

themelios

*An International Journal for Students of
Theological and Religious Studies*

Volume 44 Issue 2 August 2019

EDITORIAL: Fulfill Your Ministry by <i>Brian J. Tabb</i>	211
STRANGE TIMES: Never Say 'the Phones Are Quiet' by <i>Daniel Strange</i>	216
The Mystery Revealed: A Biblical Case for Christ-Centered Old Testament Interpretation by <i>Jason S. DeRouchie</i>	226
The Gospel as Interpretive Key to 1 Corinthians 10:31–11:16: On Christian Worship, Head Coverings, and the Trinity by <i>Peter R. Schemm and Andreas J. Köstenberger</i>	249
A Review of the <i>Christian Standard Bible</i> by <i>Mark L. Strauss</i>	258
"Striving for Glory with God": Humility as the Good Life in Basil of Caesarea's <i>Homily 20</i> by <i>Coleman M. Ford</i>	278
Can We Hasten the Parousia? An Examination of Matt 24:14 and Its Implications for Missional Practice by <i>C. J. Moore</i>	291
The Doctrine of Scripture and Biblical Contextualization: Inspiration, Authority, Inerrancy, and the Canon by <i>Jackson Wu</i>	312
The Insights and Shortcomings of Kantian Ethics: Signposts Signaling the Truthfulness of Christian Ethics by <i>Zachary Breitenbach</i>	327
Hebrews and the Typology of Jonathan Edwards by <i>Drew Hunter</i>	339
Book Reviews	353

The Mystery Revealed: A Biblical Case for Christ-Centered Old Testament Interpretation

— Jason S. DeRouchie —

*Jason DeRouchie is research professor of Old Testament and biblical theology at
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri.*

Abstract: This study provides a biblical-theological foundation for a Christ-centered hermeneutic. It overviews both Old and New Testament texts that identify how the primary audience that would receive blessing and not condemnation from OT instruction would be Christians enjoying the benefits of Christ’s eschatological, redemptive work. Jesus himself provides both the light for enabling us to see and savor what is in the OT and the necessary lens that influences and guides our reading by filling out the meaning—at times by supplying unknown interpretation and other times by clarifying, expanding, and deepening the human authors’ implications. For us to grasp the full meaning of the OT’s history, laws, poems, and prophecies, we must read them through the light and lens of Christ.

This study supplies an initial framework for a biblical theology of hermeneutics.¹ My thesis is twofold. First, I will argue that the OT is Christian Scripture, that God originally gave it to instruct Christians, and that the OT authors had a sense that at least some of their words would be more meaningful for those living this side of the cross than for those living before it, whether believer or non-believer. As such, the OT message is in many ways more clear and relevant for Christians today than it ever was for those before Christ. Second, I will argue that faith in Christ alone supplies the necessary light for seeing and savoring God’s revelation in the OT and that Jesus’s appearing in salvation history supplies the necessary lens for more fully understanding and appropriating the divine author’s intended meaning in the OT.

¹ I presented an earlier version of this paper at the 2017 “Eureka!” Conference at Bethlehem College & Seminary and the 2018 annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Denver, CO. I am grateful to the many students and fellow academics who interacted thoughtfully with the study, which has been made better through these conversations. I also thank my TA Josh Bremerman for his careful editing of the whole.

1. New Testament Reflections on the Audience of Old Testament Instruction

Paul believed that God gave the OT for *new* covenant believers. Referring to the statement in Genesis 15:6 that Abram's faith was "counted to him as righteousness," Paul asserted that "the words 'it was counted to him' were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also" (Rom 4:23–24). Similarly, just after identifying Christ as the referent in Psalm 69, the apostle emphasized, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (15:4).² Furthermore, upon recalling Israel's history in the wilderness, Paul said, "Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come" (1 Cor 10:11). In each of these three texts, Paul used third singular verbs to stress that the OT author wrote his text intentionally for the benefit of believers living this side of the cross. The apostle's use of the passive does not clarify whether this was only God's intent as the ultimate author, or whether this was also the OT human authors' intention. What is clear, however, is that for Paul, the OT was *Christian* Scripture and fully applicable to believers when read in light of Christ.

He said this much to Timothy, who was raised on the OT by his Jewish mother and grandmother (Acts 16:1; 2 Tim 1:5). Paul wrote that the "sacred writings" of Timothy's upbringing—what we would tag the OT Scriptures, "are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 3:15). People today can get saved from God's wrath and from the enslavement of sin by reading the OT through the lens of Christ! Thus, Paul then asserts, "All Scripture is ... profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work" (3:16–17). Within this context of elevating the lasting relevance of the OT, Paul then called his young protégé to "preach the word!" (4:2). God gave the OT for Christians. It's part of our Christian Scriptures, and we should use it to know God and savor Christ.

