



*The*  
PROPHETS  
*and the*  
APOSTOLIC  
WITNESS

*Reading Isaiah,  
Jeremiah, and Ezekiel  
as Christian Scripture*

EDITED BY

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# HOW THE APOSTLES READ ISAIAH AS CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURE

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**WE ARE THOSE** “upon whom the ends of the ages have come,” Paul tells the Corinthians to exhort them with the example (*typikōs*) of Israel (1 Cor 10:11).<sup>1</sup> Why should Israel’s behavior in the wilderness serve to warn Christians millennia later? The answer is in this phrase, “the ends of the ages.” Surely Paul sees some kind of temporal change but also a bringing of the prior ages to their purposeful end—the intended goal of the ages, indeed the *telos* (*ta telē*) of the ages.<sup>2</sup> To Paul, the resurrection of Jesus Christ marked not only the turning point of history but the dawning of a new era to which all previous eras had

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this chapter are the author’s own.

<sup>2</sup>Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1994), 26; Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 168–69.

been surging.<sup>3</sup> The church in Corinth, “together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:2), comprises the eschatological substance of history’s types and shadows.

Such an opening theological reflection is helpful for us because to ask how someone reads Isaiah as Christian Scripture requires first considering what would make a hermeneutic particularly Christian. The apostles’ involvement with the earthly ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, as well as the reception and influence of the Holy Spirit, was an entirely reorienting experience. How could it not be? These events brought the subsequent New Testament authors to read the sacred texts of the Hebrew canon as a story that at long last had reached its conclusion.<sup>4</sup> In describing the death and resurrection of Christ, the coming of the Spirit, and the creation of the church, Peter cites Moses (Acts 3:22-23) and then declares, “And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those that came after him, also proclaimed these days” (Acts 3:24). They proclaimed *these days*, the days of the Spirit and worldwide heralding of the gospel.

We begin our particular focus, therefore, with the observation that the apostles did not read Isaiah in the abstract but as a significant piece of a story starting in Genesis and extending through the prophets and poets. For their part, it is clear that the New Testament authors understood their own writings as continuing that story line in the consummative eon.<sup>5</sup> In the following we will see such Christian convictions at play in various patterns of how Isaiah was read and applied by the

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<sup>3</sup>As Gordon D. Fee dynamically renders 1 Cor 10:11, “toward whom all history has had its goal.” See Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 459.

<sup>4</sup>See, e.g., N. T. Wright, “Yet the Sun Will Rise Again: Reflections on the Exile and Restoration in Second Temple Judaism, Jesus, Paul, and the Church Today,” in *Exile: A Conversation with N. T. Wright*, ed. James M. Scott (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 45-72; Chris Bruno, Jared Compton, and Kevin McFaddon, *Biblical Theology According to the Apostles: How the Earliest Christians Told the Story of Israel*, NSBT 52 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020).

<sup>5</sup>G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 1-25, 129-60.

apostles. Along the way we will consider the blessed tie that binds these patterns together. We will conclude by looking particularly at Matthew's reading of Isaiah 42. In all, we will see that the apostles read Isaiah as a redemptive-historical depot through which historical and literary types are funneled into a future that the church now inhabits through Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup>

### **PATTERN ONE: ISAIAH AS A MAN OF HIS TIME**

Before we get too far ahead of ourselves with all the ways the apostles' experience with Jesus provided a new frame for understanding Isaiah, it will be helpful to recognize that the old frames were not destroyed in the process. The apostles still read Isaiah as a historic document that attests to another time and another place with another audience.<sup>7</sup>

No better text to start with than the first quotation in the New Testament, Matthew 1:23, where the evangelist says that "the sign" of Isaiah 7:14, "the virgin shall conceive and bear a son," is fulfilled. This may seem like an odd choice because Matthew is commonly indicted for ahistorical exegesis, with this verse as exhibit A.<sup>8</sup> But the prosecution has not proven its case. Matthew 1 is insatiably concerned with the house of David: after Jesus, David is the first person mentioned (Mt 1:1); the genealogy clearly revolves around David (Mt 1:17); Joseph

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<sup>6</sup>There are a lot of issues that bear on how the NT authors used the OT. The first is the kind of use: direct quotations are common, but so are echoes and allusions. See Nicholas G. Piotrowski, *In All the Scriptures: The Three Contexts of Biblical Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021), 169-77. This essay, however, is less concerned with such nomenclature and instead focused on what evidence we can see for how NT authors *read* the OT, specifically Isaiah. This essay will also not have much to say about text forms. It is clear that a variety were used, HB and various LXX versions. For such questions see G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007). Summaries of various hermeneutical warrants that explain NT authors' uses of the OT also abound. For a short summary see Andrew David Naselli, *From Typology to Doxology: Paul's Use of Isaiah and Job in Romans 11:34-35* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 118-28.

<sup>7</sup>Joseph A. Fitzmyer observes such historical awareness too. See Fitzmyer, "Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament," *New Testament Studies* 7 (1961): 297-333. What he calls "accommodated texts," however, seem to be the result of underappreciating what I call "typology" below.

