

## WHO IS SPEAKING? THE USE OF ISAIAH 8:17–18 IN HEBREWS 2:13 AS A CASE STUDY FOR APPLYING THE SPEECH OF KEY OT FIGURES TO CHRIST

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**Abstract:** *In Heb 2:13, the author of Hebrews appropriates the words of David (from Psalm 22) and Isaiah (from Isaiah 8) as if Christ said them. I propose that this interpretational perspective of the NT authors is best explained by their understanding of the OT as containing patterns to be fulfilled in the eschatological people of God. They expected the lives of key OT individuals to prefigure the life and ministry of Christ, and on this basis their words could be applied to Christ. I further propose that modern interpreters should follow this methodology in exploring other OT figures whose speech may be applied to Christ.*

**Key Words:** *Hebrews 2, Psalm 22, Isaiah 8, typology, biblical theology, Joseph, Joshua, Elisha*

Regardless of whether one agrees with his conclusions or not, Peter Enns is undoubtedly correct when he states, “Time and time again the New Testament authors do some odd things, by our standards, with the Old Testament.”<sup>1</sup> Conservative scholars are faced with two options: impose one’s own “standards” on the Bible or strive to adopt the presuppositions of the biblical authors. Since it is clearly undesirable to foist twenty-first century notions on the Bible, the challenge presented to modern-day interpreters is to identify the interpretational mindset of the biblical authors. Although this is an ever-growing field of study, there is still a need for explorations into the hermeneutic of the early church with the goal of developing a pattern that modern-day interpreters can follow. This paper will attempt to provide such an exploration into the instances where the NT authors put the words of a key OT figure into the mouth of Christ. My goal is to discern the methodology of these specific instances, using Heb 2:13 as a case study, and then to apply this methodology to the words of other OT individuals.

This paper cannot tackle every issue related to this topic. I am assuming from the outset that the NT authors’ use of the OT was always legitimate and in accordance with the original OT contexts.<sup>2</sup> In addition, I will assume that the interpreta-

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Enns, *Incarnation and Inspiration: Evangelicals and the Problem of the OT* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 114.

<sup>2</sup> For convincing argumentation, see 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 *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the OT in the New* (ed. G. K. Beale; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 387–404. Contra Enns, who maintains that “the New Testament

tive methods of the NT authors are provided as models for modern-day interpreters to follow. I will address this briefly below, but I will take this for granted rather than arguing extensively for it. With these delimitations set aside, it is time to tackle the issue at hand. First, I will explain the specific kind of NT use of the OT that is under consideration.

### I. TYPOLOGICAL SPEECH: THE NT USE OF APPLYING OT INDIVIDUALS' SPEECH TO CHRIST

I want to examine the specific instances when a NT author takes the words of a key OT figure and puts them into the mouth of Jesus. These are words that, as far as we know, were never actually spoken by the Lord Jesus during his earthly ministry. And yet they are applied to Jesus as if they are true of him as well. For lack of a better term, I will refer to this as “typological speech” throughout this paper. This is a challenge to modern readers because it is not a common Western method of research. Never have the words of George Washington been attributed to Ronald Reagan (except in sloppy internet memes). Yet this is a distinct practice of Jesus and the early church.

1. *Examples of typological speech.* For example, Peter claims that David “foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ” (Acts 2:31). To prove this, Peter quotes Ps 16:8–11 and essentially utilizes words that were spoken by David as if they were spoken by Jesus (Acts 2:27–31). Paul uses a similar hermeneutical method when he applies Ps 69:9 as the words of Christ (Rom 15:3). A few verses later, Paul interprets the words of David (2 Sam 22:50 and Ps 18:49) as spoken by Jesus at his enthronement celebration (Rom 15:9).<sup>3</sup> Paul also interprets Ps 116:10 as the words of Jesus (2 Cor 4:13). A key example is found in Hebrews where the author specifically states that Christ spoke the words of Ps 40:6–8, “Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said ...” (Heb 10:5–7).

It is not just NT authors who employ typological speech. During his earthly ministry, Jesus specifically quotes Isa 61:1–2 during his Sabbath reading and applies the mission of Isaiah to himself (Luke 4:18–19). Though not as explicit, Jesus also borrows the words of David in speaking of those who “hated me without a cause” (John 15:25; see Ps 35:19; 69:4). On the cross, Jesus voices the words of David from Ps 22:1, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt 27:46). When Jesus breathes out on the cross, “I thirst,” John tells us that it was “to fulfill the Scripture” (John 19:28). Most likely, these were once again the words of David in Ps 69:21. Then right before he died, Jesus said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46), clearly appropriating the words of David in Ps 31:5.

I want to focus on the particularly challenging examples found in Heb 2:12–13, where the author of Hebrews provides three OT quotations. The author of

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authors were not engaging the Old Testament in an effort to remain consistent with the original context and intention of the Old Testament author” (*Incarnation and Inspiration*, 115).

<sup>3</sup> This is similar to the way in which the author of Hebrews applies Ps 22:22 to Christ in Heb 2:12. This will be examined briefly below.