Based on this fact, NT authors regularly used the OT as the basis for Christian exhortation, assuming its relevance for believers today. For example, Paul, as a new covenant preacher, drew from a series of execution texts in Deuteronomy when arguing for the excommunication of the sexually immoral man in 1 Corinthians 5:13 (cf. Deut 13:5[6]; 17:7, 12; 21:21; 22:21, 22, 24; 24:7).³ The apostle also had no problem drawing from the Ten Commandments, when in Ephesians 6:2–3 he charged children, "'Honor your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land" (cf. Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16). Similarly, Paul told the young pastor in 1 Timothy 5:17–18, "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain'" (cf. Deut 25:4; 1 Cor 9:8–12). Similarly, Peter recalls the refrain in Leviticus when he wrote in 1 Peter 1:15–16, "Be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (cf. Lev 11:44–45; 19:2; 20:26). Because we are now part of the new covenant and not the old, there are natural questions that rise regarding how exactly the Christian should relate to specific old

² For a careful supporting analysis of Paul's claim in Rom 15:4, see George W. Knight III, "The Scriptures Were Written for Our Instruction," *JETS* 39 (1996): 3–13.

³ Knight rightly notes, "Here the apostle takes account of the difference that fulfillment [through Jesus] has brought about and at the same time maintains the principle continuity for the instruction as it relates to the Church, and in doing so he also has 'written for our instruction'" (Knight, "The Scriptures Were Written for Our Instruction," 10).

covenant laws.⁴ Nevertheless, the point stands that the OT, while not written *to* Christians, was still written *for* our instruction.

Now, as I noted, when Paul stated that the OT “was written” for our instruction, he was not explicit as to whether the OT human authors understood this. Peter, however, made this clear when he wrote that the OT prophets “*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” (1 Pet 1:12). The apostle emphasized that the inspired human authors themselves knew that their words revealed in the OT were principally *not for them* but for those living after the arrival of the Christ. Therefore, far from being not applicable for believers, the OT is actually *more relevant* to Christians today than it was for the majority in the old covenant era. Let’s consider a number of OT texts that stress this very fact. We will look at citations from Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel.

2. Old Testament Reflections on the Audience of Old Testament Instruction

First, *Moses’s* three favorite words to characterize Israel were “stubborn” (Deut 9:6, 13; 10:16; 31:27), “unbelieving” (1:32; 9:23; cf. 28:66), and “rebellious” (9:7, 24; 31:27; cf. 1:26, 43; 9:23). His audience was wicked (9:4–6, 27), and God promised that after the prophet’s death, the people’s defiance would only continue, resulting in God’s pouring out his curses upon them:

This people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and they will forsake me and break my covenant that I have made with

⁴ In my view, the best approach to the OT law and the Christian is a redemptive-historical one that sees Christ as the lens for grasping how any old covenant law relates to believers, this side of the cross. See especially Jason S. DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017), 427–59. See also David A. Dorsey, “The Law of Moses and the Christian: A Compromise,” *JETS* 34 (1991): 321–34; Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1991), 251–86; Douglas J. Moo, “The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View,” in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, ed. Wayne G. Strickland, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 319–76 (also 83–90, 165–73, 218–25, 309–15); Tom Wells and Fred G. Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2002), 77–160, esp. 126–27, 157–60; Daniel M. Doriani, “A Redemptive-Historical Model,” in *Four Views on Moving beyond the Bible to Theology*, ed. Gary T. Meadors, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 51–56, 75–121, 205–9, 255–61; Jason C. Meyer, *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology*, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology 7 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009); Jason C. Meyer, “The Mosaic Law, Theological Systems, and the Glory of Christ,” in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenant Theologies*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016), 66–99; Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 40 Questions (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 40; Jason S. DeRouchie, “Making the Ten Count: Reflections on the Lasting Message of the Decalogue,” in *For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block*, ed. Jason S. DeRouchie, Jason Gile, and Kenneth J. Turner (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 415–40; Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 31 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013); William W. Combs, “Paul, the Law, and Dispensationalism,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 18 (2013): 19–39; Stephen J. Wellum, “Progressive Covenantalism and Doing Ethics,” in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenant Theologies*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016), 215–33.

them. Then my anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide my face from them, and they will be devoured. (31:16–17)

Similarly, Moses would later say,

I know how rebellious and stubborn you are. Behold, even today while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the LORD. How much more after my death! ... I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly and turn aside from the way that I have commanded you. And in the days to come evil will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands. (31:27, 29; cf. 4:25–28; 28:15–68)