<sup>8</sup>See, e.g., John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah*, WBC 24 (Waco, TX: Word, 1985-1987), 1:103.

is a “son of David” (Mt 1:20); and of course Jesus is born in Bethlehem (Mt 2:1-6), a fulfillment of Davidic prophecy (Mic 5:1-3; see also 1 Sam 16:1; 2 Sam 7:8). It is quite significant to observe, therefore, that “*all this occurred* to fulfill the words by the prophet” (Mt 1:22). It is not just Mary’s virginity that fulfills Isaiah 7:14, but “*all this*” specifically concerning David. When we look at Isaiah 7:14 in its original literary and historical contexts, we see that the very reason Isaiah gave the sign to Ahaz is that he was the then-current embodiment of the house of David. This is emphasized in Isaiah 7:2, 13. Jerusalem was under threat by two larger armies, but the Lord reassured Ahaz that they would not succeed in their plans because of his zeal for the house of David.<sup>9</sup> So the son born in Isaiah 8:3 sufficiently fulfilled the sign for Ahaz’s sake because he needed assurance there and then in that historical situation.<sup>10</sup> That Matthew uses Isaiah 7:14 in his own thickly Davidic prologue shows that he read Isaiah 7–8 for what it is: a text historically concerned with the house of David. Of course, Matthew does not stop there, and so we will return to this reading of Isaiah 7–8 in just a moment. It suffices for now to see that Matthew did not just grab a verse that might exonerate Mary but sees in Isaiah’s wider historical context something more meaningful that is fulfilled by “*all this*” in Matthew 1.<sup>11</sup>

In Acts 7 Stephen concludes his review of Israel’s history with a quotation of Isaiah. While Solomon had built a grand temple (Acts 7:47; see 1 Kings 8), the sinfulness of subsequent Davidic kings led to its demise (2 Kings 23:26-27; 25:8-17). Israel’s story, therefore, is primarily a story of the presence of God (a consistent point of Stephen’s speech; note all the locations in Acts 7:2, 4, 9, 29-30, 34, 36, 43-44).<sup>12</sup> How

<sup>9</sup>Nicholas G. Piotrowski, *Matthew’s New David at the End of Exile: A Socio-rhetorical Study of Scriptural Quotations*, NovTSup 170 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 42-53.

<sup>10</sup>Norman K. Gottwald, “Immanuel as the Prophet’s Son,” *VT* 8 (1958): 36-47; J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 86, 90-101.

<sup>11</sup>Piotrowski, *Matthew’s New David*, 33-59.

<sup>12</sup>David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 261-62.

fitting that Stephen's final point races through the history of the temple (Acts 7:44-47) and ends with the question of Isaiah 66:1, "Where is the house that you would build for me?" (Acts 7:49). That was exactly the question on Isaiah's audience's mind leading up to and during the exile. Thus, in his critique of the current leadership (Acts 6:12; 7:51), Stephen concludes his soliloquy with a quote from a historical context analogous to his own: while the goodness of the temple may be in doubt (e.g., Is 63:10, 15, 18) God will someday rebuild a holy sanctuary for himself and brings Gentiles to it (Is 66:20-21).<sup>13</sup>

That Isaiah was originally written to a particular people at a particular time and in a particular situation is not lost on Matthew or Luke. Yet, they fluidly move beyond original-context exegesis, to which we next give our attention. I have little doubt that other New Testament authors had a historical conscientiousness as well; however, that is not the hermeneutical hand most commonly played.

### **PATTERN TWO: ISAIAH AS A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS**

The New Testament authors are not interested in merely surveying the past. They are interested in what that past has to say about their own time. They find in Isaiah adumbrations of a future day, when Jesus and his church bring the prophet's words to completion. To see this, let us return to the early chapters of Matthew. I mentioned above that Matthew is drawn to Isaiah's historical setting, not just the convenience of pinning Isaiah 7:14 to Mary. But more than that, Matthew sees a fulfillment (Mt 1:22) of that historical situation. How is it a fulfillment? Not in the sense of fulfilling a pledge or keeping a promise or completing a prophecy. Isaiah 7:14 is no pledge, promise, or prophecy in the strictest senses. It is a *sign* to Ahaz that God favors the house of David and will continue his purposes in Israel through the house of David.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Bruno, Compton, and McFaddon, *Biblical Theology*, 63.

<sup>14</sup>Piotrowski, *Matthew's New David*, 42-53.



This is where it gets interesting for Matthew: if God saved the house of David once before, in Ahaz's day, he can do it again in this day of eschatological culmination. The house of David was spared from near death then; it is resurrected from the grave of exile *now*.<sup>15</sup> There is a thematic outline in the history and sacred texts of Israel that only the messianic age can fill out. Fulfillment should therefore not be understood in terms of prediction and accomplishment but as bringing an original idea or event to its full meaning.<sup>16</sup> As R. T. France summarizes, fulfillment in Matthew is concerned with "how God's previously announced purpose has reached its due conclusion in Jesus."<sup>17</sup>

Let us compare this to Luke–Acts. When Jesus is asked the meaning of his parable of the sower, he replies, "To you all it has been *granted* to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but to the rest [it is given] in parables" (Lk 8:9-10), and then he quotes Isaiah 6:9, "so that seeing they would not *see* and hearing they would not *hear*." Jesus goes on to explain the parable to his disciples (to them it has been granted to know the meaning) and tells them to *see* to it how they *hear* so that knowledge of more mysteries can be *granted* (Lk 8:18). This is a strange use of Isaiah 6 because it was originally spoken to Israel as a rebuke of their idolatry at the dawn of exile (Is 6:9-13).<sup>18</sup> How does it apply over six hundred years later? Again, Israel's historic rejection is read as a pattern of eschatological realities.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, Isaiah 6:9-10 comes up again at the end of Acts. There Paul is "persuading [Jewish leaders; see Acts 28:17] about Jesus from the law of Moses and the prophets" (Acts 28:23).