Hebrews references two passages from the OT, but employs them in three individual citations: Ps 22:22, Isa 8:17, and Isa 8:18. The words of David (in Psalm 22) and Isaiah (in Isaiah 8) are put into the mouth of Christ as if he said them.

2. *Heb 2:13 as a case study.* In order to fully appreciate how the author of Hebrews employs typological speech, it is necessary to understand the point he is making in context. J. Ross Wagner voices the consensus among commentators that the theme of Heb 2:10–18 is “the solidarity of the eternal Son of God with human beings.”<sup>4</sup> Jesus and his followers are inextricably linked. Jesus “is not ashamed to call them brothers” and sisters (2:11). They are in the same family (lit., “all of one”).<sup>5</sup> For those who are united to Jesus, he becomes not only their leader but also their representative. This becomes immensely important when one understands how terribly humans have failed in the mission God gave Adam in the Garden.

As outlined in Gen 1:28, and explicated in Psalm 8, God’s plan was for man to exercise dominion over creation as his royal representative. Adam (and all humans after him) failed at his task, so the second Adam temporarily became lower than the angels so he could succeed in the place of fallen man. “In his incarnation,” writes Dale Leschert, “Jesus, the God-man, became the true embodiment of humanity (Heb 2:14, 17), a perfect man (Heb 2:10; 4:15; 5:8), and thus the only hope to fulfill all the psalmist’s aspirations to which no human being before ever fully attained.”<sup>6</sup> In the words of Brevard Childs, “In Jesus Christ true manhood has already appeared.”<sup>7</sup> As the ideal man, Jesus fulfills Psalm 8, and he invites his brothers and sisters to share in his reign (Heb 2:5–9).<sup>8</sup> Jesus is the leader or pioneer who brings “many sons to glory” (Heb 2:10). Believers are able to exercise dominion now and in the new heaven and earth only by means of their solidarity with Jesus.

It was Jesus’ suffering and death that qualified Jesus to be the leader of his people. This implies that his people must follow him on the path of suffering. The path to the crown is the cross. It was that way for Jesus, and it will be no different for his followers. In summary, Jesus fulfills Psalm 8 by being made a little lower than the angels (incarnation) so that he can be crowned with glory and honor (enthronement). Believers have the privilege of ruling and suffering with Jesus as a result of the solidarity between Jesus and his people.

To prove the concept of solidarity, the author of Hebrews draws from the OT.<sup>9</sup> These quotations are not snatched at random, but are ideally suited for the

<sup>4</sup> J. Ross Wagner, “Faithfulness and Fear, Stumbling and Salvation: Receptions of LXX Isaiah 8:11–18 in the New Testament,” in *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays* (ed. J. Ross Wagner, C. Kavin Rowe, and A. Katherine Grieb; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 98.

<sup>5</sup> The fact that Jesus finds no shame in claiming them as his brothers and sisters is deepened by the fact that they were experiencing rejection from society.

<sup>6</sup> Dale F. Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations of Hebrews: A Study in the Validity of the Epistle’s Interpretation of Some Core Citations from the Psalms* (The National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion Dissertation Series 10; Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1994), 118.

<sup>7</sup> Brevard S. Childs, “Psalm 8 in the Context of the Christian Canon,” *Int* 23 (1969): 30.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Hebrews* (BTC; Nashville: B&H, 2015), 103.

<sup>9</sup> George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 109.

point the author is making. It is interesting to note how Psalm 22 and Isaiah 8 share similar contexts of faith in the midst of suffering. Both passages reflect the feeling of abandonment by God. David begins by lamenting, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Ps 22:1) but concludes with the confidence that “he has not hidden his face from him” (Ps 22:24). Similarly, Isaiah expresses faith in God even though he believes that God “is hiding his face from the house of Jacob” (Isa 8:17).<sup>10</sup> The theme of trust is also found in both Ps 22:8 (see Matt 27:43) and Isa 8:17. G. W. Grogan is correct when he concludes, “The author of the epistle [of Hebrews] has chosen his Old Testament quotations most judiciously and with a keen eye, not only for their appropriateness in reference to Christ, but also for their links with each other.”<sup>11</sup>

In the first citation, the author of Hebrews takes the words of David in the Psalm of the Cross and puts them into the mouth of Christ.<sup>12</sup> Even Psalm 22 descends to the point of “death” (Ps 22:15), as God rescues David in a manner as dramatic as a resurrection (Ps 22:21). This causes David to exclaim, “I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you” (Ps 22:22). The author of Hebrews applies this verse to the life of Jesus who suffers on the cross, but then is exalted and rejoices with his brothers and sisters. Now Jesus and his people can fulfill the role for which God made humans by reigning together, “For kingship belongs to Yahweh, and he rules over the nations” (Ps 22:28). Jesus is made lower than the angels so he can lead his people through suffering to a glorious celebration. Since believers are united to Christ, they too will emerge victorious from their suffering to rule and rejoice with him in the new heavens and earth.

