

VIEWS ON PETER'S USE OF PSALM 16:8–11 IN ACTS 2:25–32*

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THE USE OF PSALM 16 IN ACTS 2 has been a center of controversy and confusion for centuries. The use of this psalm involves questions of beliefs in the Old Testament about the afterlife, the historical development of messianic awareness, the accuracy of the Septuagintal translation, apostolic hermeneutics, and other key biblical issues. Many schools of thought have attempted to explain how Peter interpreted and employed Psalm 16 in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost.

This article traces the history of its interpretation and analyzes seven modern views.¹ The goal is to examine the major lines of support for these positions and to raise key interpretive issues that will be addressed in the subsequent two articles in this three-

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¹ Surveys of modern views may be found in William O. Einwechter, "Peter's Use of Psalm 16:8–11 in Acts 2:25–32" (Th.M. thesis, Capital Bible Seminary, 1982), 17–30; Darrell L. Bock, "Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New, Part 1," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 142 (1985): 209–23; Pierre G. Constant, "Les Citations du Psaume 16 dans les Actes des Apôtres" (M.A. thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1989), 73–108; William J. Hofto, "Psalm 16: An Examination of the New Testament Use of the Old" (Th.M. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1986), 64–70; Scott S. Swanson, "Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament? Why Are We Still Asking?" *Trinity Journal* 17 (1996): 67–76; Gordon Whitney, "Survey of the History of Interpretation of Prophecy: How Interpreters Deal with Peter's Use of Psalm 16 in Acts 2" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, South Hamilton, MA, 1987); Klyne Snodgrass, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New," in *New Testament Criticism and Interpretation*, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 411–14; Harold R. Holmyard III, "Preparation of Israel for Messiah with Regard to Resurrection as Epitomized by Psalm 16 in Acts 2" (Th.M. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1981), 103–21; Rudolph P. Bierberg, "Conserua Me Domine Psalm 16 (15)" (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1945), 94–114; and Matthew Black, "The Christological Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," *New Testament Studies* 18 (1971–1972): 1–14.

part series. The next two articles will consider the original context of Psalm 16 and then its place in the Pentecost sermon of Acts 2.

Caird's paradigm of sense and referent provides a helpful framework for distinguishing among the major views. According to Caird, "sense" is "what is being said," while "referent" is "what is being spoken of."² Most scholars agree that the New Testament interprets Psalm 16 as having the sense of Messiah's resurrection and the referent of Jesus. Significant distinctions surface, though, in scholars' views of the original sense and referent of Psalm 16 and in the proposed connection between the original meaning and the New Testament interpretation.

ANCIENT VIEWS³

Views of key figures throughout the first nineteen centuries of church history set an important background for the modern views of Peter's interpretation of Psalm 16. The early church fathers consistently held that Psalm 16 was messianic. Their arguments were built on the New Testament statements concerning the psalm in Acts 2 and Acts 13 rather than evidence presented from the original Old Testament context.⁴

The Alexandrian School, following its allegorical method, applied the psalm immediately and directly to Christ. Eusebius of Caesarea applied the entire psalm to Christ, except for verses 3–4, which, he said, referred to Christ's saints who had turned from idols to serve Him.⁵ He stated that verse 10 was a glorious prophecy of Christ.⁶ Also Athanasius applied the entire psalm to Christ ("περὶ τοῦ χριστοῦ λέγει"), stating that verse 10 refers to His resurrection and verse 11 to His ascension and glory.⁷

² George B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1980; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 7–37.

³ For surveys of early church views on Psalm 16 see Angel Aparicio Rodriguez, *Tú eres mi bien: Análisis exegético y teológico del Salmo 16. Aplicación a la Vida religiosa* (Madrid: Clarentianas, 1993), 311–16; Moses Stuart, "Interpretation of Psalm XVI," *Biblical Repository* 1 (1831): 61–62; Whitney, "Survey of Psalm 16 Interpretations"; Hansjorg auf der Maur, "Zur Deutung von Ps 15 (16) in der alten Kirche: Eine Übersicht über die frühchristliche Interpretationsgeschichte bis zum Anfang des 4. Jhs.," *Bijdragen* 41 (1980): 401–18.

⁴ Aparicio, *Tú eres mi bien*, 312. See also the study by auf der Maur, "Zur Deutung von Ps 15 (16) in der alten Kirche," 401–18.

⁵ See comments by Stuart, "Interpretation of Psalm XVI," 61–62.

⁶ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Commentary on the Psalms*, in *Patrologiae Graeca*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris: Migne, 1856), 23:153.

⁷ Athanasius, *De titulis Psalmorum*, in *Patrologiae Graeca*, 27:696.

The Antiochene School shunned the allegorical exegesis of the Alexandrian School,⁸ and argued that a psalm must be interpreted literally in its original context. However, because of the Antiochene concept of *theoria*,⁹ this school held that a writer could speak of contemporary and future referents simultaneously. Thus Diodorus of Tarsus said that Psalm 16 spoke of historical Israel and of the future Messiah.¹⁰ Theodore of Mopsuestia understood David to be speaking of himself and Israel historically and of Christ ultimately. David could do this because his words were prophetic prediction, as shown by Peter's explanation.¹¹ These Antiochene interpretations held that both Israel and Messiah were the original referents. Though a detailed explanation by these writers is lacking, their descriptions resemble those of the contemporary typological and single message views.

Later Jerome and Augustine held that the psalm refers directly to Christ. Jerome stated that in the psalm Christ is speaking to God the Father. It has no reference to David at all, but describes Christ's resurrection.¹² Augustine also understood that Christ alone spoke in the psalm. In the psalm Christ spoke in His assumed human nature and described His passion.¹³

Much later, in the Reformation period, Martin Luther said Psalm 16 refers exclusively to Christ, except for verses 3–4, which

⁸ For a general discussion of the interpretive distinctions between these two schools see Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1991), 35–37.