<sup>15</sup>Piotrowski, *Matthew's New David*, 53-56.

<sup>16</sup>Paul D. Wegner, "How Many Virgin Births Are in the Bible? [Isaiah 7:14]: A Prophetic Pattern Approach," *JETS* 54 (2011): 481-83. See J. R. Daniel Kirk for a survey of more understandings of fulfillment in Matthew in "Conceptualising Fulfillment in Matthew," *Tyndale Bulletin* 59 (2008): 77-98.

<sup>17</sup>R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*, New Testament Profiles (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 172.

<sup>18</sup>G. K. Beale, "Isaiah vi 9-13: A Retributive Taunt Against Idolatry," *VT* 41 (1991): 257-78.

<sup>19</sup>David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Luke," in Beale and Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use*, 308.



Some believe and some do not (Acts 28:24), to whom Paul applies Isaiah 6:9-10. Thus the situation of Israel's historic exile has been eschatologized. Those who listen to the preaching and believe that Jesus sums up Moses and the prophets are those who *hear* and *see*. But those who do not are those who are still in the throes of idolatry (though, of course, never irredeemably so).<sup>20</sup> The writer's use of Isaiah evinces both an understanding of the historical milieu of the prophet and a new eschatological reality.

We can briefly survey a couple more passages in this regard. In the parable of the vineyard (Mk 12:1-11), the language of Isaiah 5 is applied to Jesus' generation. That which once spoke a word of judgment against Solomon's temple (Is 5) now speaks against Herod's (Mk 12).<sup>21</sup> In John 2:10 Jesus turns water into "good wine" (*kalon oionon*) at a wedding celebration. There could be multiple Old Testament backgrounds to this (e.g., Jer 31:12-14; Hos 14:7; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:11-15), but Isaiah 25:6 describes the new age as a time of feasting with "well-aged wine" (*šəmārîm məzuqqāqîm*; LXX *oionon*).<sup>22</sup> That is likely where John gets the images, at least in part, seen in the language of resurrection in both Isaiah 25:8 and John 2:20-21.

Paul also reads Isaiah eschatologically in defending why more Israelites do not believe his gospel when he says, "It is not as though the word of God has failed" (Rom 9:6). Rather, Paul contends, through a litany of Old Testament citations, that God's working in the present day is congruous with his plan for Israel from the beginning. For our study, it is intriguing that Paul draws from Isaianic passages that pertain specifically to the state of Israel in exile.<sup>23</sup> He uses Isaiah 10:22 and Isaiah 1:9

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<sup>20</sup>David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, Biblical Studies Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 105-9, 181-212.

<sup>21</sup>Craig A. Evans, "On the Vineyard Parables of Isaiah 5 and Mark 12," *BZ* 28 (1984): 82-86.

<sup>22</sup>Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 108-10.

<sup>23</sup>James M. Scott, "'And Then All Israel Will Be Saved' (Rom 11:26)," in *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives*, ed. James M. Scott (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 489-527.

in Romans 9:27-29 to describe the state of gospel progress and why more Jews do not believe (see Rom 9:6). Thus, Paul sees Isaiah's description of Israel at that time still applying to his own.

All this makes sense to Paul because Isaiah 52:7 announces the "good news" that Israel's God will again reign, and so Paul understands this pertaining to "the preaching of Christ" in Romans 10:15-17. But, in the same context, Israel's indictment for not obeying the gospel in Isaiah 65:1-2, while Gentiles do, is part of Paul's explanation of how the gospel has progressed in his day (Rom 10:20-21). Isaiah 52:15, concerning the sprinkling of many nations at the end of the exile, applies to the "offering" and "obedience of the Gentiles" through Paul's missionary work (Rom 15:14-21).

Equally, Paul uses Isaiah 29:14 to speak of the power of "the word of the cross" in 1 Corinthians 1:18-19, causing Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner to state, "God's eschatological judgment and salvation are taking place in the midst of the Corinthians."<sup>24</sup> Isaiah 49:8 celebrates God's promise of salvation to Israel; Paul sees that his day is the day of that salvation in 2 Corinthians 6:2, indeed, the day of the new creation (2 Cor 5:17-20).<sup>25</sup>

First Peter and Hebrews show the same eschatological reading of Isaiah 40:6-8 as a bold statement of the effectiveness of God's word to recall the exiles. First Peter 1:23-25 uses it to speak of the life-giving word of God that was preached in his time. Specifically, he calls that word of God the "good news." Isaiah 26, an encouragement to Israel "to remain faithful in the midst of oppression and to trust God to vindicate his faithful people and avenge for them," is used in Hebrews 10:37 to elicit fear of God's vengeance and confidence in God's eschatological reward for the church.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, "1 Corinthians," in Beale and Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use*, 698.

