan. But how can concepts such as "good" and "evil" properly be defined? And who can define what is "good" and what is "evil"? Furthermore, her definitions of magic seem somewhat ambiguous. She assumes that every healing, exorcism, or raising from the dead is performed, not by the power of Satan, but by the power of God. But if Satan cannot perform any signs or wonders, what sort of authority-power does he have, and why does Luke portray him as a powerful being? Moreover, although the name of Jesus is one of the principle attributes of salvation, as granted by Jesus' disciples in Luke-Acts, Garrett simply ignores it, and particularly its relationship to the dynamic movements of release (miracles) by which the kingdom of God is created and proliferates. That is, she fails to interpret the function of the name of Jesus from the geographical (temporal-spatial) perspective of Luke-Acts.

To sum up, Ziesler, Hull, and Aune categorize the New Testament data from an observer-oriented (*etic*) perspective. Although they recognize the importance of the invisible powers and its realities, they over-emphasize the idea that Luke's use of "the name of Jesus" should be understood within the framework of magic, and ignore the issue of how Luke and his readers perceived magic within their own particular contexts. Although Garrett's approach is helpful in seeing how Luke and his readers understood magic, her definitions of magic and the criteria she uses for distinguishing between the sources of authority-power are ambiguous. She also downplays the significance of the name of Jesus, and particularly its relationship to the authority-power of Jesus by which Jesus' disciples acted and moved. Thus, together these scholars fail to demonstrate the important connections between the name of Jesus, the saving authority-power of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and God. They also neglect the purpose of Luke's application of "the name of Jesus" and the phrase "in the name of Jesus" in the context of his soteriology.

IV. How Did Luke View Magic?

In this section, I want to investigate how Luke viewed magic and its activities, and inscribed them within the narrative world of Luke-Acts. The term "magic" is rarely used in Luke-Acts,⁴⁹ and Luke has provided virtually no information about the nature of magic nor any detailed

⁴⁹ In fact, in Luke-Acts, the noun *μαγεία* is used only once (Acts 8:11), the verb *μαγεύω* is used only once (Acts 8:9), and *μάγος* occurs only twice (Acts 13:6, 8).

descriptions of magical practices. However, he does report several magical activities,⁵⁰ suggesting that Luke knew of magical power and its activities. In fact, at times he clearly makes a determined effort to distance himself from magical practices,⁵¹ whereas he narrates a number of miracle accounts, which look magical, in a positive way.

However, the evidence in Luke-Acts itself seems inconsistent. Luke narrates a number of events as miracle, even though they look magical. Consider Luke's accounts of the sudden deaths of Ananias and Sapphira after Peter's abusive words (Acts 5:3-11), the cursing of Elymas (Acts 13:10-11), and the healings and exorcisms accomplished by Peter's shadow (Acts 5:15-16) and by Paul's handkerchief (Acts 19:12). At first sight, these conflicting data seem to indicate that Luke does not know much about magic and its practices. However, not only does Luke seem to have been well acquainted with magical power and its realities, but he also attempts to differentiate his treatment of the soteriological formula from that of the magicians. For example, in Acts 19:13, Luke uses a regular magical adjuration, ὀρκίζω,⁵² instead of the more usual exorcism terms, ἐξέρχομαι⁵³ and ἐκβάλλω,⁵⁴ in order to differentiate Christian exorcisms from that of the magicians. Indeed, the Jewish exorcists used the typical magical adjuration, ὀρκίζω, to mean a charm or spell efficacious against those who had evil spirits (Acts 19:13).⁵⁵ But Luke never uses ὀρκίζω in connection with Christian exorcisms.

Further, both a double accusative (ὀρκίζω ὑμᾶς τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὃν Παῦλος κηρύσσει) that comes after ὀρκίζω and the phrase "to name over" (ὀνομάζειν ἐπὶ) have magical connotations.⁵⁶ Moreover, as Deissmann

⁵⁰ Acts 8:9-13, 24; 13:6-12; cf. Luke 9:49; 11:19.

⁵¹ The episodes of Magus (Acts 8:9-13, 24), the magician Elymas (Acts 13:6-12), the seven exorcist sons of Sceva (Acts 19:13-20), and the public burning of the "magical books" by the Christians in Ephesus (Acts 19:19) clearly put that beyond doubt.

⁵² Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," 1531-32 argues that the usual form of "magical" adjuration is ὀρκίζω. Kee, *Medicine, Miracle, and Magic*, 107, also notes that the regular terms for "magical" adjuration are ὀρκίζω and the more emphatic ἐξορκίζω. Indeed the use of ὀρκίζω is found in PGM 4.3019-20. See A. Deissmann, *Bible Studies* (trans. A. Grieve; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1901), 281; A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (trans. L. Strachan; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1910), 260.

⁵³ Luke 4:35, 36, 41; 8:2, 29, 33; 11:14, 24; Acts 8:7; 16:18.

⁵⁴ Luke 9:40, 49; 11:14, 15, 18, 19, 20; 13:32.