The second passage is Isa 8:17–18, furnishing the author of Hebrews with two quotations that he applies to Jesus. The context of Isaiah 8 is a dark day for God’s people. King Ahaz is paralyzed by fear as he hears that Israel and Syria have hatched a plot to dethrone him as the rightful Davidic king.<sup>13</sup> Personally, Isaiah is experiencing rejection by the people. In spite of all of this, Isaiah still expresses his hope in God as his sanctuary (Isa 8:14). Isaiah writes, “I will wait for Yahweh, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him” (Isa 8:17). In the midst of those dark days, God gave Isaiah children as signals to the remnant people of God—signals of salvation and judgment. The lengthy name of one son, Maher-

<sup>10</sup> This connection was brought to my attention by George H. Guthrie, “Hebrews,” in *Commentary on the NT Use of the OT* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 949–51.

<sup>11</sup> Geoffrey W. Grogan, “Christ and His People: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Hebrews 2:5–18,” *VE* 6 (1969): 62. For a helpful explanation of the appropriateness of Isaiah 8 for the point the author of Hebrews is making, see Guthrie, “Hebrews,” 951.

<sup>12</sup> For an excellent explanation of how the early church interpreted the words of David in the NT, see Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 296–97. In context, Schreiner is commenting on the use of Psalm 40 in Hebrews 10. Schreiner writes, “Psalms about David were read typologically and eschatologically and messianically. What was said about David anticipated the coming of the Christ” (p. 297). Wagner also notes “the widespread early Christian interpretive convention that discerns in the words of David the voice of Jesus the Messiah” (“Faithfulness and Fear,” 103). This raises the question of whether the same could be said of Isaiah, a point further addressed below.

<sup>13</sup> Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 102.

shalal-hash-baz, brought a message of judgment; his name meant “quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil” and alerted the people that God would use the Assyrians to judge them (Isa 8:3–4). Another son, Shear-jashub, brought a message of salvation since his name meant “a remnant shall return” (Isa 7:3). Isaiah was “a rallying point for faith,” as William Lane puts it.<sup>14</sup> Isaiah said, “Behold, I and the children whom Yahweh has given me are signs and portents in Israel from Yahweh of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion” (Isa 8:18). While he suffered here on earth, Jesus also trusted in God to raise him to life. Jesus also had children that God had given him (cf. John 17:6). This group of disciples would follow their leader through the valley of the shadow of death. Just as Isaiah’s faith was representative of the faithful remnant of his day, so also Jesus represents his brothers and sisters as he expresses faith in the midst of suffering. Wagner summarizes the point of comparison, “As he stands in the assembly of his brothers and sisters praising God, Jesus embodies the attitude of the small remnant of the faithful in Isaiah 8, who in the midst of a hostile society resolve to fear and to trust in God alone.”<sup>15</sup>

By choosing quotations from Psalm 22 and Isaiah 8, the author of Hebrews makes the point that believers are united to Christ. They must follow him through suffering to reach the glory of reigning with him. In the meantime, believers must do what Jesus did in suffering—rejoice and trust God.

It is clear that the author of Hebrews used the OT in a masterful way to make his point. My goal is to go further than understanding what it means by exploring the methodological mindset of the author as he incorporates OT words (particularly the words of Isaiah) into the life of Christ. I am aware of only a few scholars who engage with the author’s method of incorporating Isaiah 8 into Hebrews 2. These approaches will be surveyed briefly before submitting my proposal.

## II. OTHER APPROACHES

I will interact with three interpreters who have tackled the issue of the use of Isaiah 8 in Hebrews 2. Since I remain unconvinced by any of these approaches, I will subsequently propose what seems to me a simpler and stronger way forward.

1. *G. W. Grogan: Vocational commonality.* G. W. Grogan has written several helpful articles on the concept of solidarity in the book of Hebrews in which he has interacted with the challenging use of the OT in Hebrews 2:13.<sup>16</sup> Grogan asks the right question, “How can the writer apply verses that speak of Isaiah and his children to Christ and his people?”<sup>17</sup> He heads in the right direction with his answer: “The presupposition for this application is clear as early as [Heb] 1:1–2, that the prophets and Christ (for all their differences) have a vocational commonality, for

<sup>14</sup> William L. Lane, *Hebrews* (WBC 47; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 1:60.

<sup>15</sup> Wagner, “Faithfulness and Fear,” 104.

<sup>16</sup> Geoffrey W. Grogan, “The NT Interpretation of the OT: A Comparative Study,” *TynBul* 18 (1967): 54–76; “The OT Concept of Solidarity in Hebrews,” *TynBul* 49 (1998): 159–73; “Christ and His People.”

<sup>17</sup> Grogan, “Solidarity in Hebrews,” 169.

God speaks through them all.”<sup>18</sup> For Grogan, this use of the OT is legitimate because of their vocational commonality, that is to say, their shared role as prophet. He states elsewhere that Isaiah parallels Christ mainly in that they are both prophets: “Language employed of an Old Testament prophet could be appropriately applied to Him. There was of course, a distinct parallel between Isaiah, rejected by the people of his day and yet gathering disciples around him, and Christ.”<sup>19</sup> This is very helpful. However, I propose that the rationale behind incorporating key OT figures’ words into the life of Jesus goes deeper than that. For example, there are clearly other OT individuals whose lives parallel that of Christ’s who were not prophets, priests, or kings (e.g. Adam, Joseph, Joshua, etc.). I would like to ask Grogan in what way all kings and prophets prefigure Jesus. Does the life (and words) of King Saul form a pattern for Christ’s life and ministry in the same way as David’s? Do Saul and other ungodly kings serve as antitypes to Christ, literary foils highlighting by contrast the righteousness of the coming Messiah? To say that all prophets, priests, and kings serve as patterns to Christ, and thereby their words are appropriate to attribute to Jesus, seems insufficient as a methodology to explain what the author of Hebrews is doing.