<sup>25</sup>Mason Lee, "'Now Is the Acceptable Time; Now Is the Day of Salvation': Reading 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2 in Light of Its Narrative Substructure," *Restoration Quarterly* 56 (2014): 1-13.

<sup>26</sup>Chee-Chiew Lee, "The Use of Scriptures and the Rhetoric of Fear In Hebrews," *BBR* 31 (2021): 191-210; quote from 201.

Each of these uses has this in common: they are all applications of Old Testament texts to the cross and resurrection of Jesus and/or the effects on the other side thereof. The apostles read Isaiah, therefore, as a “prophetic script” of which the life of Jesus and the early church became the “dramatic enactment” on the stage of history.<sup>27</sup>

### **PATTERN THREE: THE BOOK OF ISAIAH AS A UNIFIED LITERARY WORK**

We also see that the apostles read Isaiah as a complete literary piece with sustained focus over large contexts.<sup>28</sup> This is particularly observable in the way Isaiah 40–55 is used in the New Testament. A clear example of this is in Luke–Acts. David Pao convincingly shows how the use of Isaiah 40:3-5 in Luke 3:4-6 “presupposes the knowledge of the wider context of Isaiah 40–55.”<sup>29</sup> This can be seen as Luke constantly returns to Isaiah 40–55 at key moments in his two-part narrative of Jesus and the early church.

**Table 1.1.** Isaianic Quotes at Key Structural Moments in Luke–Acts

Is 40:3-5	in Lk 3:4-6
Is 42:7; 52:7; 58:6; 61:1-2	in Lk 4:17-19
Is 42:1; 43:9-12; 49:6 (and Is 44:3, 8-9; 45:22; 48:20)	in Lk 24:47; Acts 1:8
Is 53:7-8	in Acts 8:28-33
Is 55:3; 49:6	in Acts 13:34, 46-47

It seems Luke did not simply read these verses in the abstract to drop into his Jesus story wherever convenient. He saw that entire Isaianic discourse as a literary unit, which he used as scaffolding for his own work.<sup>30</sup> The effect is to shape the entirety of Luke–Acts as a fulfillment

<sup>27</sup>Max Botner uses these terms specifically for Mark, but they are just as apt for the rest of the NT. See Botner, “Prophetic Script and Dramatic Enactment in Mark’s Prologue,” *BBR* 26 (2016): 369-80.

<sup>28</sup>For the classic articulation of this see C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-structure of New Testament Theology* (London: Nisbet, 1952), chaps. 2–3.

<sup>29</sup>Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 37.

<sup>30</sup>Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 70-110.

of Isaiah's vision of the eschatological new exodus. Acts particularly funnels Isaiah 40–55 into a polemic against idolatry, and an identity claim by the first Christians when they call themselves “the Way” (Acts 9:2; 19:23; 24:14 et passim). They are the international people of God responding to the Lord's own sovereign word (cf. esp. Is 40:3-11; 45:22-24; 46:11-13; 55:10-11).

Matthew also shows a focus on literary contexts larger than just the cited verse. As mentioned above, the First Evangelist quotes Isaiah 7:14 in Matthew 1:23, but then also quotes Isaiah 9:1-2 (HB 8:23–9:1) in Matthew 4:15-16. Further, Matthew quotes Isaiah 8:8, 10 in Matthew 1:23. By repeatedly drawing on Isaiah 7–9 at the beginning and the end of his prologue, Matthew demonstrates a contextual awareness of the entire Isaianic narrative that spans those several chapters.<sup>31</sup> Add to this the likelihood that Matthew has Isaiah 11:1 in view in Matthew 2:23, and this pattern of reading is seen all the more clearly.<sup>32</sup> Matthew's repeated use of various verses from Isaiah 53 shows the same (compare Is 53:7-12 with Mt 8:17; 20:28; 26:28; 27:12, 57).<sup>33</sup>

A similar focus on large contexts can also be found in Mark, where Isaiah 40:3 is quoted right at the beginning, in Mark 1:3. Throughout the rest of the Gospel the language of Isaiah 40–55 is evoked time and again.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup>See Wim Weren, “Quotations from Isaiah and Mathew's Christology (Mt 1,23 and 4,15–16),” in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah: Festschrift Willem A. M. Beuken*, ed. J. van Ruiten and M. Vervenne, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 132 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 450-53; Warren Carter, “Evoking Isaiah: Matthean Soteriology and an Intertextual Reading of Isaiah 7–9 and Matthew 1:23 and 4:15-16,” *JBL* 119 (2000): 508-18.

<sup>32</sup>Nicholas G. Piotrowski, “Nazarene,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 2nd ed., ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 624-25.

<sup>33</sup>For the use of Is 52:1-2 and its context in Mt 27:51-53, see Timothy Wardle, “Resurrection and the Holy City: Matthew's Use of Isaiah in 27:51-53,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 78 (2016): 666-81.