Deuteronomy 29 tells the ultimate reason why Moses’s audience would not heed his words: “You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt.... But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear” (Deut 29:2, 4[1, 3]). Israel was spiritually ignorant of God’s ways, blind to his glories, and deaf to his word. They had been rebellious from the day Moses first met them (9:24), and their stubbornness both continued in the present and would continue into the future, ultimately resulting in their death (9:6; 31:27, 29).⁵ Why? Because God had not overcome the resistance of the majority’s hearts and because, in alignment with his sovereign purposes for salvation history, he created an old covenant that bore a “ministry of death” and a “ministry of condemnation,” all in order that through Christ a superior new covenant might bear a “ministry of righteousness” (2 Cor 3:7, 9).⁶ God determined that he would not overcome Israel’s crookedness and twistedness (Deut 32:5; Acts 2:40; Phil 2:15) until the prophet like Moses would rise to whom they should and could listen (Deut 18:15; 30:8; cf. Matt 17:5). In the age of restoration, God would change the remnant’s hearts and enable their love. “The LORD your God will circumcise your heart ... so that you will love the LORD your God with all” (Deut 30:6). In this eschatological day, the day we now identify with the new covenant and church age (cf. Rom 2:29; 2 Cor 3:6), Moses’s message in Deuteronomy

⁵ Block believes that Deut 29:4[3] teaches that, “whereas the exodus generation as a whole did not grasp the revelatory, redemptive, and covenantal significance of Yahweh’s actions (9:1–24; cf. 1:19–46), this generation knows; through Moses’ final pastoral addresses Yahweh has given Israel a heart to know, eyes to see, and ears to hear” (Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy*, NIV Application Commentary [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012], 676). This reading, however, fails to account for many factors: (1) Elsewhere in the book the phrase “until this day” never implies change (Deut 2:22; 3:14; 10:8; 11:4; 34:6; see Paul A Barker, *Triumph of Grace in Deuteronomy: Faithless Israel, Faithful Yahweh in Deuteronomy* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007], 118–19). (2) Moses explicitly identifies elsewhere that Israel’s stubbornness persists in the present and will continue (31:21, 27), thus forcing Block himself to admit that “Moses shares Yahweh’s pessimistic view of the spiritual state the people” (Block, *Deuteronomy*, 734). (3) Both Isa 6:10 and Jer 5:21 stress that the triad of spiritual disability in “heart, eyes, and ears” continued in their days, and Paul alludes to Deut 29:4[3]’s “until this day” in both Rom 11:8 and 2 Cor 3:14, showing that Israel hardness continued into the NT era. (4) The prophets believed that God would only reverse the majority’s disability related to “heart, eyes, ears” in the day when the messianic “king will reign in righteousness” (Isa 32:1, 3–4). Recognizably, the remnant, which would have included the prophets, had “hearts, eyes, and ears” that were responsive to God (Ezek 40:4), already having “the eyes of [their] hearts enlightened” (Eph 1:18). For an extended survey of interpretations of Deut 29:4[3], see Michael A. Grisanti, “Was Israel Unable to Respond to God? A Study of Deuteronomy 29:2–4,” *BSac* 163 (2006): 176–96. Grisanti’s own proposal rightly affirms the presence of a remnant in the OT who had their “hearts, eyes, and ears” enabled, but he fails to identify that the triad of metaphors refers to regeneration, which gives rise to faith rather than follows it (see John 3:3, 8).

⁶ Jason S. DeRouchie, “From Condemnation to Righteousness: A Christian Reading of Deuteronomy,” *SBJT* 18.3 (2014): 87–118.

would finally be heard and heeded: “And you will turn and you will hear the voice of the LORD and do all his commandments that I am commanding you today” (30:8, author’s translation). Moses believed that his law in Deuteronomy would serve those in the age of heart circumcision far more than the rebels of his own day.⁷

Second, Israel’s triadic spiritual disability continued in the days of *Isaiah*, whom YHWH called to “make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes” (Isa 6:10; cf. Deut 29:4[3]). Thus, the prophet was to preach, “Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive” (Isa 6:9). This would be the prophet’s judgment cry until his land was laid waste, his people