2. *J. Ross Wagner: Ambiguous speaker.* In a helpful essay on the reception of the LXX translation of Isa 8:11–18 in the NT, J. Ross Wagner explores the “complex and dynamic process of appropriating and transforming Israel’s traditions in a quest to understand and proclaim the significance of God’s redemptive work in Christ.”<sup>20</sup> Wagner writes that placement of Isaiah’s words “on the lips of Jesus” is a “bold and creative interpretation of Isaiah 8:17–18 [that] originated with the homilist himself.”<sup>21</sup> The early church drew a connection between Isa 8:14 and 28:16, with the result that they interpreted the “stone of offense” as Christ himself (Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:8; 1 Cor 1:23). According to Wagner, the author of Hebrews advances this interpretation by noting parallels between Isaiah’s remnant and Jesus’s followers.<sup>22</sup> Wagner mentions the possibility that the author of Hebrews recognizes “Isaiah and his children as prefigurations of Christ and the church.”<sup>23</sup> This is not the view Wagner favors, but it is an idea to which we will return. Wagner believes, instead, that the ambiguity of the introductory phrase (“and he said,” *καὶ ἐρεῖ*, Isa 8:17, added in the LXX) provided the author of Hebrews with the latitude he needed for a creative adaptation of this quotation for his own theological purposes.<sup>24</sup>

The ambiguity expressed in the LXX is insufficient as a methodological model of the early church. First, it seems unlikely that entire interpretation by the author of Hebrews would be based on ambiguity introduced by the LXX. Second, Wag-

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* (italics mine).

<sup>19</sup> Grogan, “Christ and His People,” 61.

<sup>20</sup> Wagner, “Faithfulness and Fear,” 81.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 101, 102.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 105. This appears very similar to Bates’s prosopological exegesis, though Bates says that his view calls Wagner’s perspective into question (Matthew W. Bates, *The Hermeneutics of the Apostolic Proclamation: The Center of Paul’s Method of Scriptural Interpretation* [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012], 6).

ner's proposal makes no progress toward explaining other similar uses of the OT where the words of key figures are applied to Christ. There is one more area of criticism to mention about Wagner's essay, though it does not necessarily affect his proposal. I am uncomfortable with the terminology he employs to describe what the author of Hebrews is doing. For example, Wagner refers to interpretation of Hebrews 2:13 as "a creative transformation of tradition."<sup>25</sup> When speaking of the author of Hebrews, Wagner speaks of "his exegetical innovations" and his "bold and creative reappropriations of Isaiah's words."<sup>26</sup> Speaking in these terms can easily lend itself to the methodology Wagner adopts. If the speaker in the text is unclear, then the NT author is free to creatively adapt, expand, or commandeer the original text in accordance with his own theological purposes. The trajectory of such conclusions threatens to arrive at a destination far from the mind of the divine author, and I believe far from the minds of the human authors as well. It is not as if the author of Hebrews has infused Isaiah with new meaning, but rather that he has detected and unpacked the meaning that God, and quite likely Isaiah as well, had always intended. It is probable that Isaiah was aware that his life was a pattern of the Messiah's. My proposal will not be to reappropriate the text, but to uncover divinely intended patterns.

3. *Matthew Bates: Prosopological exegesis.* Matthew Bates contributes to the conversation about discovering the "voice behind the voice," as he says was the goal of the Church Fathers.<sup>27</sup> Bates refers to his contribution as prosopological exegesis, which he briefly defines as "the activity of ancient readers in seeking to clarify ambivalent speeches in their scriptures by assigning suitable characters as they saw fit."<sup>28</sup> Bates allows that the uncertainty of the speaker could be the result of the NT author's ignorance of the context of his OT quotations.<sup>29</sup> When there is apparent ambiguity regarding the speaker (or hearer), Bates maintains that the early church employed prosopological exegesis by designating new speakers where appropriate.<sup>30</sup>

While this proposal is attractive, it begs the question: How did NT interpreters know what an appropriate speaker would be? Even if uncertainty as to the speaker allowed the early church to assign the quotations to new speakers, this does not move toward understanding their methodological mindset. I am also unconvinced that NT authors applied OT quotations to Christ only when the original speaker was uncertain. This does not explain the common practice of interpreting the words of David as if Christ said them.

The proposals surveyed above are fascinating, but none of them appears to me to provide an adequate understanding of the hermeneutic of the early church.

<sup>25</sup> Wagner, "Faithfulness and Fear," 102.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 103, 105.