<sup>34</sup>See esp. Joel Marcus, *Mark: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 2 vols., AB 27 (New York: Doubleday, 2000–2009).

**Table 1.2.** Isaianic Echoes in Mark

Isaianic Language	Echoes in Mark
<b>Is 40:9-10; 52:7</b> "herald of good news [LXX: <i>euangelizō</i> ]"	<b>Mk 1:1, 14-15; 13:10</b> "The beginning of the gospel [ <i>euangelion</i> ]"
<b>Is 52:14</b> "many were astonished [LXX: <i>existēmi</i> ] at you"	<b>Mk 2:12; 5:42; 6:51 (Mk 1:22; 16:8)</b> "they were immediately overcome with amazement [ <i>existēmi</i> ]"
<b>Is 42:6-7</b> "I will take you by the hand . . . to open the eyes that are blind"	<b>Mk 1:31; 8:22-23</b> "he took the blind man by the hand"
<b>Is 43:25; 44:22</b> "I am he who blots out your transgressions . . . and I will not remember your sins"	<b>Mk 2:5-7</b> "Son, your sins are forgiven' . . . Who can forgive sins but God alone?"
<b>Is 49:24-25</b> "the captives of the mighty [LXX: <i>hischyontos</i> ] shall be taken/saved"	<b>Mk 3:27</b> "plunder his goods . . . first bind the strong man [ <i>hischyros</i> ]"
<b>Is 50:4-6; 52:13, 15</b> "the LORD has given me . . . that I may know"	<b>Mk 4:11</b> "To you has been given the secret"
<b>Is 49:8-10</b> "they shall feed along the ways; on all bare heights"	<b>Mk 6:32-44</b> "a desolate place . . . they all ate"
<b>Is 43:16</b> "the LORD who makes a way in the sea"	<b>Mk 6:48-49</b> "he came to them walking on the sea"
<b>Is 41:4; 43:10-11, 25</b> "I am he [LXX: <i>egō eimi</i> ]"	<b>Mk 6:50</b> "it is I [ <i>egō eimi</i> ]"
<b>Is 40:3</b> "prepare the way of the LORD"	<b>Mk 8:27; 9:33-34; 10:32, 46, 52</b> "on the way"
<b>Is 51:17, 22</b> "O Jerusalem, you who have drunk . . . the cup of his wrath"	<b>Mk 10:32, 38</b> "going up to Jerusalem . . . Jesus said to them . . . 'Are you able to drink the cup . . . ?'"
<b>Is 52:13, 15; 53:11-12</b> "my servant . . . bore the sin of many"	<b>Mk 10:43, 45</b> "to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."
<b>Is 52:15; 53:12</b> "he shall sprinkle many nations"	<b>Mk 14:24</b> "my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many"
<b>Is 53:7</b> "so he opened not his mouth"	<b>Mk 15:4-5</b> "Do you say nothing? . . . But Jesus still answered nothing"
<b>Is 52:15</b> "many nations will marvel [LXX: <i>thaumazō</i> ] at him; kings will shut their mouths"	<b>Mk 15:5</b> "Pilate was amazed [ <i>thaumazō</i> ]"

Because Mark has used the opening of the literary block Isaiah 40–55 at the beginning of his Gospel and then echoes various Isaianic themes throughout the rest of the narrative, we can see how Mark had the entire literary discourse in view.<sup>35</sup>

It is also evident that Paul read with an eye toward contexts, not just individual verses. Paul returns to Isaiah 52–53 four times in Romans (Rom 2:24; 10:15, 16; 15:21). He also combines Isaiah 45:23 and Isaiah 49:18 in Romans 14:11. Paul also references Isaiah 28:22 and Isaiah 28:16 in Romans 9:28, 33. Such revisiting different parts of both narrower and wider sections of Isaiah shows Paul had an understanding of the scope of the whole of the book, or at least unified sections thereof.<sup>36</sup> This can be seen not only in repeated uses of whole contexts but also in the logic of Paul’s arguments that mirror (and sometimes depend on) the context of an Old Testament citation.<sup>37</sup> Isaiah 40:12–31, for example, is about how God is superior to idols because no one gives him advice, specifically for the task of restoring his people. Paul cites Isaiah 40:13 in Romans 11:34 to conclude his argument for how God is working to restore his people.<sup>38</sup>

A clear example of contextual reading is found in the way 1 Peter uses several lines from Isaiah 53 in quick sequence. In 1 Peter 2:20–23 Peter references Isaiah 53:4, 6–7, 9. Again, understanding Isaiah 40–55 as a complete literary unit, we can also note the use of Isaiah 43:20–21 in 1 Peter 2:9. I mentioned above that 1 Peter 1:23–25 uses Isaiah 40:6–8 to emphasize the life-giving gospel. Yet that term *gospel* comes from

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<sup>35</sup>Regarding John’s contextual reading of Isaiah, see Jonathan Lett, “The Divine Identity of Jesus as the Reason for Israel’s Unbelief in John 12:36–43,” *JBL* 135 (2016): 159–73; Andreas J. Köstenberger, “John’s Appropriation of Isaiah’s Signs Theology: Implications for the Structure of John’s Gospel,” *Themelios* 43 (2018): 376–86.