⁷ I do not believe that Deut 30:11–14 can be used as a counter-argument to my claim. While contemporary English versions and most commentators treat Deut 30:11–14 as expressing Israel’s present ability to keep God’s law, the greater context of the book does not support this reading (29:4[3]; cf. 4:25–28; 9:6; 10:16; 30:1; 31:16–18, 27–29). Moreover, the subordinate connection ׀ is Deut 30:11 most naturally serves as a ground (“for, because”) for the *preceding* future predictions, thus suggesting that the verbless clauses in 30:11–14 should all be translated as futures and that Moses’s statement that all he commanded “today” in 30:11 would align with the similar statements in 30:2 and 8. Thus Deut 30:11–14 *predictively* clarifies why Israel will “listen” to Yahweh’s voice (30:2, 8, 10; cf. 30:12, 13) and “do” (30:8, 10; cf. 30:12, 13, 14) his word in the future when they were not able to do so in the present. On this reading, Paul in Rom 10:6–8 would be identifying the fulfillment of this prediction in Christ, and his contrast between Lev 18:5 in Rom 10:5 and Deut 30:11–14 in Rom 10:6–8 would be between texts addressing two different eras in redemption history. In support of this exegetical conclusion, see John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, Library of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 473; J. Gary Millar, *Now Choose Life: Theology and Ethics in Deuteronomy*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 6 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 94, 174–75; Steven R. Coxhead, “Deuteronomy 30:11–14 as a Prophecy of the New Covenant in Christ,” *WTJ* 68 (2006): 305–20; Barker, *Triumph of Grace in Deuteronomy*, 168–90; Bryan D. Estelle, “Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 30:1–14 in Biblical Theological Development: Entitlement to Heaven Foreclosed and Proffered,” in *The Law Is Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant*, ed. Bryan D. Estelle, J. V. Fesko, and David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 123–37; Colin James Smothers, “In Your Mouth and in Your Heart: A Study of Deuteronomy 30:12–14 in Paul’s Letter to the Romans in Canonical Context” (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018). While Moo chooses to render Deut 30:11–14 as present time, he does admit, “I wish I could interpret Deut 30:11–14 in this way: it would, indeed, considerably diminish the apparent dissonance between this text and Paul’s application.” Douglas Moo, “Paul’s Reading of Deuteronomy: Law and Grace,” in *For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block*, ed. Jason S. DeRouchie, Jason Gile, and Kenneth J. Turner (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 408. Significantly, the only reason that keeps Moo from this reading is that “most interpreters of Deuteronomy argue that the characteristic language of ‘today’ in v. 11 suggests that the implied tense in vv. 11–14 shifts back to the present,” but this understanding fails to account for the uses of “today” in the immediate future contexts of 30:2 and 8 and for the most natural rendering of ׀ in v. 11. Furthermore, Moo himself notes that “most commentators do not even mention the [future] alternative” (p. 408n56), suggesting that they likely were simply following the majority of English versions and did not wrestle in detail with the text itself. Using Paul’s words, the overwhelming view of Deuteronomy is that the function of the old covenant in redemptive history was to bear “a ministry of death” and “a ministry of condemnation” (2 Cor 3:7, 9), all so that “God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory” (Rom 9:22–23).

were destroyed, and all that remained was a “stump” or “holy seed” (6:11–13; cf. 11:1; 53:2).⁸ Speaking of God’s servant-nation, Isaiah later said, “He sees many things, but does not observe them; his ears are open, but he does not hear” (42:20). “Bring out the people who are blind, yet have eyes, who are deaf, yet have ears!” (43:8). “They know not, nor do they discern, for he has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts, so that they cannot understand” (44:18). YHWH purposed that Israel’s history would be characterized by “deep sleep” and the inability to “read” the Word. It was as if Isaiah’s words and the rest of the Scriptures were a sealed book to the bulk of the prophet’s contemporaries. As Isaiah states in 29:9–11,

Astonish yourselves and be astonished; blind yourselves and be blind! ... For the LORD has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes (the prophets), and covered your heads (the seers). And the vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, saying, “Read this,” he says, “I cannot, for it is sealed.”

Isaiah’s audience could neither comprehend nor appropriate God’s Word, because the Lord had hardened them. Paul stressed this point when he brought together Isaiah 29:10 with Deuteronomy 29:4[3] in Romans 11:7–8: “Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, ‘God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.’” Similarly, when Paul turned away from the recalcitrant Jews in Rome to preach to the Gentiles, he identified the lasting impact of Isaiah’s mission to harden in Isaiah 6:9–10 (Acts 28:26–27).

We can rejoice that salvation history did not end in darkness and silence. For Isaiah further noted that YHWH promised a day when “the deaf shall hear the words of a book ... and the eyes of the blind see” (29:18). Because God instructed Isaiah to write his words in a book for a perpetual witness and because the majority of his own audience could not grasp these words, his book-writing was principally for a later generation that would have hearts to know and eyes to see and ears to hear.

And now, go, write it before them on a tablet and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever.... Your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, “This is the way, walk in it.” (30:8, 20–21)

Similarly, we are told that in the day when the messianic “king will reign in righteousness ... then the eyes of those who see will not be closed, and the ears of those who hear will give attention. The heart of the hasty will understand and know” (Isa 32:1, 3–4; cf. 35:5). And again, of the Spirit-empowered, royal servant, God would declare, “I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness” (42:6–7).

There was a small remnant of Isaiah’s contemporaries who, at least at some level, understood his message: “Bind up the testimony; seal the teaching among my disciples [lit., my taught ones]” (8:16). Nevertheless, God promised that one day there would be a democratization of such knowledge: “My people shall know my name” and “shall know that it is I who speak” (52:6). “All your children shall be

⁸ For more on this text, see Craig A. Evans, *To See and Not Perceive Isaiah 6.9–10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989); cf. Craig A. Evans, “Isa 6:9–13 in the Context of Isaiah’s Theology,” *JETS* 29 (1986): 139–46.