⁹ *Theoria* may be defined as a prophetic vision "in which the recipient saw as intimate parts of one meaning the word for his own historical day with its needs and that word for the future. . . . Both were intimate parts of one total work of God" (Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "The Promise to David in Psalm 16 and Its Application in Acts 2:25–33 and 13:32–37," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 23 [1980]: 222).

¹⁰ Marie Joséphe Rondeau, "Le Commentaire de Diodore de Tarse sur Les Psaumes," *Revue de l'Orient Chretien* 5 (1924): 142. See also Aparacio, *Tú eres mi bien*, 313.

¹¹ Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Expositio in Psalmos*, in *Patrologiae Graeca*, 66:660. See also discussions in Aparacio, *Tú eres mi bien*, 313; and Whitney, "Survey of the History of Interpretation of Prophecy," 8–9.

¹² Jerome, "Vox Christi, vox Christi ad Patrem," in *Psalteries Saint Hieronymi de Hebraica Ueritate Interpretatum* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1960), 151. See also Stuart, "Interpretation of Psalm XVI," 62.

¹³ Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, trans. members of the English Church (London: F. and J. Rivington, 1847), 111. See also Stuart, "Interpretation of Psalm XVI," 62.

refer to saints who obediently follow Christ. The inheritance and lot (vv. 5–6) describe Christ's inheritance in the saints. The instruction described in verse 7 was the inner guidance of His holiness. The resurrected "Holy One" of verse 10 is Christ.¹⁴ Verses 8–11, Luther said, are a literal prophecy of Christ's death and resurrection.¹⁵

Like Luther, Calvin related the psalm directly to Christ. Calvin explained that the parallel terms in 16:10 (לִישׁוּב and חַיָּה) both refer to the power of the grave's destruction. "There is some greater thing expressed in this place than the common redemption or deliverance of the godly."¹⁶ The psalmist then hoped for resurrection. David only hoped and spoke as he saw himself in Christ. David did indeed face corruption in the grave, as noted by Peter. So David did not speak of his own resurrection. Rather he spoke of himself "only so far as he beheld himself in Christ." David prophesied of Christ's resurrection, and so his hope was in the victory that Christ's resurrection brought to all who belong to Him.¹⁷

Therefore in the centuries before 1900 Psalm 16 was understood as speaking primarily of the resurrection of Christ. The writings of the Alexandrian School, Jerome, Augustine, and Luther apply the psalm directly to Christ with no meaning for David. David was merely the author through whom Christ spoke. Though the Antiochene School eschewed Alexandrian allegory, the former saw that the psalm had a historical referent (David or Israel) and also a future referent (Christ).

Though the proposed initial referents differed throughout these centuries, the sense of resurrection remained virtually unchallenged until the early 1900s. At this time, however, tradition concerning Psalm 16 was questioned by scholars such as Hermann Gunkel and S. R. Driver. They argued that the psalmist did not express hope in an afterlife or resurrection, but that he trusted in rescue from a premature death.¹⁸ Gunkel concluded that only

¹⁴ *Luther's Works*, ed. Helmut T. Lehman (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958), 10:104–10. See also *ibid.*, 14:324–25.

¹⁵ Theo Bell, "Martin Luther über Psalm 16 in den 'Operationes in Psalmos,'" *Bijdragen* 41 (1980): 435.

¹⁶ John Calvin, *The Commentaries of John Calvin upon the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Henry Beveridge, trans. Christopher Fetherstone (London: Impensis G. Bishop, 1585; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 101.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁸ Hermann Gunkel, *The Psalms: A Form Critical Introduction*, trans. T. M. Homer (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 51.

through a special view could one find the afterlife or resurrection rather than preservation from premature death.¹⁹

Claims such as those by Gunkel and Driver moved the Pontifical Bible Commission of the Roman Catholic Church in 1933 to address the question of the psalm's interpretation in Acts. The question, as the commission posed it, was whether a Roman Catholic interpreter could interpret Psalm 16 other than how Peter and Paul presented it, namely, as a prophecy of the Messiah's resurrection.²⁰ The commission concluded that it was unlawful to interpret the psalm "as if the holy author did not speak of Jesus Christ's resurrection."²¹

However, this ruling did not prevent subsequent Catholic scholars from concluding that Psalm 16 spoke of something other than Jesus' resurrection.²² Also the commission did not address *how* the psalm speaks of Jesus' resurrection. Therefore modern scholars have offered a variety of explanations for Peter's interpretation of Psalm 16. Where ancient writers interpreted the psalm through New Testament statements, modern scholars begin with the original context in the Book of Psalms and then consider the interpretive relationship between the original context and the New Testament usage.

MODERN VIEWS

Modern scholarship has resulted in seven modern views: Hermeneutical Error, Jewish Hermeneutics, *Sensus Plenior*, Canonical Approach, Typology, Single Message, and Direct Prophecy.

VIEW ONE: HERMENEUTICAL ERROR

This view holds that Psalm 16 contains the psalmist's plea to avoid imminent death, and that Peter's messianic interpretation stems from hermeneutical errors in the Septuagint.

S. R. Driver, one of the earliest proponents of this view, stated that the psalm is "a prayer for God's protecting care, based on the Psalmist's consciousness of the close communion with God which he enjoys, and of which nothing, he feels, can ever deprive him."

¹⁹ Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926), 51.

²⁰ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis: Commentarium Officiale* (Rome: Vatican, 1933), 24:344.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² See discussion of other Roman Catholic scholars by Aparacio and his own exegesis (Aparacio, *Tú eres mi bien*). For an example of a staunch exegetical defense of the Commission's decision, see Bierberg, "Conserva Me Domine Psalm 16 (15)."