⁵⁵ The word ὀρκίζω is used only once elsewhere in the New Testament. The demon uses it against Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by God, do no torment me" (Mark 5:7).

⁵⁶ C. K. Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles II, 15-28* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 908; Garrett, *Demise of the Devil*, 92 and 153 n. 19.

noted earlier,⁵⁷ the term *πράξεις* in Acts 19:18 may refer to magical practices found in *PGM*.⁵⁸ Finally, the word *περίεργα* in Acts 19:19 refers to magical practices, and the term *τὰς βίβλους* may refer to magical or magic books.⁵⁹ Hence, as his careful treatment of these various magical terms indicates, Luke is familiar with magic and its practices. At the same time, though Luke attempts to distance himself from magical practices, he positively reports a number of miracle narratives,⁶⁰ which look magical. These contradictions do not seem to suggest that Luke was naïve about magic and its practices, but rather indicate that his understanding of magic simply differs from that of modern readers.

To give one example, Luke hardly makes any distinction between miracle and magic in his writings because a clear-cut distinction between the two was rarely made in antiquity.⁶¹ Also, Luke positively reports that good results and supernatural power (insight) can be attained by magical practice although he does not promote magical practice. For example, when the disciples attempt to stop someone who had used the name of Jesus in exorcism (Luke 9:49), Jesus tells them not to prevent him, but to allow him to practice it (Luke 9:50). In Acts 16:16, Luke also records the case of a certain slave girl, who testified that Paul and his companions were bondservants of the Most High God and proclaimed the way of salvation (Acts 16:17). Although she had a spirit of divination and made a lot of money for her masters, Paul made no attempt to release her from the demon instantly. Instead, Luke shows the Apostle can utilize her power of foreseeing in a positive way. When Paul eventually releases her from the spirit of divination, he does so "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 16:18).⁶² Note that Paul releases her from the spirit when he has become greatly annoyed and not because of her magical practice.

Elsewhere in his gospel Luke certainly employs the demonic supernatural power, which speaks through the mouths of the people possessed, in a positive way. That is, demons testify that Jesus is "the Holy One of God" (Luke 4:34), "the Son of God" (Luke 4:41), "the Messiah" (Luke

⁵⁷ Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, 323 n. 5.

⁵⁸ J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 651.

⁵⁹ *PGM* III. 424; XIII. 739.

⁶⁰ Acts 5:3-11, 15-16; 13:10-11; 19:12.

⁶¹ Betz, *Magical Papyri*, xli.

⁶² Barrett, *Acts II*, 785, interprets the phrase *πνεῦμα πύθωνα* as "a pythonic spirit" and perceives it as "not a good spirit." But the issue is not whether it is good or bad, but the invisible power and its operational space by which the slave girl speaks and acts, disclosing that the invisible power is visualized and presented as a part of the visible world.

4:41), and “the Son of the Most High God” (Luke 8:28). Although he does not *promote* magical practices, then, Luke nevertheless recognizes the reality and efficacy of the invisible powers, and turns the supernatural knowledge gained from the invisible powers of Satan to good in order to make his theological (or Christological) point. Of course, there are times when Luke seems to distance himself from such practices in Acts, particularly when it appears to challenge the authority-power of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and/or God.

V. What Does “the Name of Jesus” Signify?

Before answering this question, it would be helpful to list several ways in which “the name of God” is portrayed in the Old Testament.⁶³ To begin with, there is no clear difference between the name and the person—the very essence—of God. As the author of Ecclesiastes writes, “Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what human beings are” (Eccl 6:10a). Fossum writes, “The name expresses the living essence, the vital energy, the power of the human person or the deity.”⁶⁴ Apparently, the name and the person of Yahweh are interconnected, like two sides of one coin. In fact, von Rad argues that the name of God is “a double of his being.”⁶⁵ This simply means that the name stands in parallel to Yahweh himself, and is a substitution for Yahweh:⁶⁶

⁶³ PGM I. 276; IV. 159, 1227.

⁶⁴ J. E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 86.

⁶⁵ G. von Rad, *Theology of the Old Testament II* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1962), 183.