taught by the LORD” (54:13). YHWH’s law would go forth in “the latter days,” and its recipients would include many from the “nations/peoples” (2:3; 51:4–5). That is, while most Israelites from Isaiah to Jesus and the early church did not believe what they heard but rebelled, having their spiritual senses dull (Isa 53:1 with John 12:38; Rom 10:16; Isa 65:2 with Rom 10:21), the prophet envisioned that God would one day disclose himself to many who never sought him (Isa 65:1 with Rom 10:20) and that kings from many nations would see “that which had not been told them” and understand “that which they have not heard” (Isa 52:15 with Rom 15:21). Isaiah associates the proclamation of this end-times law with the teaching and rule of the royal Servant (42:1, 4), who would “sustain with a word him who is weary” (50:4; cf. Matt 11:28–30; 28:20).⁹

Building on this OT context, Jesus identified that through his own teaching God was fulfilling these promises by drawing a multi-ethnic people to himself. Jesus declared, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me” (John 6:44–45). Christ’s sheep would include some not from the Jewish fold (10:16), yet all his sheep would “believe,” “hear” his voice, and follow (10:27). To these awakened and responsive believers, the Lord would supply “the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, so that ‘they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven’” (Mark 4:11–12; citing Isa 6:9–10). Isaiah himself saw that his writings would benefit a future transformed multi-ethnic generation more than they would the spiritually disabled of his own day. In short, Isaiah would have agreed with Paul that he wrote his book for Christians.

Now, we here, living on this side of the cross, are the ones who can enter with Isaiah into the throne room and tremble upon the sound of, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD” (Isa 6:3). We are the ones who can testify that a people walking “in darkness have seen a great light” (9:2)—a light emanating from a person whose very identity is “God with us” (7:14) and whose characterization through his eternal and universal reign is “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (9:6). We Christians are the ones who can truly begin to celebrate the portrait of YHWH’s incomparability in Isaiah 40. And we are the ones—Jews and Gentiles in Christ, whom God’s righteous royal Servant has accounted righteous through his substitutionary atoning work portrayed in Isaiah 53. To the majority in Israel, the prophecies of Isaiah were like a sealed book until YHWH’s Spirit came upon this servant-hearted, royal God-man, and he began to proclaim the good news of provision to the poor, of healing to the sick, of freedom to the captives, and of comfort and joy—full joy—to those who mourn (61:1–2; cf. Luke 4:18–19).

Third, as with Isaiah (Isa 30:8), YHWH told *Jeremiah* that his writing was specifically intended for a future, post-exilic, restored community of God.

Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Write in a book all the words that I have spoken to you. For behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah, says the LORD, and I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall take possession of it. (Jer 30:2–3)

⁹ Cf. Charles E. Hill, “God’s Speech in These Last Days: The New Testament Canon as an Eschatological Phenomenon,” in *Resurrection and Eschatology: Theology in Service of the Church; Essays in Honor of Richard B. Gaffin Jr.*, ed. Lane G. Tipton and Jeffrey C. Waddington (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 203–54.

While there was the potential that some of Jeremiah's contemporaries would repent upon hearing his words read (36:2–3), God told Jeremiah's that most would not heed his voice, retaining the same stubbornness that characterized previous generations (7:23–28; cf. 22:21). Moreover, 30:2–3 stress that the reason Jeremiah needed to write his words in a book (cf. 36:2, 4, 17–18, 28–32) was because the *future* generations would need them. While his verbal sermons condemned those in his days, his written words were less for his present generation and more for the generations of the restored community.

The prophet further noted that only in the latter days would full understanding of his writings come. “The fierce anger of the LORD will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intentions of his mind. *In the latter days you will understand this.* At that time, declares the LORD, I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they shall be my people” (Jer 30:24–31:1; cf. 23:19–20). The “you” in this passage is masculine plural and refers to the members of the restored new covenant community in the latter days.¹⁰ This is the most natural referent because it is the group to which Jeremiah was just prophesying about (30:18–22), and because YHWH next declares that “at that time” of understanding, “I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they shall be my people” (31:1), a phrase that both recalls 30:22 and anticipates the restatement of the same a little later in the chapter with direct connection to the “new covenant”: “For this is the [new] covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (31:33).

In the immediate context, Jeremiah associates the “latter days” of “understanding” with Israel/Judah's restoration from exile and reconciliation with God (30:10–11, 17, 18–22; ch. 31; cf. 23:6–7), with God's punishment of the enemy nations (30:11, 16), with the rise of a ruler from the people's midst (30:21; cf. 23:5), and with the incorporation of foreigners into the one people of God who too will be surrendered to “the LORD their God and David their king” (30:8–9; cf. 3:16–18; 12:14–17; Hos 3:5).¹¹ This period of Jeremiah's “new covenant,” which is now being realized through Christ and his church (Luke 22:20; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:13; 9:15), would find every covenant member enjoying forgiveness of sins (cf. Heb 10:12–18), which in turn would result in the democratization of a new knowledge: “No longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (31:34). This new knowledge aligns with the earlier promise of “understanding” (30:24) and