The psalmist did not speak of resurrection; instead he wrote about not dying. Indeed, because of undeveloped afterlife theology, the psalmist could not have believed in a future bodily resurrection.²³

Driver asserted that the application of the psalm to Christ “was facilitated by the mistranslations of the Septuagint (‘shall dwell in hope,’ ‘wilt not leave my soul in Hades,’ and ‘to see corruption’).” These errors did not affect Peter’s hearers because they agreed with him concerning the authorship of David and the Davidic lineage of Messiah. Therefore Peter’s arguments were effective for his generation. And though Peter himself believed his interpretation to be correct, the meaning of Psalm 16 “will not support the argument which the Apostles built upon it.”²⁴

Haenchen followed Driver and suggested three other translation shifts: קְבוֹדִי (“my glory”) to ἡ γλῶσσά μου (“my tongue”) in verse 9; אֶרֶץ חַיִּים (“path of life”) to ὁδοὺς ζωῆς (“ways of life”) in verse 11; and קֶחָץ (“pit”) to διαφθοράν (“corruption”) in verse 10. In each he contended that the translation rose from Hellenistic roots and that only by these translation changes could the psalm be viewed as Christological.²⁵

Boers suggested that the Septuagint wrongly rendered קֶחָץ (“in security”) by ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι (“in hope”) in verse 9. He further argued that the intertestamental development of the theological concept of Sheol facilitated the “reinterpretation of Psalm 16.” The Old Testament belief that all who died went to Sheol was replaced by the conviction that the righteous avoided Sheol and went directly to heaven. The translation changes moved the meaning to the future (“security” to “hope”) and to resurrection (“pit” to “corruption”). These changes combined with the individual eschatological developments permitted the apostles to interpret Psalm 16 as speaking of the righteous Messiah being resurrected and not going to Sheol.²⁶

Important questions arise from this view. Did the Septuagint fairly translate the Masoretic text, or was the Septuagint affected by changing theological viewpoints? Did the Septuagint translators

²³ S. R. Driver, “The Method of Studying the Psalter: Psalm XVI,” *Expositor* 11 (1910): 33–35.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 36–37.

²⁵ Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, trans. Bernard Noble and Gerald Shinn (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 1965; reprint, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 181–82.

²⁶ H. W. Boers, “Psalm 16 and the Historical Origin of the Christian Faith,” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 60 (1969): 106.

have a significantly more developed individual eschatology than the psalmist? Could Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, build a crucial apologetic argument on a flawed translation?

VIEW TWO: JEWISH HERMENEUTICS

This view focuses on the process by which Psalm 16 came to be understood as referring to the resurrection of the Messiah through the influence of patterns in early Jewish interpretive techniques.²⁷ Scholars who take this approach state or imply that the original sense of the psalm was a preservation of life in some way. The psalmist himself stood as the original referent. However, through hermeneutical processes, following the practices of then contemporary rabbinics, the psalm came to refer to the Messiah and His resurrection. Scholars most often describe the processes as midrash or pesher.²⁸

“Midrash” generally refers to exposition. Sometimes it means literal interpretation and application, and other times it represents an attempt to go beyond the literal sense and to uncover meanings not readily obvious.²⁹ The ultimate purpose was to contemporize the Old Testament.³⁰ Midrashic exegetical rules included the connection of two or more passages through shared terms or phrases. These passages then were to be interpreted together. This principle was known as *gezerah shawah*.³¹

Pesher interpretation is exemplified in the practices of the Qumran community. They viewed themselves as the chosen generation living in the messianic age. They then understood prophetic texts as speaking exclusively of them and their situation. Their exegetical practices often seemed forced, though they viewed their

²⁷ For a general treatment not discussed below see Daniel Patte, *Early Jewish Hermeneutic in Palestine*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature and Scholars, 1975).

²⁸ The difficulties in accurately defining the terms “midrash” and “pesher” are well-known (see Darrell L. Bock, “Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New, Part 2,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 142 [1985]: 313 and passim). For this overview the definitions of Richard N. Longenecker, a major proponent of this view, are employed (*Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975]).

²⁹ Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 32–33.

³⁰ E. Earle Ellis, “How the New Testament Uses the Old,” in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 203.

³¹ See Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 34. See also J. W. Bowker, *Targums and Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 315; and Craig A. Evans, *Noncanonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 116–18.

expositions as revealing the true mysterious meanings of Scripture.³² Qumran pesher also employed interpretive textual alterations, often based on wordplays, to reveal present fulfillment.³³ Pesher, like midrash, sought to contemporize the Old Testament. The difference between the two was the eschatological implications of pesher.

Doeve discussed Acts 2 and Acts 13 as midrashic speeches on the resurrection of Christ. He sees a complicated midrashic connection in Psalm 16:9 that led a Jewish Christian exegete to link the psalm to Jesus. The term נָל in verse 9 links the psalm to passages where the word is used in conjunction with שְׁעָה.³⁴ This would “call to mind Jesus’ own name, יְהוֹשֻׁעַ.” Doeve also suggested that כְּבוֹד in verse 9 “corresponds to the יָקָר of Dan. viii.14.” This verbal complex would also lead the interpreter to understand that the psalm refers to Jesus. These connections then dictate the subject of the psalm, “for once one has seen that it refers to Jesus, the text cannot really deal with anything else than the resurrection.”³⁵

The association of the psalm to the Messiah also comes through a verbal network. The term שָׁחַח in verse 10 ties the psalm into a “complex of conceptions” relating to the Son of Man. This grouping includes the idea of Messiah and corruption through passages such as Isaiah 52:14 and Jonah 2. This association led to the view that Psalm 16 spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah from the corruption of the grave. “Explained in this way Ps. xvi. 10 does indeed announce to the Jewish expositor, that the Messiah ‘shall not be deserted in Hades’ and that his flesh ‘shall not see corruption.’ ”³⁶ The aforementioned link to Jesus’ name then allowed the conclusion that the psalm refers to the expected resurrection of the Messiah.

³² Ibid.

³³ Darrell L. Bock, “Use of the Old Testament in the New,” in *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation: A Complete Library of Tools and Resources*, ed. David S. Dockery, Kenneth A. Mathews, and Robert B. Sloan (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 101–2; and Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 38–45.

³⁴ Isaiah 25:9; Habakkuk 3:18; Psalms 9:15; 13:6; 21:2.

³⁵ Jan Willen Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1954), 168–76. For a similar view see Donald Juel, James S. Ackerman, and Thayer S. Warshaw, *Introduction to New Testament Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), 216–18. See also Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 146–47; and idem, “Social Dimensions of Exegesis: The Use of Psalm 16 in Acts 2,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 (1981): 543–56.