⁶⁶ The name of Yahweh is not to be blasphemed (Lev 24:11, 16; cf. Amos 6:10), misused (Exod 20:7; Deut 5:11), or profaned (Lev 22:2, 32). For his name is good (Ps 52:9; 54:6) and holy (Ps 99:3; 111:9; Isa 57:15) as God is good (1 Chr 16:34; 2 Chr 5:13; Ps 106:1; Jer 33:11) and holy (Lev 11:44, 45; Isa 6:3). Note blaspheming the name is blaspheming God himself (Lev 24:15). For this reason, those who blaspheme the name will be put to death (Lev 24:16). Second, the name of God alone is to be exalted (Ps 148:13; Isa 12:4; cf. Neh 9:5; Ps 138:2) and magnified (2 Sam 7:26; Deut 32:3; 1 Chr 17:24) as God is alone to be exalted (Isa 2:11, 17; 33:5) and magnified (Ps 34:3; 69:30; cf. 138:2). Third, the name of God is to be glorified (Isa 24:15; Ps 86:9, 12) and praised (Ps 113:3) as God is to be glorified (Lev 10:3; Ps 22:23; Isa 24:15; 66:5; Hag 1:8) and praised (2 Sam 22:4; Ps 48:1; 96:4). Indeed, glory (1 Chr 16:29; Ps 96:8; 115:1) and praise (לְהַלֵּל) (1 Chr 29:13; Ps 22:22; 69:30; 74:21; 145:2; 148:5; 149:3; Joel 2:26) are ascribed to the name as glory (Isa 24:15) and praise (1 Chr 16:4, 36; Ps 104:35; 106:1; Isa 62:9; Jer 20:13) are due to God. Finally, the name of God is to be known (Isa 52:6; Jer 16:21) and loved (Isa 56:6; Ps 5:11; 69:36; 119:132) as God is to be known (Exod 6:7; 10:2; 29:46; Lev 23:43; 1 Kgs 20:28;

the name signifies the person of God. In this regard, as God acts, so does the name act; as God protects, so does the name protect (Ps 91:14); as God judges, so does the name judge;⁶⁷ as God is near, the name of God is near.⁶⁸ Interestingly, the phrase "I am the LORD" is another way of saying, "My name is the LORD."⁶⁹ In short, the name of God signifies the person, the very essence, and the authority-power of God.⁷⁰

Similarly, as we shall see, in Luke-Acts the name of Jesus signifies the person, the very essence, presence, work, and the authority-power of Jesus.⁷¹ Acts 9:34 is an excellent example to support this point. In Acts 9:34, Peter healed the paralyzed man, and said, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you" (cf. 3:16). The text clearly indicates (1) that it is Jesus Christ, who stands behind his name, who heals Aeneas, and (2) that Luke presents the name of Jesus as a connecting event by which Jesus and people are interconnected. Significantly, the whole soteriological mission of the apostolic church is based upon the name of Jesus, which comes to define the kingdom of God. O'Toole rightly argues that the name of the risen Lord Jesus Christ replaces his (physical) absence in Acts.⁷² Its use demonstrates that Jesus is among the people as an invisible presence, and that his person, authority-power, and very essence live on.⁷³ Note also that just as salvation is received through the person of Jesus Christ in Luke, so also salvation is given in/through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in Acts, displaying the interconnection between the person and the name of Jesus. Surely, just as the Lord Jesus is to be called upon (Acts 7:59),⁷⁴ proclaimed (Acts 5:42; 8:35; 11:20), preached (Acts 8:5;

Isa 49:23; Ezek 36:23; 39:7) and loved (Deut 6:5; 10:12; 11:1; Josh 22:5).

⁶⁷ Isa 30:27; cf. Ps 75:1.

⁶⁸ Ps 34:18; 119:151; 145:18; Isa 55:6.

⁶⁹ Exod 3:15b; 15:3; Isa 42:8; Jer 16:21.

⁷⁰ Exod 3:1ff.; 9:16; Ps 54:1; Isa 4:26; Jer 16:21; Dan 2:20.

⁷¹ Bietenhard, *TDNT* 5:271, notes that the name, person, and work of God are integrated with the name, person, and work of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

⁷² See R. F. O'Toole, "Activity of the Risen Jesus in Luke-Acts," *Bib* 62 (1981): 472. In contrast to O'Toole's view, see J. Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 33-4; Ziesler, "Name of Jesus Christ," 28-41.

⁷³ Even though Ἰησοῦς was a common name in the first century, Luke does not propose that *all* the names of Jesus are to be invoked, but only the name "Jesus the Nazarene" (Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 22:8; 26:9; cf. Luke 4:16, 34; 24:19), i.e. the one whom God raised from the dead, made Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:36), and through whom he performed healings and exorcisms (Acts 2:22; 10:38). In Acts 24:5, Tertullus describes the Christians as Nazarenes.

⁷⁴ Cf. Rom 10:12, 14; 2 Tim 2:22. Interestingly, both the Lord God (2 Cor 1:23; Heb 11:16; 1 Pet 1:17) and the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:21; 7:59; 9:14,

9:20), taught (Acts 5:42; 28:21),⁷⁵ and glorified (Acts 3:13; cf. Luke 4:15), and he saves (Acts 5:24; 7:48; 19:9-10) and heals (Luke 4:38-40; 7:21; 18:41), so also the name of Jesus is to be called upon (Acts 2:21; 9:14, 21; 22:16),⁷⁶ proclaimed (Acts 8:12), and glorified (Acts 19:17),⁷⁷ and it saves (Acts 4:12) and heals (Acts 3:16). Note also that the name of Jesus is spoken by way of a rebuke (Acts 26:9; cf. 9:14, 21) and as worthy enough for Christians to suffer and die for (Acts 5:41; 9:16; 15:26; 21:13; cf. Luke 21:12, 17). As the data indicates, Luke describes the name of Jesus as the authority-power, person, very essence, and presence of Jesus by which the kingdom of God is proclaimed and by which all believers act and move. Acts 2:21 and 4:12 will help illustrate this idea.