¹⁰ Lundbom notes that the Medieval Jewish rabbi Joseph Kimḥi (AD 1105–1170) identified the time of “understanding” in Jer 30:24 with the messianic era (see Hos 3:5; Dan 2:28; cf. Gen 49:1, 8–9; Num 24:14, 17–19; Deut 4:30–31; 31:29; Isa 2:2; Mal 4:1; Jer 23:20; 48:47; 49:39; Ezek 38:16; Dan 10:14), but Lundbom himself follows the majority critical view that “eschatological meaning is not present in the pre-exilic use of this expression” (Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004], 198; cf. Horst Seebass, “אַחֲרֵית” *ach'arith*,” *TDOT* 1:210–11; Ernst Jenni, “אַחֲרַ” *hr* after,” *TLOT* 1:87–88). Even the conservative Thompson says Jeremiah's day of understanding “is in the not too distant future; it is not an eschatological concept” (J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 563). However, Jeremiah's association of the following phrase “at that time” with the covenant formula (“I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they shall be my people,” 31:1) links the period of understanding with the “new covenant,” which is when the reinstated covenant relationship will be realized (31:31, 33). Cf. G. K. Beale, “Eschatology,” *DLNT* 330–31.

¹¹ For my interpretation Jeremiah's portrayal of Gentile incorporation into the one people of God, see Jason S. DeRouchie, “Counting Stars with Abraham and the Prophets: New Covenant Ecclesiology in OT Perspective,” *JETS* 58 (2015): 462–65.

recalls Isaiah's promise that, following the work of the suffering royal Servant, "all your children shall be taught by the LORD" (Isa 54:13; cf. John 6:45).

Ignorance prevailed in Jeremiah's day, but true knowledge of God and understanding of his OT teaching would characterize the new covenant community. In Jeremiah, knowledge of God relates to an experiential involvement in the Lord's commitment to steadfast love, justice, and righteousness (Jer 9:24; 22:15–16). John later stressed how the knowledge for which Jeremiah longed is now enjoyed by *all* who are in Christ. "You all have knowledge. I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth" (1 John 2:20–21; cf. 2:27–29).

Fourth, the book of *Daniel* is filled with symbolic dreams, visions, and declarations—"mysteries" (Dan 2:18–19, 27–30, 47; 4:9[H 4:6]) of which God reveals some to Daniel, so that we are told "he understood the word and had understanding of the vision" (10:1; cf. 10:11–14). Indeed, Daniel grasped something of both the person and time of the Messiah's ministry (9:25; cf. 1 Pet 1:10–11).¹² Still there are elaborations on these latter day prophecies related to the kingdoms of God and mankind that Daniel asserts, "I heard, but I did not understand" (Dan 12:8) and that the Lord tells his prophet to "shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end" (12:4)—the appointed period in salvation history when God would fully disclose his purposes to the wise.¹³

"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase." ... And someone said ..., "How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?" And I heard the man ... [say] that it would be for a time, times, and a half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished. I heard, but *I did not understand*. Then I said, "O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?" He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.... But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days. (12:2–4, 6–10, 13).

Daniel envisioned that only at "the time of the end"—which the Septuagint in the rest of Daniel identifies as the last "hour" (Dan 8:17, 19; 10:14; 11:35, 40; 12:1)—would people grasp the full meaning

¹² For me, the most satisfying interpretation of Dan 9:24–27 is found in "The New Covenant in Daniel's Seventy Weeks," in Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 599–643. Gentry's discussion in this second edition is a substantial advance on his previous studies. See also Sam Storms, *Kingdom Come: The Amillennial Alternative* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2013), 71–133.

¹³ For more on "mystery" in Daniel and its implications for our understanding of continuity and discontinuity between the Testaments, see G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 29–46. Cf. Benjamin L. Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion: The Use of Mystery in Daniel and Second Temple Judaism with Its Bearing on First Corinthians*, BZNW 160 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008).

of his revelations regarding God's kingdom. From a NT perspective, the first coming of Christ has inaugurated this period of eschatological realization when people can both hear and understand God's words in this book. We see this in Matthew's Gospel, where, after speaking of "the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel" (cf. 11:31; 12:11), there appears an intrusive parenthetical comment, "*Let the reader understand*" (Matt 24:15). Similarly, echoing Daniel 12:1 and its context, Jesus would note, "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.... Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:25, 28–29).¹⁴

In summary, these OT texts from Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel all suggest that the OT prophets knew, as Peter would say, "that they were serving not themselves" but us, believers upon whom the end of the ages has come and with that the revelation of mysteries through Christ (1 Cor 10:11; 1 Pet 1:11). With these OT texts we see God withholding the full meaning of his intended message in at least two ways.