<sup>27</sup> Bates, *Hermeneutics of the Apostolic Proclamation*, 2.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 6. "Prosopological exegesis," Bates further notes, "explains a text by suggesting that the author of the text identified various persons or characters (*prosopa*) as speakers or addressees in a pre-text, even though it is not clear from the pre-text that such persons are in view" (*ibid.*, 183). For a fuller definition, see *ibid.*, 218.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 216. Bates lists the book of Hebrews as an example of this (*ibid.*, 216 n. 111).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

Building on the helpful elements in the above perspectives, I will propose that the NT authors were operating under certain hermeneutical assumptions that modern-day interpreters should strive to copy.

### III. PROPOSAL

Once one understands the mindset of the early church, it is not surprising to see that they utilize typological speech. I propose that they understood that God sovereignly coordinated history so that key individuals, events, and institutions served as patterns of what the end-times people of God would experience. They were expecting individuals like David, events like the exodus, and institutions like the Passover, to find fulfillment in the Messiah. They were on the lookout for key OT figures whose lives prefigured the life and ministry of Christ, and on this basis the words of these individuals could be applied to Christ. To prove this thesis, it is first necessary to demonstrate that God wrote the history of Israel by way of patterns.

1. *Israel's history as a pattern for God's eschatological people.* Francis Foulkes has written a fascinating article demonstrating that God acts in patterns, showing convincingly that key people, events, or institutions are repeated throughout the OT. This, he says, is based on the character of God for “as he had acted in the past, he could and would act in the future.”<sup>31</sup> This is particularly demonstrated in the exodus event as the OT anticipates that God will deliver his people in a “new exodus.” These people or events serve as types of the Messiah. Foulkes defines a type as “an event, a series of circumstances, or an aspect of the life of an individual or of the nation, which finds a parallel and a deeper realization in the incarnate life of our Lord.”<sup>32</sup> Typology is not only based on the repetition of history, but on the belief that it would be repeated on a more glorious scale. OT authors anticipated a Davidic Messiah, a new Melchizedek, a new Moses, a new Elijah, a new temple, a new covenant, a new creation, and a new people of God. This perspective allows NT authors to base their Christology not only on direct predictions in the OT but also on the typological patterns of the OT. As Foulkes puts it, “History is itself prophetic.”<sup>33</sup>

If God designed the OT (and redemptive history) to function in this way, it is probable that this understanding shaped the perspective of the early church. Not only did God hardwire history with patterns pointing to Christ, but the NT authors also expected to find these patterns as they interpreted the OT. G. K. Beale agrees, “Old Testament history was understood as containing historical patterns which

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<sup>31</sup> Francis Foulkes, “The Acts of God: A Study of the Basis of Typology in the OT,” in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Text? Essays on the Use of the OT in the New* (ed. G. K. Beale; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), 343.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 366. Foulkes does not regard allegory as an appropriate hermeneutic, even arguing that Paul’s use of ἀλληγορέω in Gal 4:24 is better categorized as typology (*ibid.*, 367–68).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 366. He explains, “It is thus that the New Testament interprets the Old. It interprets not only its prediction but also its history, which is itself revelation because it describes the acts of God, in the light of the revelation of him who is the Word Incarnate” (*ibid.*, 365).

foreshadowed the period of the eschaton.”<sup>34</sup> Since the early church understood that God is the sovereign writer of history, they were looking for “overarching historical patterns or for significant persons” from the OT and expected to find “patterns of Israel’s history from the Old Testament as recapitulated in the New Testament.”<sup>35</sup> Beale argues that this expectation was based on “the assumption of *corporate solidarity* or *representation*.”<sup>36</sup> He summarizes this point well: “The early church believed that through identification with Christ it was the continuation of the true Israel, living in the inauguration of the latter days. As such it was beginning to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies and promises about eschatological Israel.”<sup>37</sup> Since the early church was aware that God was sovereignly writing history with intentional patterns that pointed to the Messiah, they interpreted the OT with the expectation that key individuals would serve as patterns of Christ.<sup>38</sup>

The NT authors understood that God’s story was being told in repeated patterns that would escalate and culminate in the eschatological people of God who are united to the Messiah. They also understood that the lives of key OT figures were intentional patterns of the life of Christ. An obvious example is the life of King David, an individual whose words are often put into the mouth of Christ. Based on this perspective on the NT use of the OT, I propose that it is also appropriate to put the words of Isaiah and other key typological patterns into the mouth of Christ. The author of Hebrews knew that Isaiah’s life paralleled that of the coming Servant, and so his words were appropriate for Jesus.

2. *Isaiah’s life as a pattern of the life of Christ.* At this point, it is helpful to repeat Grogan’s insight regarding the parallels between Isaiah and Christ. “There was,” Grogan writes, “a distinct parallel between Isaiah, rejected by the people of his day and yet gathering disciples around him, and Christ.”<sup>39</sup> I believe that there are far more similarities between Isaiah and Jesus than Grogan has mentioned (see table below). Below I will elaborate on a few of the more significant parallels.

Table 1. Isaiah’s Life as a Pattern of the Life of Christ

<b>Isaiah</b>	<b>Jesus</b>
Name means “Yahweh is salvation”	Jesus will save his people (Matt 1:21)
Prophet	Better prophet
Represents Israel	Represents Israel
Leader who gathers a remnant	Leader who gathers his people
Vineyard parable (Isa 5:1–7)	Vineyard parable (Matt 21:33–41)
Sent by God (Isa 6:8)	Sent by God (John 20:21; 1 John 4:14)

<sup>34</sup> Beale, “Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?,” 394.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 394, 395.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 392, italics his.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 394.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 400. Beale clarifies that these are key people and important events, which protects interpreters from “illegitimately focusing on minutiae as typological foreshadowings” (*ibid.*).