Acts 2:21

In this text, Peter proclaims, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (cf. Joel 2:28-32). Although in the Old Testament the act of “calling on the name of the Lord” had a technical function in prayer, Acts 2:21 is not a mere description of prayer, as some scholars have proposed,⁷⁸ nor the description of a magical incantation.⁷⁹

21; 22:16; Rom 10:13; 1 Cor 1:2; Jas 2:7) are the objects of invocation in the New Testament. I will investigate the act of “calling on the name of the Lord” in detail elsewhere.

⁷⁵ I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1970), 177, notes that the words “teach” and “proclaim” are used synonymously in Luke-Acts.

⁷⁶ Cf. Rom 10:13; 1 Cor 1:2; Jas 2:7.

⁷⁷ Cf. 2 Thess 1:12.

⁷⁸ Cf. W. C. Van Unnik, “With All Those Who Call on the Name of the Lord,” in *The New Testament Age: Essays in Honor of Bo Reicke* (ed. W. C. Weinrich; Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984), 537.

⁷⁹ With regard to the techniques of invoking the names of the gods, a couple of points need to be made. First, magical techniques seem to be coercive and manipulative, to the point that even the divine powers are subject to magicians’ orders (cf. Kee, *Medicine, Miracle, and Magic*, 108-9). Magicians believed that their requests and demands would be fulfilled when they invoked the names of gods (Bietenhard, *TDNT* 5:250). Second, a series of invocations is the typical characteristic of their magical technique, employed to obtain a desired end. See A. M. J. Festugiere, *L’ideal religieux des Grecs et l’Evangile* (Paris: J. Gabalda et cie, 1932), 284-85. C. K. Barrett, *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents* (New York: Harper, 1961), 32, shows a good example of this from the magical papyri: “I adjure thee by the god of the Hebrews Jesu, Jaba, Jae, Abraoth, Aia, Thoth, Ele, Elo, Aeo, Eu, Jiibaech, Abarmas, Jaba-rau, Abelbel, Lona, Abra, Ma-roia.” Interestingly, Luke does not advocate invoking multiple names of gods in his writings, but insists that people invoke one name and one Lord for salvation

Instead, in this text the dynamic flows of salvation unfold from an individual and national level to a universal level, from a physical presence of Jesus to a spiritual presence, as everyone calls upon the name of the Lord [Jesus], which unfolds the dynamic movements of salvation from Jerusalem across the earth (Acts 1:8; cf. Luke 24:47). Thus the name of Jesus is expressed as a connecting space or central *node* by which all sorts of people come and are interrelated, and by which people must act and move.

Interestingly, from the outset Luke connects both ἐπικαλέω⁸⁰ and σώζω⁸¹ to the name of the Lord and to all persons.⁸² Van Unnik notes that this connection is significant because "it sets the tune for the whole book."⁸³ Marshall writes, "This idea governs the subsequent narrative."⁸⁴ This can clearly be seen in Acts 2–5, and in fact the links between the name of Jesus and salvation and persons are seen throughout Acts,⁸⁵

(Acts 2:21; 4:12), and even uses the singular construction ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in baptism (Acts 2:38) in contrast to the threefold formula of εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος prescribed in Matt 28:19.

⁸⁰ In the NT, the word ἐπικαλέω occurs 3 times in relation to the name of the God (Acts 15:17; 1 Pet 1:17; 2 Cor 1:23; Heb 11:16), and 9 times to the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:21; 7:59; 9:14; 9:21; 22:16; Rom 10:12, 13; 1 Cor 1:2; Jas 2:7). According to Bietenhard, καλέω and ἐπικαλέω are used interchangeably. However, it is noteworthy that ἐπικαλέω is not used in Luke at all. In fact, it only occurs once in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt 10:25). In Acts, ἐπικαλέω occurs 20 times (Acts 1:23; 2:21; 4:36; 7:59; 9:14; 9:21; 10:5; 10:18; 10:32; 11:13; 12:12; 12:25; 15:17; 22:16; 25:11; 25:12; 25:21; 25:25; 26:32; 28:19). Yet it is used only 5 times with reference to the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:21; 7:59; 9:14, 21; 22:16) and once to the name of the Lord God (Acts 15:17). It also occurs 5 times in the undisputed Pauline letters (Rom 10:12, 13, 14; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:23) and 4 times in the rest of the New Testament (2 Tim 2:22; Heb 11:16; Jas 2:7; 1 Pet 1:17).

⁸¹ The word σώζω occurs 17 times in Luke and 13 times in Acts. It occurs twice in combination with the name of the Lord, in Acts 2:21 and Acts 4:12. However, this is the only place that σώζω occurs with ἐπικαλέω.

⁸² Although the word ἐπικαλέω is used five times in Acts in relation to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:21; 7:59; 9:14, 21; 22:16), here in Acts 2:21 is the only place that ἐπικαλέω and σώζω are used together in relation to the name of the Lord.