First, God's prophets were convinced that the rebel majority among their contemporaries would neither hear nor heed their messages due to God's hardening judgment (Deut 29:4[3]; Isa 6:9–10; 29:11), but they also envisioned a day when the Lord would overcome spiritual disability, thus enabling a sensory, life-changing encounter with the living God (Deut 30:6, 8; Isa 29:18). Most in the OT period were spiritually disabled—blind to the beauties of God, deaf to his laws, and ignorant of both their sin and its remedy. They didn't grieve over their rebellion; they didn't lean on the Lord or long for his Messiah, because they thought they were okay. But at the rise of the child-king (Isa 9:6–7), "the people who walked in darkness" would see "a great light" (Isa 9:2; cf. Matt 4:15–16).

Second, YHWH's prophets themselves did not fully grasp the meaning of all their predictions and declarations. As such, Daniel could both "understand" some words and visions (Dan 10:1) while not "understanding" others (12:8). The remnant of faithful would only fully comprehend God's intended meaning in the latter days (Jer 30:24; Dan 12:4, 9–10). "Many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it" (Luke 10:24; cf. Matt 13:17). We see more clearly today what the righteous ones of old longed to see but could not. While they understood partial mysteries, the full revelation is only disclosed through Christ. He is the necessary lens for grasping all the meaning the divine author intended in his OT revelation.

So even to the prophets there were some mysteries that remained hidden, and to their listeners there was even more withheld, for their spiritual disability made them completely unresponsive to the voice of God, completely incapable to see and savor the beauty of the Lord, completely unable to follow God's ways. As Paul would later say, "The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot" (Rom 8:7). And again, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14). A supernatural healing and revelation would be required to create fresh responsiveness to the Lord, thus awakening the heart to God's intended meaning of the OT Scriptures. "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God" (2:12).

¹⁴ Cf. Mark 13:11; John 4:23; 12:23; 16:32; 17:1; Acts 2:17; 1 Cor 10:11; Heb 1:2; 9:26; 1 Pet 1:20; 1 John 2:18. See G. K. Beale, "The Old Testament Background of the 'Last Hour' in 1 John 2,18," *Bib* 92 (2011): 231–54.

3. New Testament Reflections on the Rebels' Inability to Understand the Old Testament

The NT is clear that the blindness associated with the rebel majority continued into Christ's day. We see this incapacity, for example, in the religious leaders, whom Jesus confronted numerous times. "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life" (John 5:39–40). "If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead" (Luke 16:31). The Jewish leaders were blind to seeing how the OT itself pointed to Christ.

Matthew highlights a number of episodes in Jesus's life where he treats those who were supposed to be masters of the Scriptures as though they didn't know how to read them.

Have you not read what David did when he was hungry? ... Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? ... If you had known what this means, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless." (Matt 12:3, 5, 7)

The Pharisees could not understand their own Scriptures. Jesus further said, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female?" (19:4). "Have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise?'" (21:16). "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone?'" (21:42). "And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God?" (22:31).

In the Gospels we find a number of statements that identify the roots of such blindness. For example, in Matthew 16:3–4, Jesus again addresses the Pharisees and Sadducees, asserting, "You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation!" So at the core, their inability to interpret rightly was related to their innate evil and adultery against God. Similarly, Mark highlights that the leaders refused to celebrate his coming because of their "hardness": "And [Jesus] looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart" (Mark 3:5). John further records Jesus's assertion, "Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires" (John 8:42–44). Earlier John recalled Jesus's statement:

The Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard.... I know that you do not have the love of God within you.... How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words? (5:37, 42–47)

In these texts we read of innate wickedness that stands hostile to God, of a heart hardness, of desires that are not submitted to God but that are aligned with the devil, and of a passion for man's praise over the glory that comes from God. The religious leaders of Christ's day loved being noticed in the public square and getting the best seats in the synagogues and at feasts (Matt 23:6; Luke 11:43; 20:46). They were more concerned with their own exaltation rather than God's. And the result was that they could not hear God's voice or savor God's beauty in the Scriptures. Thus, Jesus bemoaned over Jerusalem, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now

they are hidden from your eyes” (Luke 19:42). It was as if these leaders were living in the dark, unable to see the beauty of God in the face of Christ to which the OT pointed.

And where the leaders went, the rest of the nation went also. Speaking of the broader crowd that followed Jesus yet failed to exert saving faith, John wrote,

Though [Jesus] had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet might be fulfilled: “Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, “He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I will heal them.” Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. (John 12:37–41)

Note that Isaiah stresses that the people’s deafness and blindness was “that the word spoken by the prophet [Isaiah] might be fulfilled.” God intended that the word of God through his prophets would be like a closed book until the time when the revealer of mysteries would come. Thus, Jesus, quoting Isaiah 6:9–10, disclosed to his disciples the meaning of his teaching, declaring, “To you has been given the secret [i.e., mystery] of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, so that ‘they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven’” (Mark 4:12).

Paul echoed the realities we’ve seen thus far when he wrote in Rom 11:7–8, “Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, ‘God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.’” The apostle appears to draw the “to this very day” from Moses’s words in Deut 29:4[3] that “to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear,” whereas the rest of the citation is drawn from Isaiah’s stress that “the LORD has poured out upon you [Israel] a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes” (Isa 29:10).