<sup>36</sup>See also Jonathan M. Lunde and John Anthony Dunne, “Paul’s Creative and Contextual Use of Isaiah in Ephesians 5:14,” *JETS* 55 (2012): 87–110.

<sup>37</sup>See esp. J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul “In Concert” in the Letter to the Romans*, NovTSup 101 (Leiden: Brill, 2002); J. Edward Walters, “How Beautiful Are My Feet: The Structure and Function of Second Isaiah References in Paul’s Letter to the Romans,” *Restoration Quarterly* 52 (2010): 29–39.

<sup>38</sup>Naselli, *From Typology to Doxology*, 51–61.

Isaiah 40:9. Thus, Peter had at least some of the wider context in view than just the verses from Isaiah he actually quotes.<sup>39</sup>

The apostles seem to have read and applied portions of Isaiah, not just isolated verses, seen in the way they return to the same Isaianic contexts for their arguments and in the thematic coherence between the Isaianic contexts and their own discourses.

#### **PATTERN FOUR: ISAIAH AS A TYPOLOGICAL VISIONARY**

In several ways, this last pattern is a synthesizing of the previous three. It is the one that makes sense of how Isaiah can be read in such diverse ways. For how can something be historical (pattern one) and pertain to the future age (pattern two)? How can something have meaning in a particular literary context (pattern three) and then be employed in a new literary setting? The answer is found in particular theological convictions about the nature of both history and texts. The apostles read with the conviction that the sovereign Lord sketched within Israel's history a basic eschatological design.<sup>40</sup> Biblical texts were crafted in a way to create objective correspondences between Israel's history and that eschaton.<sup>41</sup> Together these twin convictions create a typological way of reading, where images and themes across Scripture resonate with Christ and his people. We can call typology, therefore, "*a hermeneutical conviction that God has sovereignly organized history and revelation such that Old Testament people, events, and institutions prefigure the person and work of Christ in concert with literary genre and history.*"<sup>42</sup> Such Old Testament people, events, and institutions are the

<sup>39</sup>D. A. Carson, "I Peter," in Beale and Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use*, 1019-22.

<sup>40</sup>Francis Foulkes, "The Acts of God: A Study of the Basis of Typology in the Old Testament," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Text? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 365-66.

<sup>41</sup>Such correspondences are, therefore, not contrived by the reader but found in the literary details of texts. See Frances Young, "Typology," in *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, Paul Joyce, and David E. Orton, *Biblical Interpretation Series 8* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 34-45.

<sup>42</sup>Piotrowski, *In All the Scriptures*, 71.



types in history to which Jesus becomes the antitype, the full expression of what the types intimate.<sup>43</sup> This is the kind of reading the apostles were particularly adept at, and it created the hermeneutical space to read Isaiah in any combination of the previous three patterns.

We saw this already in Matthew with his strong Davidic emphasis (Mt 1:1, 17, 20; 2:6). The passages of Isaiah that Matthew turns to commonly have a Davidic subtext (Is 7:14 in Mt 1:23, as mentioned above; likely Is 11:1 in Mt 2:23; Is 11:2 in Mt 3:16; Is 9:1 in Mt 4:16; Is 11:10 in Mt 12:21). Matthew sees in Isaiah, therefore, a means by which to access the larger biblical-theological images and expectations surrounding the house of David. The Lord's handling of the house of David in places such as Isaiah 7, or the dawning of the light of restoration in Isaiah 9:1 (HB 8:23), are typological of Jesus' birth in Matthew 1 and his preaching in Matthew 4:13-17.

Consider again the quote of Isaiah 40:3 in Mark 1:3, where the Evangelist does not *merely* quote Isaiah but draws together Malachi 3:1 and Exodus 23:20 as well.<sup>44</sup> Yet, Mark 1:2 simply says, "As it is written in Isaiah the prophet." What Mark identifies as Isaiah is actually drawing together other Old Testament material. The common bond between these Old Testament passages is the language of the exodus and the Lord meeting with his people in his designated place.<sup>45</sup> Mark's subsequent use of exodus themes (e.g., Mk 2:10-12 and Ex 9:14; Mk 3:13-14 and Ex 24:4; Mk 5:13 and Ex 15:4-5; Mk 6:48 and Ex 14:24; Mk 10:45 and Ex 6:6; Mk 14:24 and Ex 24:8) and focus on the temple (Mk 11-16) are the antitype of Isaiah 40-55.<sup>46</sup> Thus, for Mark, Isaiah is a kind of depot for ideas gathered up from other prophetic sources.

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<sup>43</sup>For seeing such dynamics in the Old Testament itself, not just retrospectively, see Foulkes, "Acts of God," 342-71.

<sup>44</sup>For much more on the significance Mark's mashup citation, see Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark*, Biblical Studies Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000).

<sup>45</sup>Nicholas G. Piotrowski, "'Whatever You Ask' for the Missionary Purposes of the Eschatological Temple: Quotation and Typology in Mark 11-12," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 21 (2017): 97-98, 101.

<sup>46</sup>Piotrowski, "'Whatever You Ask,'" 97-121. On Mark's exodus themes, see, e.g., Bryan D. Estelle, *Echoes of Exodus: Tracing a Biblical Motif* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018), 208-25.