⁸³ See W. C. van Unnik, "The Book of Acts: the Confirmation of the Gospel," *NovT* 4 (1960-61): 26-59.

⁸⁴ Marshall, *Luke*, 170; R. C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation II: The Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 31.

⁸⁵ Acts 2:38, 40; 3:6, 16; 4:7-12, 17-18, 30; 5:28, 31, 40-41; 7:59; 10:48; 22:16. See Tannehill, *Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts II*, 31, 49, 53-54, 60-61; Bar-

and it is these connections that proliferate the kingdom of God. The word ἐπικαλέω is closely connected with both baptism (Acts 22:16; cf. 2:38) and salvation *in his name* (Acts 7:59; 22:16; cf. 4:12): so Stephen calls on the name of the Lord to effect his own “spiritual salvation” in the midst of suffering and dying (Acts 7:59; 9:14, 21). Note that this is the first time in Acts when the name of the Lord God of the Old Testament is applied to the Lord Jesus.⁸⁶ In Joel 3:5 (LXX), “the name of the Lord” clearly refers to the Lord God, but it refers to the risen Lord Jesus in Acts 2:21 (cf. Acts 2:22, 36):⁸⁷ specifically Jesus the Nazarene (Acts 2:22)⁸⁸ whom God raised from the dead and made both the Lord and the Messiah. Peter declares, “Let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ [Messiah]” (Acts 2:36), suggesting that in Acts 2:21, Luke replaces the name of the Lord *God* with the name of the Lord *Jesus*, to accentuate the name of Jesus and situate it as the connecting space of God’s saving kingdom. Interestingly, the word ἐπικαλέω occurs often in LXX, particularly when people invoke God’s name for salvation from suffering and death.⁸⁹ Yet in Acts it is exclusively used alongside Jesus’ name (Acts 2:21; 7:59; 9:14, 21; 22:16). Hence, Luke portrays Jesus as the Lord and Savior who will save those who call his name (Acts 5:31; 7:59); in fact, Jesus is presented as the Lord of all (Acts 10:36).

Acts 4:12

This powerful statement is a direct response to Acts 4:7 where the Jewish authorities arrested the apostles and questioned the authority and power of their activity, particularly for the healing of the crippled beggar (4:9; cf. 3:6). Before the council, Peter explicitly states that their apostolic activity is based on the name of Jesus because all people must be saved by his name. However, as it will be noted shortly, the name itself does not save but the person, who stands behind his name. In the Old Testament, the name and the power of God are closely related,⁹⁰ but the

rett, *Acts II*, 139.

⁸⁶ J. D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (London: Epworth, 1996), 29; O’Toole, “Activity of the Risen Jesus,” 487; E. M. B. Green, *The Meaning of Salvation* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1965), 127. Against this, see Mowery, “Lord, God, and Father,” 82-101.

⁸⁷ Cf. E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (trans. R. M. Wilson; Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 179; B. R. Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 77.

⁸⁸ Barrett, *Acts II*, 139f.

⁸⁹ Ps 17:3-7; 114:3-4; 117:5; Zech 13:9.

⁹⁰ Exod 9:16; Isa 4:26; Jer 16:21; Dan 2:20; Bar 3:5; cf. Acts 4:7; Rom 9:17.

name of God itself does not save. For example, the Psalter prays, "Save me, O God, by your name, and vindicate me by your might [δύναμαι]" (Ps 54:1). Clearly, God's name is portrayed as powerful because he is behind it.⁹¹ In the present verse, Luke also describes the name of Jesus as powerful by which all people must be saved because Jesus whom God raised from the dead is behind his name (Acts 5:31; 2:36; 4:10). The γάρ clause gives an explicit explanation why there is no salvation in any other person. The precise reason is that no other name has been given to men. The name (ὄνομα) clearly refers to the person (οὐδενί). Note the direct relationship between the person and the name.⁹² As γάρ indicates, the expression of no other name (οὐδὲ ὄνομά ἕτερον) means no other person (οὐκ ἄλλω οὐδενί).⁹³ Here the name of Jesus and the person of Jesus are used interchangeably.⁹⁴ The expressions of οὐκ ἄλλω οὐδενί and οὐδὲ ὄνομά ἕτερον serve to accentuate the idea of one Lord and one name. This expression reiterates Luke 21:8⁹⁵ where Jesus asserts that there is only one true Messiah who must suffer and be raised from the dead (cf. Luke 24:46) although many false messiahs/prophets will come in his name. As Jesus prophesied, he died and was raised from the dead and became Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:36). Indeed, in Acts 4:12, the expression of οὐκ ἄλλω οὐδενί and οὐδὲ ὄνομά ἕτερον indicates the idea of the *one* Lord and *one* name in contrast to the false prophets misusing Jesus' name (power) or the magicians invoking multi-names of gods to achieve their desired ends.⁹⁶ As

⁹¹ Charlesworth, *OTP* 2:717, notes that the name of God was powerful because God was behind it. The concept of the power of God's name in the Jewish magical papyri is different from the biblical view (viz. Exod 3:13-15, Acts 4:9f). In the OT, God's name is considered known, holy, revered, and often ineffable. In the magical papyri the divine name is considered secret and itself full of efficacious powers.