<sup>39</sup> Grogan, “Christ and His People,” 61.

Spoke but people did not understand (Isa 6:9–10)	Spoke in parables so people would not understand (Matt 13:14–15)
Debate regarding signs (Isa 7:10–14)	Debate regarding signs (Matt 12:38–39)
Trusted God (Isa 8:17)	Trusted God (Heb 2:13)
Rejected by the people (Isa 28:9–10; 30:9–11)	Rejected by the people (John 1:11)
Confronted hypocritical worship (Isa 29:13)	Confronted hypocritical worship (Matt 15:7–9)
“Do not be afraid” of people (Isa 37:6–7)	Do not fear what people can do to you (Matt 10:28)
Anointed for a specific mission (Isa 61:1–2)	Had the same mission (Luke 4:17–18; 7:22)
Murdered (Heb 11:37)	Murdered (Matthew 27)

Both Isaiah and Jesus called people to repent (Isa 1:18; Mark 1:15) so they could receive forgiveness (Isa 40:1–2; Mark 2:5). They both spoke in cryptic language so that some people would not be able to understand (Isa 6:9–10; Matt 13:14–15). Then Isaiah, clearly speaking on behalf of the coming servant, explains his mission, “The Spirit of the Lord Yahweh is upon me, because Yahweh has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of Yahweh’s favor” (Isa 61:1–2). It was on a Sabbath seven hundred years later that Jesus intentionally found this passage and read it. In no unmistakable terms, Jesus announced that he shared Isaiah’s mission, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). Here Jesus adopts the words of Isaiah as his own.

On an even deeper level, both Isaiah and Jesus represent the faithful people of God. God said to Isaiah (as prefiguring the Servant), “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified” (Isa 49:3). As the leader of the remnant of God’s people, Isaiah served as a representative for true Israel. Jesus is the true Israel, and all those who unite themselves to him are the “Israel of God” (Gal 6:16). Tremper Longman and Raymond Dillard beautifully demonstrate how Jesus represents and fulfills the remnant in Isaiah’s day, “As the embodiment of the faithful remnant, [Jesus] would undergo divine judgment for sin (on the cross), endure an exile (three days forsaken by God in the grave), and experience a restoration (resurrection) to life as the foundation of a new Israel, inheriting the promises of God afresh.”<sup>40</sup>

When Isaiah spoke, he expressed the corporate trust of his children and disciples (Isa 8:16–18). As we have seen, this passage is clearly applied to Jesus by the author of Hebrews, emphasizing the solidarity between Christ and his people. Jesus speaks of true believers as his brothers who share “one source” (Heb 2:11). He also shares their human nature and was “made like to his brothers in every respect” (Heb 2:17). This qualified him to lead “many sons to glory” (2:10). The solidarity of

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<sup>40</sup> Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the OT* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 315.

Isaiah with his disciples and Jesus with his brothers and sisters is explained by F. F. Bruce:

Certainly, in Isaiah's prophetic ministry there is a close association between the coming King and the remnant—or, to use the language of Hebrews, between the Son and his brothers. Moreover, there is reason to believe that Isaiah himself took steps to give a conscious corporate existence to the embryonic remnant of his own day, partly in the circle of his disciples of whom he speaks in Isa. 8:16 and partly in his own family.<sup>41</sup>

As the representative leader of his disciples, Jesus leads them to exaltation by means of the path of suffering. William Lane expresses this point well, "The prophet [Isaiah] was persecuted and rejected by the people, but he became a rallying point for faith.... Jesus is now the representative head of a new humanity which is being led to glory through suffering."<sup>42</sup>

Like Jesus (John 1:11), Isaiah was rejected by the people as a whole (Isa 28:9–10; 30:9–11).<sup>43</sup> And like Jesus (Matthew 27), Isaiah was persecuted and ultimately martyred. Jewish tradition says that Isaiah, on the run from King Manasseh, hid in the hollow trunk of an old tree. Eventually the king's men found Isaiah, and sawed down the tree to force Isaiah out. Having saws handy, they decided to saw Isaiah in half.<sup>44</sup> When the author of Hebrews refers to those who "were sawn in two," he appears to be thinking of the martyrdom of Isaiah (Heb 11:37). Given the striking similarities between Isaiah and Jesus, it is no wonder that upon reading the book of Isaiah, the Ethiopian eunuch would respond, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" (Acts 8:34). Based on the evidence above, it seems the appropriate answer is, "Both." Isaiah was aware that the things he did and said were patterns of the coming Servant, one who would succeed where Israel had failed, suffer as a substitutionary sacrifice, and gather around him a remnant of true Israel in the end times.