We can see this as well in Luke when he quotes Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4:18-19, which is itself a development of the theology of Leviticus 25 (see esp. Lev 25:10).<sup>47</sup> Isaiah is predicting a future restoration in terms of the Levitical Jubilee. He has gathered up the theology of the Jubilee and projected it into the future—that future Luke now sees. The preaching of Jesus and the life of the church amount to the antitype of Isaiah's Jubilee vision.

Paul also reads the new exodus language of places such as Isaiah 43:18-19, and the new creation language of Isaiah 65:17, to apply to believers' reconciliation with God. The gospel is the "new thing" shaped like the old, and wherever "anyone is in Christ" the new creation has dawned (2 Cor 5:17). As Tom Holland puts it, Paul was "immersed in [the] Old Testament stream of expectations," most of which "are found in embryonic form in the book of Isaiah."<sup>48</sup>

Such typology is also evident in the way references to Israel are applied to Jesus and subsequently to the church. Isaiah 49 is about the redemption and future missionary fruitfulness of one whom the Lord calls "my servant, Israel" (Is 49:3). Yet, this servant has a ministry to "the tribes of Jacob" (Is 49:5-6) and is equally "a light to the nations, that [the LORD's] salvation may reach to the ends of the earth" (Is 49:6; LXX: *heōs eschatou tēs gēs*). Luke 2:32 calls Jesus "a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and [the] glory of your people Israel." In turn, in Acts 13:47 Paul and Barnabas call themselves "a light for the Gentiles, [bringing] salvation to the ends of the earth" (*heōs eschatou tēs gēs*; see also Acts 1:8). Typology is the basic hermeneutical principal at work whereby words spoken to Israel are applied to Jesus and then to his people.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Walther Zimmerli, "Das 'Gnadenjahr des Herrn,'" in *Archäologie und Altes Testament*, ed. A. Kuschke and E. Kutsch (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1970), 330-32; Christopher R. Bruno, "Jesus Is Our Jubilee' . . . But How? The OT Background and Lukan Fulfillment of the Ethics of Jubilee," *JETS* 53 (2010): 85-86, 93.

<sup>48</sup>Tom Holland, *Contours of Pauline Theology: A Radical New Survey of the Influences of Paul's Biblical Writings* (Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2004), 31.

<sup>49</sup>Michael A. Lyons contends that such individual/corporate dynamic (servant-Jesus-apostles) originates out of Is 40-55 itself. See Lyons, "Paul and the Servants[s]: Isaiah 49,6 in Acts 13,47," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 89 (2013): 345-59, strengthening the contextual reading observations above.

The same hermeneutical understanding is at play in Luke 1:79 and Acts 26:18. In the former Isaiah 42:7 is used to speak of Jesus' ministry; in the latter the same is applied to Paul's evangelistic preaching. Equally, the Isaianic language of "the Way" is taken up and applied to the church in Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22.<sup>50</sup>

Let us consider also Paul's use of Isaiah 25:8 in 1 Corinthians 15:54. Isaiah 25 is a text of national restoration where swallowing up death forever is a promise made to Israel. Paul applies it to the resurrection of Jesus and of believers (1 Cor 15:51-57). Thus, the eschatological hope of the nation is applied to Jesus and his international people. The warrant for this is the solidarity between Israel and Jesus, and in turn between Jesus and the church.<sup>51</sup> In this way, Israel is typological of the combined Jewish and Gentile worshiping community.<sup>52</sup>

The same typological dynamic is at work in Paul's reading of Isaiah 52:11. There Israel is called to come out of exile. In 2 Corinthians 6:17 Paul uses that verse to call the church out of the pagan culture.<sup>53</sup>

We noted above that Isaiah 40:6-8, which is about the recalling of the exiles, is used in 1 Peter 1:23-25 to celebrate the new life provided by the gospel. Again, there are words spoken to Israel being applied to the church, which makes sense if Israel and the situation of exile are typologically related to the church.

In sum, that which Isaiah applies to Israel, the New Testament writers apply to Jesus. That which applies to Jesus is then also applied to the church. If Jesus, therefore, is the antitype to the Old Testament's types, the church is "a gathering place of supratypes."<sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup>See Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 51-69.

<sup>51</sup>E. Earle Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 170-71.

<sup>52</sup>Richard B. Hays also points out how dependent Paul's argument is on the original Isaianic context. See Hays, *First Corinthians*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 275-76.

<sup>53</sup>It is worth noting that typology is not the same as allegory, the latter of which "is not one of Paul's primary hermeneutical strategies" (Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 166). On the difference between the two, see Piotrowski, *In All the Scriptures*, 21-28, 68-71.

<sup>54</sup>David Schrock, "From Beelines to Plotlines: Typology That Follows the Covenantal Topography of Scripture," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 21 (2017): 44-46.