⁹² The adjective pron. m. sg. ἄλλω lit. means "another one" or "another person."

⁹³ As here, the person and the name are linked together in John 5:43, where Jesus complains that people do not receive him who comes in the name of the Father. Yet they receive another person who comes in his own name.

⁹⁴ E. Schweizer, *The Good News according to Luke* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1973), 179-80.

⁹⁵ Cf. Mark 13:6, 22; Matt 24:5, 24; John 5:23.

⁹⁶ From a variety of Jewish and Jewish-influenced texts dating from the late Second Temple period through the early second century C.E., magic, false prophecy, and satanic agency are integrally linked (Garrett, *Demise of the Devil*, 13). The NT (Matt 24:11, 24; Mark 13:22; 2 Thess 2:3-10; Rev 13:11-14; 19:20) and *Didache* 16:4 describe evil figures ("false prophets," "false messiahs," "the lawless one," "the deceiver of the world") who will perform signs and wonders to lead people astray. In Acts, Luke characterizes Bar-Jesus as a magician and a

Zechariah prophesied, “On that day the Lord will be one and his name one” (Zech 14:9). Furthermore, the name here is interlocked with the risen Lord Jesus. In other words, the name that was given for the people envisages Jesus who had given himself for the people. It appears that the name of Jesus was given when Jesus gave himself for the people.⁹⁷ At the Passover meal, Jesus said, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). It appears that remembering Jesus means remembering his name. Indeed, the words and actions of Jesus are remembered by his name as God’s name is remembered by his words and actions in the Old Testament (cf. Exod 3:15; 20:24). The people will know the Lord Jesus Christ by his words and actions (Acts 2:36). Therefore, it seems proper for us to conclude that the name signifies the person, the very essence, the presence, and the authority-power of Jesus and the name itself does not save but the Lord Jesus Christ saves.

VI. What Does the Expression “in the Name of Jesus” Signify?

In Luke-Acts, the phrase “in the name of,” in relation to the name of Jesus, has several forms: (1) ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι, (2) ἐν ὀνόματι, (3) ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι, and (4) εἰς τὸ ὄνομα.⁹⁸ Noticing these variants, and particularly Luke’s inconsistent use of the expression “in the name of Jesus” in baptisms: ἐπί (Acts 2:38),⁹⁹ εἰς (Acts 8:16 and 19:5), and ἐν (Acts 10:48).¹⁰⁰ The phrase is employed in baptism (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5), preaching (Luke 24:47), speaking (Acts 4:17; 5:40; 9:28, 28), teaching (Acts 4:18; 5:28), healings (Acts 3:6, 16; 4:7, 10), and exorcisms (Acts 16:18; 19:13; cf. Luke 9:1-2; 49; 10:17). From this data, we can draw initially the following conclusions: (1) The phrase recalls the saving kingdom of God brought by Jesus, (2) the phrase is used as

magician who attempts to turn the proconsul away from the faith. See Garrett, *Demise of the Devil*, chaps. 1-2 for further discussion on this subject.

⁹⁷ In Exod 3:15, as we have noted, revealing the name of Yahweh to Moses for the people means Yahweh giving himself away for them.

⁹⁸ The phrase ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι applies to the name of Jesus 8 times (Luke 9:49; 10:17; Acts 3:6; 4:7, 10; 9:27, 28; 10:48). The phrase ἐν ὀνόματι occurs once in relation to the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 16:18; cf. Luke 13:35; 19:38 to the name of the Lord God). The phrase ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι occurs 8 times (Luke 9:48; 21:8; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 4:17, 18; 5:28, 40).

⁹⁹ See n. 3 above.

¹⁰⁰ For a fuller discussion on the use of the phrase “in the name of Jesus” in baptism and preaching, see Hak Chin Kim, “Luke’s Soteriology: A Dynamic Event in Motion” (Ph.D. diss., Durham University, 2008), 156-65.

an authorized formula to validate these activities,¹⁰¹ and (3) the phrase discloses the eternal flows of Jesus' authority-power¹⁰² by which his disciples preach, convey salvation, and proliferate the kingdom that he has implemented. These three uses are not isolated, but interrelated. But in this article, I will focus on the second use. As we shall see, the phrase "in the name of Jesus" is used as the authority and power for apostolic activity.¹⁰³