³⁶ Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts*, 169–70.

Longenecker argued that the “Jewish roots of Christianity make it *a priori* likely that the exegetical procedures of the New Testament would resemble to some extent those of then contemporary Judaism.”³⁷ The apostles used “exegetical presuppositions and practices” of their day,³⁸ namely, midrashic and pesher techniques.

According to Longenecker, Peter linked Psalm 16:8–11 and Psalm 110:1 through *gezerah shawah*.³⁹ The two passages were connected through the shared phrase “at my right hand” (ἐκ δεξιῶν μου). Peter then used them together to support the resurrection.⁴⁰ The shared phrase indicated that the two “are to be treated together.”⁴¹ Longenecker also holds that Peter used a pesher understanding of Psalm 16:8–11, thus leading to the introduction, “David said concerning him” (Δαυὶδ λέγει εἰς αὐτόν). This pesher interpretation allowed Peter to apply the psalm directly to Jesus.⁴² Longenecker then says that Peter did not literally interpret Psalm 16, but rather came to a meaning through Spirit-directed midrashic and pesher exegesis.⁴³

Adherents of this Jewish hermeneutic view trace the exegetical process that led to Peter’s messianic interpretation of Psalm 16.

³⁷ Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 205. Cf. W. H. Bellinger Jr., “The Psalms and Acts: Reading and Rereading,” in *With Steadfast Purpose: Essays in Honor of Henry Jackson Flanders Jr.*, ed. Naymond H. Keathley (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 1990), 135.

³⁸ Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 207.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴⁰ Longenecker’s terminology is vague at this point. As will be demonstrated in the third article in this series, Peter quoted Psalm 16:8–11 to demonstrate that Jesus’ resurrection fulfilled messianic prophecy. Peter quoted Psalm 110:1 not to support Jesus’ resurrection but to support His ascension and exaltation. Jesus’ exaltation to God’s right hand led to the giving of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

⁴¹ Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 97. It should be noted that in the Masoretic text the phrases are not exact matches. Psalm 16 employs the prepositions יָמִין (v. 8) and יְמִינִי (v. 11), while Psalm 110:1 employs יְמִינִי as the prefix to יָמִין.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 100.

⁴³ Cf. Richard N. Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles as a Witness to Early Christianity,” *Themelios* 5 (1968): 15–23. See also idem, “Three Ways of Understanding Relations between the Testaments—Historically and Today,” in *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament: Essays in Honor of E. Earle Ellis*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Otto Betz (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 22–32; and idem, “Who Is the Prophet Talking About? Some Reflections on the New Testament’s Use of the Old,” *Themelios* 13 (1987): 15–23. For a similar view see E. Earle Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 18 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978); and idem, “How the New Testament Uses the Old,” in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, 199–219.

They say that the original sense of the psalm relates to the preservation of the psalmist's life in crisis. Then they track the process through various networks of passages. The midrashic practice of *gezerah shawah* builds these networks. The eschatological implications follow the *peshar* pattern common at Qumran.

As Longenecker has noted, midrash often completely ignored the original context of Old Testament passages. Also *peshar* at times created eschatological implications where none originally existed. Yet the New Testament employed these same techniques. The difference, according to this view, is the presuppositional foundation behind the exegesis. Jewish and Christian exegesis shared preconceptions such as corporate identity and typology. Qumran and Christian exegesis shared eschatological fulfillment perspectives.⁴⁴ However, the key presuppositional distinction is the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah. The reality of Jesus' messiahship along with His death and resurrection gave the apostles a unique and clear interpretation of the Old Testament.⁴⁵

Questions arise from this view that will be addressed in the following articles in this series. How much did common rabbinic hermeneutical practice influence Peter, a fisherman, and Luke, a Greek physician? Would Christian writers adopt the interpretive schemes of the rabbis? Is it possible that Peter literally understood the original meaning of Psalm 16 and then presented it in forms recognized by his Jewish audience?

VIEW THREE: *SENSUS PLENIOR*⁴⁶

The classic definition of *sensus plenior*, according to Brown, is "that additional, deeper meaning, intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author, which is seen to exist in the words of a biblical text (or group of texts, or even a whole book) when they are studied in the light of further revelation or development in the

⁴⁴ For discussions of these exegetical presuppositions see Bock, "Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," 102–4; Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 93–95; and Ellis, "How the New Testament Uses the Old Testament," 199–219.

⁴⁵ Juel, "Social Dimensions of Exegesis," 548; Bock, "Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," 102–4; Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 206–9; and Ellis, "How the New Testament Uses the Old Testament," 209–14.

⁴⁶ Other adherents include Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 158; and Douglas A. Oss, "Canon as Context: The Function of 'Sensus Plenior' in Evangelical Hermeneutics," *Grace Theological Journal* 9 (1988): 105–28.

understanding of revelation.⁴⁷ Grammatical-historical exegesis provides the beginning point, but *sensus plenior* develops beyond that point. *Sensus plenior* views Old Testament passages through the perspective of God's ultimate purpose in revelation.⁴⁸

Hagner summarizes the historical sense of Psalm 16 in this way. "The Psalm can be understood historically as referring to David's confidence that God would deliver him from death at the hands of his enemies." But then Hagner sees a change of meaning in the New Testament. "There is, however, a much fuller sense to these words than can be satisfied by the deliverances that David enjoyed." This fuller sense was not in the original context of David's writing, but comes only when the passage is read through the lens of the New Testament.⁴⁹

The key elements that brought this fuller sense to the New Testament writers were the understanding of a unified plan of God and the witnessing of the fulfillment of God's salvation through Jesus the Messiah.⁵⁰ These elements allowed the New Testament writers to recognize Jesus' resurrection in "devotional utterances of psalmists" with "no semblance of predictive intention."⁵¹ Thus the Scriptures had a deeper sense that could be applied on a different level. This process produced an interpretation of Psalm 16 that would be persuasive to a believing audience, but less so to unbelievers. "Thus the true value of the arguments from the *sensus plenior* of the Old Testament is for those who are already in the household of faith. . . . The identity of Jesus does not rest primarily on these patterns of promise and fulfillment, but rather upon the objective events of His ministry, His death and His resurrection."⁵²

⁴⁷ Raymond E. Brown, *The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture* (Baltimore: Saint Mary's University Press, 1955), 92. Though Brown's definition is employed here, for the purpose of this study *sensus plenior* refers not to the older Roman Catholic concept that further revelation through church tradition brought new meanings to biblical texts. See Douglas J. Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," in *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 202.