3. *Summary of proposal.* Not only is typological speech a legitimate use of the OT, it is also consistent with the way God has sovereignly written Israel's history. NT authors understood that the lives of significant OT individuals were patterns of the coming Messiah. Isaiah is no exception. As a prophet of God, he served as a representative head for the faithful remnant of his day, and led true Israel by his example to trust God in the midst of suffering. Jesus was the final prophet of God who not only represents the people of God, but also leads his brothers to trust God in suffering as he pioneers the way for them to reach glory. The author of Hebrews can apply the words of Isaiah to Jesus because Isaiah serves as a type of Christ.

<sup>41</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 83.

<sup>42</sup> Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:60.

<sup>43</sup> Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 102.

<sup>44</sup> For references in Jewish tradition, see Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:390.

## IV. APPLICATION FOR MODERN-DAY INTERPRETERS

At this point I want to explore whether this principle can be applied in other situations. Although some argue that the hermeneutic of the early church is not for modern-day interpreters to follow,<sup>45</sup> it is wiser to follow their example with appropriate humility regarding one's conclusions. Beale goes so far as to say that "we may seek for more Old Testament types than the New Testament actually states for us."<sup>46</sup> Therefore, I will explore three key OT figures whose lives clearly parallel the life of Christ to see if their words may also be applied to Christ.<sup>47</sup> If Isaiah's words belong in Christ's mouth based on the fact that he serves as a type of Christ, then perhaps the speech of other individuals who serve as types could do the same. I will examine the words of three OT types of Christ—Joseph, Joshua, and Elisha. Rather than exhaustively demonstrating that each individual serves as a pattern of Christ, I will mention some of the most striking similarities and then focus on a specific quotation of theirs. Following the hermeneutic of the author of Hebrews, I will demonstrate that these quotations are appropriately attributed to Christ.

1. *Joseph*. Beloved of his father, Joseph was the recipient of predictions that he would rule over his family. He was sold as a slave, just as Jesus was betrayed for the price of a slave. He experienced a death (when Jacob thought he was dead) and resurrection (when his family met him again in Egypt). James Hamilton notes that, "like Joseph's brothers, Jesus' kinsmen will bow to him when they behold him back from the dead."<sup>48</sup> Both Joseph and Jesus are exalted to a place of authority, a posi-

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<sup>45</sup> Longenecker writes that "we cannot possibly reproduce" their use of the OT, "nor should we try" (Richard N. Longenecker, "Who Is the Prophet Talking About? Some Reflections on the NT's Use of the Old," in *Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, 385).

<sup>46</sup> Beale, "Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?," 402. Likewise, Hamilton writes, "I think we can and should learn to interpret the way the biblical authors do, and that we can and should apply their methods to questions they have not answered for us" (James M. Hamilton Jr., "Was Joseph a Type of the Messiah? Tracing the Typological Identification between Joseph, David, and Jesus," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12.4 [Winter 2008]: 72 n. 14).

<sup>47</sup> Another application to be explored is how the patterns of the OT apply to the followers of Jesus. Paul apparently thought along these lines since he believed that his life was parallel to the ministry of Isaiah. Isaiah and Paul shared the mission of preaching to "those who have never been told of him" (Rom 15:21; cf. Isa 52:15). They likewise share the same frustration with the lack of receptivity, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" (Rom 10:16; cf. Isa 53:1). For an extensive look at how Paul utilizes Isaiah, see J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul in Concert in the Letter to the Romans* (Boston: Brill Academic, 2003). Wagner explains how "Paul appropriates Isaianic images in order to depict his ministry of the gospel as the proclamation of Israel's long-awaited release and restoration" (*ibid.*, 357). Hamilton seems to make a similar point when he suggests that in Acts 7 "Stephen apparently read his own situation and the recent events that had taken place with Jesus through the lens of the Old Testament" (Hamilton, "Was Joseph a Type of the Messiah?," 64). Perhaps it could be argued that the end-times people of God who are united to the Messiah also share in the patterns of key OT figures (see 1 Cor 10:11).

<sup>48</sup> Hamilton, "Was Joseph a Type of the Messiah?," 68. This is Hamilton's interpretation of Rom 11:25–27. For a fascinating and extensive look at Joseph as a type of David and Jesus, see the entire article. See also James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 428–30, where he proves that Stephen interprets the story of Joseph as typologically fulfilled in Jesus (Acts 7).

tion from which they can bless all nations.<sup>49</sup> For both Joseph and Jesus, God used tragic circumstances to accomplish his sovereign plan to deliver his people. As the book of Genesis comes to a close, Joseph comforts his brothers for their evil behavior by saying, “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today” (Gen 50:20).

I propose that, as Joseph is a pattern of Christ, these words fit just as well in the experience of Jesus. The shared contexts of undeserved suffering and subsequent exaltation indicate that this is an appropriate connection to make. To those who conspired to murder Jesus, he says, “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.” Even though lawless men crucified and killed Jesus, this was actually “according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:22–23). It was through the evil plans of men that God was bringing about the greatest plan of all, as Jesus says, “that many people should be kept alive.” Through his death, Jesus forgave the sins of and saved the lives of many people (Matt 26:28).