Acts 3:6

Acts 3:6 contains the first healing event in Acts that the apostles perform "in the name of Jesus," and they are successful.¹⁰⁴ Ziesler argues that the phrase in the name of Jesus in Acts 3:6 is used in the sense of a magical formula, because Peter believes that some sort of power would operate when the right name was invoked or claimed.¹⁰⁵ This episode echoes Luke 9:1-2 and 10:1-20, where the connection between Jesus' name and his authority-power is made, showing that when Jesus imparts his authority-power to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing, Jesus imparts his name (cf. Luke 10:17). Thus, in relation to salvation the weight in Acts 3:6 should be given to the phrase "in the name of Jesus," which functions as an authorized formula for performing the apostolic saving ministry (cf. Acts 4:7) to effect the growth of the authority-power of Jesus Christ. In Acts 4:7, the apostles are brought to and questioned by the authorities of the temple, who ask them, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" As the link between name, power and healing in Acts 3:6, 12, and 16 indicates, the dispute is still about the healing and the source of its saving authority-power. That is, the question "by what power or in what name, have you done this?" is about the source of their authority-power and their entire apostolic

¹⁰¹ In the Old Testament, the phrase "in the name of God" signifies the authority and power of God and is used as an "authorization formula" to validate the saving activities of the prophets and priests. As God has commissioned them, so the prophets and priests speak (Exod 5:23; Jer 18:19-20; 20:9; 26:16, 20) and act (Deut 10:8; 18:5, 7; 21:5; 1 Chr 23:13) "in the name of the LORD."

¹⁰² Cf. Luke 1:32-33.

¹⁰³ Acts 3:6, 16; 4:10, 12, 17-18, 30; 5:28, 40-41; 8:12; 9:16, 21, 27, 28; 15:26; 16:18; 19:13, 17; 21:13; 22:16; 26:9). See L. T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1992), 57.

¹⁰⁴ There is an interesting parallel between the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of the disciples in relation to the balance between words and miraculous works. Jesus cures the man with the unclean spirit after he has preached and taught (Luke 3:31ff; cf. 4:14ff); similarly, Peter heals the crippled man after he has preached and taught the people (Acts 3:7ff; cf. 2:14ff).

¹⁰⁵ Ziesler, "Name of Jesus," 32.

activities, which reinforces the idea that the name of Jesus is the basis of the salvific mission and the source of God's authority-power.

Acts 4:10

Here, Peter again lets all the people of Israel know that the healing is to be credited to the name of Jesus Christ, that is, the person of Jesus Christ, reiterating that the person whom they have crucified is the one whom God has raised from the dead. In the name of, or by the power of, this person, the crippled man became whole. The phrase ἐν τούτῳ can be translated as either "in this name" or "in this person." Although ἐν has also been used with ὄνομα, the expression ἐν τούτῳ should be taken to refer to Jesus Christ since the nearer antecedent of ἐν τούτῳ is Ἰησοῦς.¹⁰⁶ In this verse, then, Peter reminds his audience that the crippled man has been healed by the name of Jesus Christ. Put simply, Peter reiterates the fact that it is Jesus Christ, standing behind his name, who has saved the man, because salvation can be found *in* Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 4:12).

Notably, Acts 4:10 is parallel with Acts 13:39, where Paul claims, "Through him [ἐν τούτῳ, "in him"] everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the Law of Moses." This indicates that those who believe *in him* are released from their sins, suggesting that release of sins can be found *in* (Acts 13:39) and be given *through* Jesus Christ (Acts 13:38; cf. 4:10, 12). As in Acts 4:10, the phrase ἐν τούτῳ here reveals the link between the name and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, whom God has raised from the dead (Acts 13:37; cf. 4:10)¹⁰⁷ and made both Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:36). As God performs miracles, wonders, and signs through Jesus (δι' αὐτοῦ) in the third gospel, so he performs them through the name of Jesus (διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος Ἰησοῦ) in Acts 4:30. Since the singular word ἴασις refers back to the healing of the crippled beggar (Acts 3:16), the healing is the primary attribute primarily intended in Acts 4:30.¹⁰⁸ But again the

¹⁰⁶ Although it may be translated as either "in this name" or "in this person," Barrett, *Acts II*, 229, prefers "in this person." However, Ziesler thinks that it refers only to the name, not to Jesus Christ himself. He then argues that if it must refer to the nearest antecedent noun, this would be God and not Jesus. However, this would make the text more confusing than it is. The preposition ἐν never occurs with God in Luke-Acts. Hence, the expression ἐν τούτῳ should be read alongside "Jesus Christ whom God raised from the dead" (ὃν ὁ θεὸς ἤγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν). The crippled man is healed through Jesus Christ who died and was resurrected, not through his name.

¹⁰⁷ NRSV translates ἐν τούτῳ as "by Jesus."

¹⁰⁸ Ziesler, "Name of Jesus," 34, argues that the dispute about healing in Acts 4 primarily becomes a dispute about teaching. However, the central issue is not only about teaching, but also about healing. In fact, the major dispute is

name signifies the person, that is, the saving authority-power of Jesus. By this name, the man is transferred from outside to inside the temple (cf. Acts 3:2-10) and praised God (Acts 3:8). In this sense, not only does the name of Jesus evoke multiple events of Jesus and God, but also it is described as a criss-crossing where God, Jesus, and people intersect.