⁴⁸ William S. LaSor, "The Sensus Plenior and Biblical Interpretation," in *Scripture, Tradition and Interpretation*, ed. W. Ward Gasque and William S. LaSor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 275.

⁴⁹ Donald A. Hagner, "The Old Testament in the New," in *Interpreting the Word of God*, ed. Samuel J. Schultz and Morris A. Inch (Chicago: Moody, 1976), 99. For a similar view see Aparacio, *Tú eres mi bien*; see also idem, "Datación y 'Sitz im Leben' del Sal 16," *Rivista Biblica* 42 (1994): 385–408.

⁵⁰ Hagner, "The Old Testament in the New," 93.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 92. Though Hagner did not write this in his discussion of Psalm 16, he states it immediately before his discussion of specific examples, including Psalm 16.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 103.

Moo notes that Peter cited Psalm 16 in similar fashion to the Jewish exegetes of the day (the *gezerah shawah* link with Psalm 110 discussed earlier), but Moo cautions that Peter's citation technique does not require that he employed their exegetical methods. "A vast gulf separated the often fantastic, purely verbal exegesis of the rabbis from the generally sober and clearly contextually oriented interpretations found in the New Testament." He then states that Peter's interpretation stemmed from "the brute facts of who Jesus is and what He did, combined with the inspired authors' unique revelatory stance, serving to give them a knowledge of the meaning of the text that would otherwise not have been possible." Thus the basis of the interpretation was revelation and the events of Jesus' passion. Peter's claim of a prophecy of resurrection "cannot be demonstrated from exegesis of the psalm." The validity of Peter's interpretation depends on inspiration alone.⁵³

Key questions arise from this view. Does Psalm 16 give no evidence of resurrection in its historical context? Did Peter base a crucial point (that the resurrected Jesus was the Messiah) solely on "revelatory stance"? Would Peter's unbelieving audience be convinced by a declaration ungrounded in the biblical text?

VIEW FOUR: CANONICAL APPROACH

Waltke, a major proponent of the canonical approach,⁵⁴ reviewed the allegorical and Antiochene approaches to interpreting the Old Testament and found both to offer "inadequate hermeneutical principles for the interpretation of the psalms."⁵⁵ He defends what he calls "the church's traditional view. The New Testament has priority in 'unpacking' the meaning of the Old Testament."⁵⁶ He defines the canonical approach as "the recognition that the text's intention became deeper and clearer as the parameters of the canon were expanded."⁵⁷

⁵³ Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," 193, 210–11.

⁵⁴ For a general discussion and defense of Waltke's canonical approach see J. E. Shepherd, "The Book of Psalms as the Book of Christ: The Application of the Christo-Canonical Method to the Book of Psalms" (Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1995). Shepherd does not address Psalm 16 in any detail.

⁵⁵ Bruce K. Waltke, "A Canonical Approach to the Psalms," in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg*, ed. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 7.

⁵⁶ Bruce K. Waltke, "Is It Right to Read the New Testament into the Old?" *Christianity Today*, September 2, 1983, 77. See also his comments in "A Canonical Approach to the Psalms," 3–18.

⁵⁷ Waltke, "A Canonical Approach to the Psalms," 7.

This position seeks to trace the development of a psalm's meaning through canonical stages. Waltke recognizes four such stages for the psalms: the original poet's context, the first temple worship context, the Old Testament canonical context, and the New Testament context.⁵⁸ Regarding Psalm 16 Waltke argues that in the first stage, the psalmist's context, the referent is King David. Waltke notes that in the seventy-three psalms written by David, he was "presumably the human subject of these (Davidic) psalms."⁵⁹ Waltke then argues that in Psalm 16 *διαφθοράν* ("corruption") is the proper rendering of *רָחַץ*.⁶⁰ He concludes that the original sense of the psalm "inferred a resurrection before corruption."⁶¹ In the second stage the influence of the Davidic Covenant moved the referent of these psalms from David to his royal line. David's hope became the hope of his kingly descendants. These living referents, however, failed to live up to the ideal of these psalms. This failure surfaced a latent messianic sense in the psalms. When the Jews returned from the Exile and when the Old Testament canon was compiled, no Davidic king reigned. Thus the psalms took on an eschatological sense. The "historical realities" brought a "more precise interpretation, a future messianic hope."⁶² This sense represents the meaning in the New Testament when it recognized Jesus' fulfillment of these messianic expectations.⁶³ Peter then declared that the resurrection of the Messiah, inferred in Psalm 16, was fulfilled in Jesus.

The canonical approach raises these questions: Can resurrection be proven in the Old Testament context of Psalm 16? Could David have spoken of Messiah originally?

VIEW FIVE: TYPOLOGY

Typology has been defined as "the study of types and the historical and theological correspondences between them."⁶⁴ A type is "a bib-

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 10–16.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁰ Bruce K. Waltke, "Theology of Psalms," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1113.

⁶¹ Bruce K. Waltke, email to the author, "RE: Psalm Question," April 5, 2001.