It is essential to recognize that hermeneutics is not just a mechanical how-to process, like the way I assemble IKEA furniture. Rather, hermeneutics is intensely *theological* and, therefore, employs interpretive frames.<sup>55</sup> For the apostles, that interpretive frame was created by the conviction that history was real, purposeful, and under the Lord's providential guidance (pattern one) to bring about the fullness of time (pattern two) as types give way to their eschatological fulfillment (pattern four). This is all to be expected because God himself has spoken it and transmitted it to successive generations by way of literary conventions (pattern three). It is these convictions that the apostles brought to bear on their reading of Isaiah. They can show up in any one or combination of the above four patterns.

#### **MATTHEW'S READING OF ISAIAH 42:1-4:**

##### **A CONFLUENCE OF PATTERNS**

Each contributor in this section will comment on the use of Isaiah 42:1-4 in Matthew 12:17-21. For our purposes here, what do we learn about how Matthew reads Isaiah from this use? It seems three of the four patterns can be observed.

To begin, we can observe pattern two at work: Isaiah as a man for all seasons. Note that Matthew sees Jesus' healing ministry as a fulfillment of Isaiah 42:1-4. As mentioned above, fulfillment in Matthew should be understood as bringing an original idea or event to its full meaning. Thus, the evangelist sees Jesus' ministry as the landing pad of God's prior announcements, the finish line to which his purposes had always been traveling. In this way, Isaiah is read eschatologically.

Next we observe that Matthew has more than just Isaiah 42 in view, thus reading according to pattern three: Isaiah as a unified literary work. While the main quote is that of Isaiah 42:1-3, Matthew splices

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<sup>55</sup>Especially helpful is G. K. Beale, "Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? An Examination of the Presuppositions of Jesus' and the Apostles' Exegetical Method," in Beale, *Right Doctrine from the Wrong Text?*, 387-404.

in Isaiah 11:10 for specific language that serves his theological purposes more directly. Thus, he has an eye toward the wider theology of Isaiah.<sup>56</sup>

What are those specific theological purposes Matthew saw in Isaiah 11:10 to draw it into the larger quote? Here we observe pattern four: Isaiah as a typological visionary. We have already seen how Matthew is thoroughly focused on Jesus' role as the eschatological heir of David's house. Turning to LXX Isaiah 11:10 in Matthew 12:21 brings with it that Davidic theme. The entire Isaianic verse reads, "And it will come to pass in that day—the root of Jesse, who rises to rule the nations—of him shall the nations hope, and his resting place will be glorious." The "root of Jesse" is a reference to the house of David. This is clearly Matthew's intent, as seen in the question only two verses later, "Can this be the Son of David?" (Mt 12:23). Matthew 12:15-21 also dovetails with four other healing episodes in the Gospel where Jesus is again called the "the Son of David" (Mt 9:27; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:14-15).<sup>57</sup> That tradition of the eschatological Davidide as a *healer* comes from Ezekiel 34:2-4, 22-25.<sup>58</sup> Matthew has found in Isaiah, therefore, a chance to redouble his Davidic emphasis and splice in the eschatological hopes of Ezekiel 34.

## CONCLUSION

What caused the apostles to read Isaiah, or anything else, as *Christian* Scripture? The answer is the reorienting experience of the Christ event. Isaiah was written in another time, under different circumstances from the New Testament. But because sacred history is under the Lord's control, and that history has reached its intended goal in the gospel and

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<sup>56</sup>See Jeannine K. Brown, "Jesus Messiah as Isaiah's Servant of the Lord: New Testament Explorations," *JETS* 62 (2020): 51-69.

<sup>57</sup>See H. Daniel Zacharias, *Matthew's Presentation of the Son of David: Davidic Tradition and Typology in the Gospel of Matthew*, T&T Clark Biblical Studies (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 79-103.

<sup>58</sup>Young S. Chae, *Jesus as the Eschatological Davidic Shepherd: Studies in the Old Testament, Second Temple Judaism, and in the Gospel of Matthew*, WUNT 2/216 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

the church; the texts that record such history can never be read the same way again. Richard Hays says it this way: “Because God has acted in Jesus Christ to initiate the turn of the ages, everything past must be read with new eyes.”<sup>59</sup>

The new hermeneutical frame shows up in observable patterns in how the apostles read Isaiah. They read Isaiah as a historic text (pattern one) that nonetheless spoke to their unique moment in time (pattern two), while giving attention to large textual discourses (pattern three). Together, these patterns evince a *typological* reading of the Isaiah wherein it is specifically the death and resurrection of Jesus, together with his creation of the church, that brings the full meaning of history and sacred texts to their climax (pattern four).

It is critical to note that the apostles are not simply updating the significance of the Old Testament to jive with their unique audience, like a twenty-first-century preacher will make so-called relevant application. No! To live on the precipice of history is quite different from living downstream. Instead, they understood that the Old Testament was intentionally written for their moment. First Peter 1:10-12 comments:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. (ESV)

The heaviest objects in the universe exert a gravitational force on other objects because they press down on the fabric of space-time and create a slope toward themselves. In so doing, they gather objects

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<sup>59</sup>Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 168.

around themselves. The New Testament authors understood Jesus' person and work as such a theological lodestar, sloping the terrain of redemptive-historical toward itself, wherein all biblical themes and types rush along to finally revolve around the gospel "at the ends of the ages."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Special thanks to Jonathan Zavodney for his help with resources and editing.



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