Acts 16:18

In this episode, a certain slave girl, who has a spirit of divination, testifies about Paul and his companions, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation" (Acts 16:17). It appears that there is no harm done to Paul and his companions by her testimony. Naturally, Paul does not exorcise the spirit of divination. But when she keeps doing this for many days, Paul expels the spirit of divination because she begins to annoy him greatly. Thus, he says, "I command [παραγγέλλω]¹⁰⁹ you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" At that very moment, it comes out of her. Note that the word ἐξῆλθεν is a typical exorcism formula in Luke-Acts,¹¹⁰ and also that exorcism has to do with the authority-power of the person who speaks (Luke 4:36). In Luke 8:29, when Jesus commands the unclean spirit to come out of the man, it obeys him because it recognizes Jesus' authority-power, by which it is expelled. That is, the phrase replaces the figure of Jesus, but both refer to the power that lies beyond, namely God.

Acts 19:13

Here, some Jewish exorcists attempt to use "calling on the name of the Lord" as a magical formula, because to know and use the name of a god are to have a claim on the power of that god.¹¹¹ Likewise, the seven sons of Sceva use such a formula. However, they fail to cast out the evil spirit, and are driven out of the house naked and wounded, because the man possessed by the evil spirit leaps up and overpowers

still the source of the authority and power for apostolic teaching and healing (words and actions).

¹⁰⁹ The word παραγγέλλω is used in the sense of issuing a direct order from an authoritative source, announcing, commanding, or ordering what must be done (see Luke 5:14; 8:29, 56; 9:21; Acts 1:4; 4:18; 5:28, 40; 10:42; 15:5; 16:18, 23; 17:30; 23:22; 23:30). Only twice, out of 15 times, is it used in relation to exorcism.

¹¹⁰ Luke 4:35, 36, 41; 8:2, 29, 33; 11:14, 24; Acts 8:7; 16:18. The word ἐκβάλλω is another exorcism formula (Luke 9:40, 49; 11:14, 15, 18, 19, 20; 13:32).

¹¹¹ Bietenhard, *TDNT* 5:250f

them all because the evil spirit does not recognize their power-authority. The evil spirit says, “I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?” (Acts 19:15). As a result, the name of the Lord Jesus is magnified (Acts 19:17), and many who practiced magic bring out their magical books, worth fifty thousand pieces of silver, and burn them all (Acts 19:19).¹¹² Thus the word of the Lord grows mightily and prevails (Acts 19:20). Furthermore, Luke notes that the name of Jesus cannot be used without faith and the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 3:6, 16).¹¹³

Summary

In summary, just as in the Old Testament, the leaders of the church speak and act “in the name of Jesus” to validate their activity and to disclose the source of their authority-power. By using the phrase, the apostles distance their authority-power from that of men (Acts 5:29; cf. 4:19-20), of the chief priests (Acts 9:14; 26:10, 12), and ultimately, of Satan (Acts 26:18; cf. Luke 4:6). In other words, Luke presents the phrase “in the name of Jesus” as an *authorization formula* to validate the apostolic ministry and as a distinctive mark to disclose the source of apostolic authority-power, namely Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and ultimately, God.

VII. Conclusion

As in Luke’s gospel, Jesus Christ is very much active in Acts through his name because his name signifies the authority-power, the work, the presence, and the risen Lord Jesus himself who heals and saves to those who call upon his name (Acts 2:21; 9:34). Luke shows that an act of calling on the name of Jesus (Acts 2:21) is not a mere description of prayer, of a magical incantation, or even of the Christians themselves. Instead, it unfolds the link between people, salvation, and the name of Lord Jesus (Acts 2:38; 3:6, 16; 4:12; 10:48; 22:16), and anticipates the proliferation of the kingdom of God. Luke also emphasizes one Lord and one name for salvation (Acts 2:21, 36; 4:12) against invoking on multiple names of gods. Finally, by using the name of Jesus, it appears

¹¹² Paul Trebilco notes that the magicians’ books in Acts 19:19 may have contained the famous Ephesian Letters and the sort of material preserved in the magical papyri, such as thaumaturgic formulae, incantations, hymns and prayers (P. Trebilco, “Asia,” in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting* (ed. D. W. J. Gill and C. Gempf; vol. 2 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, ed. B. W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 314.

¹¹³ Luke attempts to demonstrate the important connection between the name of Jesus and faith in him. See n. on Acts 3:6, 16.

that Luke constantly reminds his readers the source of saving authority-power as well as the saving words and actions of Jesus Christ. Therefore, "the name of Jesus" signifies the person, the very essence, the presence, and the saving power-authority of the Lord Jesus, evoking the saving event(s) conveyed by Jesus and his disciples and the promise that God will save whoever calls upon Jesus' name. At the same time, the phrase "in the name of Jesus" is understood as an authorization formula to validate the apostolic ministry and as a distinctive mark to disclose the source of apostolic authority-power, and it unfolds the nomadic flows of Jesus' saving authority-power by which the kingdom of God proliferates.