⁶² Waltke, "A Canonical Approach to the Psalms," 12–15.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ David L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: A Study of the Theological Relationship between the Old and New Testaments*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-

lical event, person, or institution which serves as an example or pattern for other events, persons or institutions.⁶⁵ Typology is distinguished from allegorical interpretation by rooting the types in historical reality.⁶⁶ Thus types accomplished a historical purpose apart from their future significance.⁶⁷ The future significance is fully realized only through the eyes of the New Testament.⁶⁸

Briggs, one of the earliest to take a typological view of Psalm 16, stated that it "is a typical messianic psalm presenting the ideal man enjoying the favour of God in a happy lot in life, and in communion with God after departing from life."⁶⁹ The psalmist expected communion with God after death, but not resurrection. This is a "messianic ideal" spoken of, but without the psalmist's grasp of a "personal Messiah." The perfect fulfillment of messianic hope by Jesus made clear the person of Messiah. Jesus' resurrection made possible and actual the hope of communion with God after death.⁷⁰ Peter could then apply the psalm directly to Jesus because His resurrection revealed for the first time what believers could expect after death.⁷¹

Varsity, 1991), 195. See also idem, "Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 29 (1976): 137–56. Adherents of this view include C. T. Fritsch, "Biblical Typology," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 104 (1947): 214–22; G. W. H. Lampe, "Hermeneutics and Typology," *London Quarterly and Holborn Review* 34 (1965), 17–25; James Earl Gilmore, "Apostolic Interpretation of Typicoprophetically Messianic Psalms: Seven Rules Demonstrated from Psalm 16 and Elsewhere" (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1979); and Walter Eichrodt, "Is Typological Exegesis an Appropriate Method?" in *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. Claus Westermann, trans. James Barr (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1963), 224–45.

⁶⁵ Baker, *Two Testaments One Bible*, 195. See similar definitions in S. Lewis Johnson, *The Old Testament in the New: An Argument for Biblical Inspiration* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 55; Lampe, "Hermeneutics and Typology," 17–25; Fritsch, "Biblical Typology," 214; and Patrick Fairbairn, *Typology of Scripture* (Philadelphia, Daniels & Smith, 1852; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1956), 1:42–61.

⁶⁶ Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 172.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁸ Johnson, *The Old Testament in the New*, 70; and Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 173.

⁶⁹ Charles A. Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy*, 2d ed. (New York: Scribners, 1895), 148. See also Charles A. Briggs and Emilie G. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: Clark, 1906), 117–27. For a similar view see Fairbairn, *Typology of Scripture*; and Leonard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 122–23.

⁷⁰ Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy*, 151–52.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 151–52 n. 4.

Briggs saw the original sense of the psalm as “communion with God” after death. He understood that David was the first referent. Peter could then apply this to Jesus because His resurrection perfectly fulfilled the hope of the psalmist. This application is direct because Jesus’ resurrection completely fulfilled the confidence expressed by the psalmist.

Bock says that “typological-prophetic” passages are those in which “pattern and promise are present, so that a short-term event pictures and mirrors (or ‘patterns’) a long-term fulfillment.”⁷² “Typological-PROPHETIC” fulfillment has an initial fulfillment that creates an expectation of a future greater fulfillment. “As such the passage begs for additional fulfillment and such expectation usually already existed among Jewish readers of these texts.”⁷³ On the other hand with “TYPOLOGICAL-prophetic” fulfillment “the pattern is not anticipated by the language, but seen once the decisive pattern occurs.”⁷⁴ Though God established the pattern, fulfillment is not expected. “Typological-PROPHETIC” moves forward, looking for fulfillment of an established pattern. “TYPOLOGICAL-prophetic” moves backward, linking fulfillment to a previously hidden pattern. Bock views Psalm 16 as a “righteous-sufferer” text, describing a saint facing persecution for his loyalty to Yahweh. The New Testament then points to the unique way Jesus fulfilled the latent pattern. Thus the pattern, he says, is “TYPOLOGICAL-prophetic.”⁷⁵

This conclusion implies that the original sense of Psalm 16 is a prayer of deliverance by a righteous sufferer, indicating preservation of life rather than resurrection.⁷⁶ The prayer, though, employs vague language that establishes a latent pattern uniquely fulfilled by Jesus’ resurrection. Only looking back through the perspective of Jesus’ resurrection can the prophetic pattern be discerned.⁷⁷

Bock explains Psalm 16 as follows. The three major Septuagint changes claimed by some to transform the psalm into a resurrec-

⁷² Bock, “Use of the Old Testament in the New,” 110.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁷⁵ Bock, “Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament,” 110–12 (capital letters his).

⁷⁶ Darrell L. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987), 173.

⁷⁷ For Bock’s discussion of the interpretive impact of Jesus’ resurrection, see “Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New, Part 2,” 311–12.

tion text (קָרָא לְעֵלְפִידִי [v. 9], קָרָא לְדִיָּאֲבֹרָא [v. 10], and קָרָא לְדִיָּאֲבֹרָא לְדִיָּאֲבֹרָא [v. 11]) are demonstrated to “emerge conceptually from the Masoretic text.”⁷⁸ Therefore resurrection was part of the original sense, though in latent form. What are not evident in the Old Testament context are the messianic understanding and the immediacy of the resurrection. These elements were “novel exegesis which the church introduced.”⁷⁹ These additional elements allowed Peter to proclaim Psalm 16 as a promise from God to raise the Messiah from the dead. Therefore Peter declared that the resurrection of Jesus directly fulfilled this prophecy. “A clearer presentation of a direct prophecy fulfilled could not exist.”⁸⁰

Bock sees the original sense of Psalm 16 as deliverance from death for the first referent, the psalmist. The vague language in the Hebrew text created a latent pattern discerned and fulfilled through the events of Messiah. Thus the ultimate sense and referent are found in Jesus' resurrection.

The typological view surfaces important questions for Psalm 16. Though clearly used in the New Testament, is typological fulfillment what Peter argued for in Acts 2? Was the pattern in Psalm 16 as vague (latent) as proposed, or did David realize he spoke of the Messiah? How much escalation is allowed between the original sense and the New Testament sense before the sense actually changes rather than heightens?