2. *Joshua*. Not only do they share the same name, but Joshua also serves as a type of Jesus.<sup>50</sup> Both Joshua and Jesus are conquering leaders who direct God’s people into the Promised Land. Richard Hess notes other similarities, including the fact that Joshua apportioned the land while Jesus distributes spiritual blessings, and Joshua was the mediator of an old covenant while Jesus launches the new covenant.<sup>51</sup> The author of Hebrews makes the point that Jesus is greater than Joshua since Jesus leads us into permanent rest, something Joshua was not able to do (Heb 4:8).

When Joshua and the men of Israel had conquered certain kings, Joshua instructed the men to put their feet on the necks of the conquered kings (Josh 10:24). As they took possession of the Promised Land (the new Eden), they were subduing the seed of the serpent (Gen 3:15). Then Joshua makes a striking comment, “Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and courageous. For thus Yahweh will do to all your enemies against whom you fight” (Josh 10:25). Joshua promised that God’s people would share in the crushing of the serpent’s seed as they reclaimed the Promised Land. It is not difficult to put these words into the mouth of Christ, for he said something very similar. When he sent his disciples to preach the good news that the King had arrived, it made a significant dent in Satan’s kingdom (Luke 10:18). Jesus then said, “Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you” (Luke 10:19). Essentially Jesus was promising the same thing as Joshua. Yes, Jesus is the Serpent-Crusher, but those united to him were also given “authority to tread on serpents” (cf. Rom 16:20). To apply the hermeneutic of the early church, one

<sup>49</sup> I am thankful to Joshua Pannell for drawing this connection to my attention, as well as for his helpful comments on the paper as a whole.

<sup>50</sup> For a unique perspective on the role of Joshua typology in the book of Hebrews, see Richard Ounsworth, *Joshua Typology in the NT* (WUNT 2/328; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).

<sup>51</sup> For more typological comparisons between Joshua and Jesus, see Richard S. Hess, “Joshua,” *NDBT* 171.

could say that Jesus said, “Be strong and courageous. God will put all your enemies under your feet.”

3. *Elisha*. If John the Baptist was the new Elijah (Mal 3:1; Mark 1:2), then it is probable that Jesus is to be seen as a new Elisha. There is much interesting work yet to be done showing how Elisha’s life patterns the life of Christ. Suffice it to say, both Elisha and Jesus exceeded the ministry of their predecessors, healed lepers, fed the hungry, and raised sons to life.<sup>52</sup> The NT makes at least one connection in Luke 4:27 where Elisha “functions typologically in relation to Jesus.”<sup>53</sup> I want to submit two quotations of Elisha that may be attributed to Christ.

When Elisha was brought bread, he responded by sharing it with all of the sons of the prophets. His servant was surprised because there was not enough food to feed the hundred men that were there. Elisha was insistent, “Give them to the men, that they may eat, for thus says Yahweh, “They shall eat and have some left”” (2 Kgs 4:43). And that is exactly what happened. When another Man multiplied bread for hungry people nearly eight hundred years later, it would not have been viewed as a coincidence (Mark 8:1–9). Especially in light of the corresponding miracle in the life of Christ, it seems appropriate to put the words of Elisha in 2 Kgs 4:43 into the mouth of Christ.

There is another fascinating scenario where the Syrian army is on a mission to kidnap Elisha. But Elisha struck the soldiers with blindness and led them straight to the capital of Israel. The king of Israel asks, “Shall I strike them down?” (2 Kgs 6:21). Elisha proposes instead that they “set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master” (2 Kgs 6:22). So they prepared a feast for their enemies and released them and “the Syrians did not come again on raids into the land of Israel” (2 Kgs 6:23). Earlier, Solomon had taught God’s people to feed their enemies when they were hungry and give them water to drink when they were thirsty (Prov 25:21–22; cf. Rom 12:20). Not only is this what Elisha did, but it is also the example set by Jesus when he ate with sinners (Luke 5:29). Regardless of whom one’s enemy might be—a bully at school, an obnoxious neighbor, or even an estranged spouse—Jesus says, “You shall not strike them down. Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink.” In other words, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you” (Luke 6:27–28).

These examples have merely scratched the surface of the similarities between Jesus and Joseph, Joshua, and Elisha, and there are more OT types to be examined. This paper assumes that the hermeneutic of the early church was not only legitimate but also exemplary for modern-day interpreters. There is a world of research yet to be done uncovering how the lives of OT individuals prefigured Christ’s min-

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<sup>52</sup> For a popular introduction to this concept, see Bruce Waltke, “Meditating on Scripture,” Ligonier Ministries, September 1, 2009, <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/meditating-scripture>.

<sup>53</sup> Iain W. Provan, “Elisha,” *NDBT* 457. Curiously, Provan suggests that the early church attempted to downplay the typological connection between Elisha and Jesus because they did not want it to appear that Jesus was the successor of John the Baptist. It seems unlikely that NT authors would have intentionally downplayed a divinely intended type.

istry. It is imperative that believers allow the hermeneutical method of the early church to change the way they read the Bible. As they bend their minds and bow their lives in submission to Jesus, the Lord of history, it will also transform their lives.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Hamilton writes, “We should not only read the Bible typologically, the types we find in the Bible should shape the way we view the world” (Hamilton, “Was Joseph a Type of the Messiah?,” 69).