VIEW SIX: SINGLE MESSAGE

Proponents of this view hold that the message of Psalm 16 was a single message that did not change in the New Testament. The only change occurred in how the referent (psalmist or Messiah) related to this single sense.⁸¹

Kaiser writes, “David as the man of promise and as God's *hāsīd* (‘favored one’), was in his person, office and function one of the distinctive historical fulfillments to that word that he received about his seed, dynasty and throne. Therefore he rested secure in the confident hope that even death itself would not prevent him from

⁷⁸ Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern*, 177.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁸¹ An early proponent of this position was Alberti Vaccari, “Salmo 16: Il Salmo della Risurrezione,” in *La Redenzione* (Rome: Pontifical Bible Institute, 1934), 185; and *idem*, “Antica e Nuova Interpretazione del Salmo 16 (Volg. 15),” *Biblica* 14 (1933): 408–34.

enjoying the face-to-face fellowship with his Lord even beyond death, since that ultimate *hāsīd* would triumph over death. For David, this was all one word: God's ancient but ever-new promise.⁸² Peter then expounded the promise as given to and understood by David.⁸³ Kaiser does not address specifically whether David wrote of preservation or resurrection. One may infer, however, from Kaiser's later conclusions that David intended resurrection and understood that his personal resurrection and eternal fellowship with God were inexorably linked to Messiah's promised resurrection.⁸⁴

Kaiser builds his argument on three key points. First is the hermeneutical requirement for a single meaning for a text. This "has been acknowledged by all interpreters—at least as a starting principle."⁸⁵ He therefore rejects any suggestion of shift or escalation of meaning from the Old Testament to the New. Second, he accepts the Davidic authorship and Davidic Covenant setting of the psalm.⁸⁶ Third, perhaps his most crucial point is the identification of the יִשְׁרָאֵל (v. 10). Kaiser views יִשְׁרָאֵל as "best rendered in a passive form," yielding the translation "Favored One."⁸⁷ Kaiser sees יִשְׁרָאֵל as a definite link to the Davidic Covenant and as one of the most important messianic terms in the Old Testament.⁸⁸ He identifies the

⁸² Kaiser, "The Promise to David in Psalm 16," 229.

⁸³ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 27.

⁸⁴ Though Kaiser surfaces the question, he does not directly answer it. He writes that the identity of the יִשְׁרָאֵל answers the question (Kaiser, "Promise to David Psalm 16," 224). Also Kaiser agrees with Dahood (*Psalms I: 1–50*, 91) that the "path of life" in Psalm 16:11 means "eternal life." Also Kaiser states that Scripture writers had understanding of their subjects and did not write beyond what they knew, except for the time of fulfillment (Kaiser, "The Promise to David in Psalm 16," 222; and idem, "The Eschatological Hermeneutics of 'Epangelicalism: Promise Theology,'" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 13 [1970]: 95). See also Elliott E. Johnson, "Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 441–47. Kaiser states that Psalm 16 "made these claims for Christ and His resurrection" (Kaiser, "The Promise to David in Psalm 16," 228). One then may reasonably conclude that Kaiser understands Psalm 16 as referring to resurrection.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 219–22. See also his expanded comments on the same subject in idem, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 38–40.

⁸⁶ Kaiser, "The Promise to David in Psalm 16," 222–23.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 224–25.

⁸⁸ Kaiser, citing Beecher, says that יִשְׁרָאֵל "is only surpassed by 'Servant of the Lord' and 'Messiah' for messianic terms" (*ibid.*, 222). See Willis J. Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1905), 313.

דָּוִד as David, not “as a mere person, but David as the recipient and conveyor of God’s ancient but ever-renewed promise.”⁸⁹ Thus David wrote of both himself and the Messiah in a single message.

According to Kaiser the original referent is both David and Messiah as one. That single message of the resurrection of the דָּוִד was declared by Peter as fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah.

Elliott E. Johnson states that the original meaning of the psalm is that “God, who is [David’s] portion, brings his Holy One hope for resurrection.”⁹⁰ Johnson sees support for the idea of “hope” coming from Yahweh’s instruction to David (v. 7), the psalmist’s confidence (v. 8), his security (vv. 9–10), and his enduring satisfaction (v. 11). The idea of David’s resurrection may be seen in the psalmist’s physical security (v. 9), his sureness of not being abandoned to the grave (v. 10), and the certainty of continued joy before God’s presence in (v. 11).⁹¹

The sense of the psalm is the same for David as it was for Christ: a resurrection.⁹² While the sense is singular, however, the reference and its implications are plural. The sense refers to David in a limited manner, but to Christ in an unlimited manner.⁹³ To illustrate, Johnson notes that David “set the LORD always before me” (v. 8) in a limited way. He states that David did sin at times, yet overall he was loyal to God. Thus his allegiance was genuine though limited. Christ, on the other hand, had absolute allegiance to God. Thus Yahweh was always set before Christ. So the sense was the same, but its fullest implications are found only in Christ. Also the words “your Holy One” (v. 10), are “unlimited in reference to Christ and limited in reference to David.”⁹⁴

David had awareness of these limitations. His awareness required God’s counsel (v. 7), which enabled him to “know and speak as a prophet (Acts 2:30).” David knew of the Holy One, Christ, and spoke of His resurrection. Though David “knew the truth clearly enough to write it” and grasped the “type of meaning conveyed in

⁸⁹ Kaiser, “The Promise to David in Psalm 16,” 225.

⁹⁰ Elliott E. Johnson, *Expository Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 181. Cf. Elliott E. Johnson, “Author’s Intention and Biblical Interpretation,” 409–29.

⁹¹ Johnson, *Expository Hermeneutics: An Introduction*, 181.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 182.

⁹³ *Ibid.* See a similar conclusion by M. Gruenthaner, “The Future Life in the Psalms,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 2 (1940): 63.

⁹⁴ Johnson, *Expository Hermeneutics: An Introduction*, 182–83.

his words,” he was unaware of the full implications of his message either for Christ or himself.⁹⁵

Therefore Johnson concludes that David wrote a single generic message, “hope for resurrection.” This single sense was shared both by David (limited) and Christ (unlimited). This singular sense with its fullest implications was then proclaimed by Peter at Pentecost.

This single-message view raises important questions. Does a single generic message (hope of resurrection) properly fit the arguments of both David in the Old Testament and Peter in the New? Is it possible to establish a Davidic Covenant background as the original backdrop to the psalm? Can such an exact correspondence be made between David’s hope and Christ’s fulfillment as asserted by Kaiser and Johnson? Both Johnson and Kaiser write of David’s hope in terms of a general eschatological resurrection. The resurrection of Christ, on the other hand, was a special and immediate resurrection, a resurrection before decay. Can one talk of these two distinct resurrections as a single sense? If David hoped for a general resurrection based on the immediate resurrection of Messiah, is this not an effect-cause relationship rather than a one-to-one correspondence in meaning?

VIEW SEVEN: DIRECT PROPHECY⁹⁶

This view holds that David spoke directly of the Messiah. Scholars agree that the *entire* psalm does not speak of the Christ (see especially v. 4), but they disagree as to the portion that speaks exclusively of Messiah.

Lenski links each part of the quoted portion of Psalm 16 as it applies to David. The statements of relationship and confidence in verses 8–10a and verse 11 are related to David the psalmist. David saw the Lord and His protection always before him, and so he rejoiced. David was confident that Yahweh would not abandon his soul to the “place of the damned.” David’s hope rested in the reality

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Proponents of this view in addition to those discussed include Ernst W. Hengstenberg, *Psalms*, trans. J. Thomson and P. Fairbairn, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: Clark, 1977); Arno C. Gaebelein, *The Jewish Question* (New York: Our Hope, 1912); David Cooper, *Messiah: His First Coming Scheduled* (Los Angeles: Biblical Research Society, 1939); J. Barton Payne, “Psalms,” in *Zondervan’s Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 4:940–43; and Stuart, “Interpretation of Psalm XVI,” 51–110. This seems to be the view of John F. Walvoord as well. “The New Testament makes clear, however, to all who accept the infallibility of the Scriptures that Psalm 16:10 is specifically a reference to Christ.” He later says that verse 10 directly predicts the resurrection of Christ (“The Incarnation of the Son of God, Part 2,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 105 [April–June 1948]: 150–51).

of his prophecy of Messiah (v. 10b). Because Messiah would not experience corruption but would be resurrected, David had hope that he would enter heaven rather than hell. "David's body, living or dead, thus rested in the hope, in the hope of its resurrection at the last day, and at death his soul would enter glory."⁹⁷

Lenski divides the referent of verse 10 between David and Christ. Neither David nor Christ would be abandoned to hell (v. 10a), but only Christ would not experience decay (v. 10b). Lenski makes this separation because of the contrast between "my soul" in verse 10a and "thy Holy One" in verse 10b. "The former ('my soul') refers to David and to Christ, the latter ('Holy One') only to Christ." Peter's explanation about the decay of David's body also demands the separation of referents.⁹⁸ In this way David prophesied of Messiah's resurrection.

Much of Lenski's explanation of Peter's interpretation of Psalm 16 could be classified as "reference plenior," except that he understands David to shift referents in verse 10b. This shift indicates a single line of direct prophecy concerning Messiah. In this line David spoke "as a prophet . . . by revelation and by inspiration." This prophecy was then literally fulfilled by Jesus.⁹⁹ Therefore the original sense of verse 10b was the resurrection of Messiah. Lenski says David was the original referent for all of the psalm except for verse 10. In verse 10 the reference is first to David and Messiah and then Messiah alone. The psalm, then, speaks of David's future hope based on the resurrection of Messiah, and Peter proclaimed this same sense.

Bierberg, a Roman Catholic scholar, supported the majority of Catholic scholars and the ruling of the 1933 Pontifical Bible Commission. He understands the psalm to refer directly to David and typically to Christ in verses 1–9. Because of David's close relationship with Yahweh, he was rewarded with a revelation of Messiah's resurrection (vv. 10–11) so that these final two verses refer only to Christ.¹⁰⁰

Bierberg supports his view primarily through the demonstration that the phrases "not forsaken to Sheol" and "not to see decay" (v. 10) could not apply to David. Therefore they must apply to

⁹⁷ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1934), 85–93.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 94–95.

¹⁰⁰ Bierberg, "Conserva Me Domine Psalm 16 (15)," 131. See also Rudolph P. Bierberg, "Does Sacred Scripture Have a Sensus Plenior?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 10 (1948): 182–95.

Christ. He provides a lengthy defense for the translation of מָוֶשׁ (v. 10) as “corruption.” He concludes that this must be a reference to resurrection before bodily decay. He suggests that this view of Psalm 16 was the understanding of both Peter and Paul, the early church fathers, and the majority of Roman Catholic scholars. He sees this explanation as the traditional and accepted interpretation of the psalm.¹⁰¹

According to Bierberg, David is the original referent in the psalm. David spoke of his personal relationship with Yahweh and then shifted to speak of the Messiah’s resurrection. “Because of the intensity of his rapture and security, because of a conscious identity of himself with the ‘fruit of his loins,’ he passes almost imperceptibly from the role of singer to that of prophet.”¹⁰² David’s words in verses 10–11 lifted himself to speak directly and literally of Messiah. This, Bierberg says, is the same message proclaimed by Peter in Acts 2.

Therefore the direct-prophecy view holds that David, in a moment of ecstasy and prophetic clarity, moved from declaring his own intimate relationship with Yahweh to prophesy of Messiah’s victory over death through His resurrection.

This view brings to light important questions. Can this prophetic shift be demonstrated from the Old Testament context? Could David have understood enough to speak of the Messiah’s resurrection? Do the words of Peter’s interpretation require direct prophecy or could other explanations (typical, *sensus plenior*, etc.) also fit Peter’s words?

CONCLUSION

This article has reviewed seven contemporary views of Psalm 16 and its use in Acts 2. This review has raised important issues to be considered in the study of the Old and New Testament contexts. The following two articles in this series address these issues and offer a solution to the question of how Peter in Acts 2 interpreted Psalm 16.

¹⁰¹ Bierberg, “Conserva Me Domine Psalm 16 (15),” 73–87, 131, 134.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 137.



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