In 2 Cor 3:14, the apostle similarly emphasizes, “The [Jews’] minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away.” In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul says that Moses’s veil that he wore after encountering the divine presence served as a parable of the people’s spiritual emptiness. Apart from Jesus, the Jews could not fully see and savor the beauty of God bound up in the Scriptures, resulting in the old covenant bearing “a ministry of condemnation” (3:9). Nevertheless, with the coming of Christ, the veil is lifted as God begins to disclose his glory in Christ that was always part of the OT. The OT age was one of ignorance and hardness (Acts 17:30; Eph 4:18; 1 Pet 1:14) with the devil keeping most of the world blind to the beauties of God. “If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case, the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor 4:3–4). But in Jesus new creation dawns, with gospel light breaking over the horizon and dispersing darkness and shadow. “God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (4:6).

Why would God purpose to extend such a season of hardness, ignorance, and blindness where his Word was not understood, his precepts were not treasured, his commands were not celebrated, and his promises were not hoped in? Paul tells us that it was so that we as Christians could celebrate all the more the mercy that comes through Christ. “What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to

make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?” (Rom 9:22–24). The Lord made the darkness so deep and the night so long, so that we upon whom the light has dawned may be able to savor all the more the warmth, brilliance, and merciful glory of God bound up in his gift of Christ.

4. New Testament Reflections on the Remnant’s Inability to Fully Understand the Old Testament

Along with highlighting his enemies’ inability to read the OT rightly, Jesus also reprimanded his own disciples for failing to recognize fully who he was and all that their Scriptures anticipated about him. After noting that he was now revealing “the secret [μυστήριον] of the kingdom of God” to them (Mark 4:11), Jesus queried, “Do you not understand this parable” (4:13). Later, following both Jesus’s feeding of the five thousand and his calming of the storm, Mark tells us that his disciples still “did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened” (6:52). Rather than recognizing that Jesus controlled creation, that Jesus was their satisfier and supply, they still failed to see him for who he was. Jesus regularly charged the crowds “hear” and “understand” (e.g., 4:9, 23; 7:14), but he remained astonished that his closest followers did not grasp his meaning: “Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see?” (7:18). And again, “Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened?” (8:17; cf. 8:21). We then read, “But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him” (9:32).

Significantly, Mark uses two parallel healing accounts to highlight the progressive growth of the disciples’ understanding. Mark first compares Jesus’s two-stage healing of the blind man (Mark 8:22–26) with Peter’s partial understanding of Jesus’ identity and mission. Peter rightfully confesses that Jesus is the Christ (8:27–30), but then Jesus immediately has to castigate him (“Get behind me Satan!” [8:31–33]) because Peter’s mind was not yet fully in alignment with God’s purposes. Jesus’s death and resurrection in the holy city, however, would bring understanding, as is anticipated through Jesus’s instantaneous and complete healing of blind Bartimaeus during Jesus’s journey to death at Jerusalem (10:46–52).

Luke too emphasized the disciples’ lack of knowledge of the OT. After Jesus’s resurrection, he challenged the two on the road to Emmaus, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (Luke 24:25–26). Even the closest followers of Jesus were culpable for failing to see. What a mercy, then, is shown by Christ in disclosing himself, in opening the OT Word to minds once closed. Christ’s two students recalled following their encounter with the resurrected Christ, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while *he opened to us the Scriptures?*” (Luke 24:32). Christ made them wise to the OT’s meaning, thus fulfilling what both Isaiah and Daniel said would come to pass—that after a season of ignorance “the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see” (Isa 29:18); that “those who are wise shall understand” (Dan 12:10).

Luke further unpacks what the resurrected Christ enables with respect to the initial three-fourths of the Bible. After his encounter with the two men, he appeared to a group that included the eleven remaining apostles. We read, “Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while

I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled! Then *he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures*” (Luke 24:44–45). The resurrected Christ now allows the community associated with him to see things in the biblical text that were there all along but ungraspable without the correct light and lens. Jesus is here revealing a “mystery” that is not totally new revelation (their gaining understanding of *the Scriptures*), but its full disclosure was to a significant extent hidden.¹⁵ In Christ, God “enlightens” the eyes of our hearts (Eph 1:18). He shines into our once darkened hearts “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Cor 4:6). He grants “strength to comprehend” the love of God (Eph 3:18–19), “revealing” Jesus to us (Matt 13:16) and “giving us understanding” (2 Tim 2:7).

5. *New Testament Reflections on the Old Testament’s Mystery Revealed*

I have argued that the OT prophets and righteous men understood in part but only in part what they were testifying to when the Spirit of Christ in them was “predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories” (1 Pet 1:11). As was declared of Daniel, “He understood the word and had understanding of the vision” (Dan 10:1), whereas in other instances he admitted, “I heard, but I did not understand” (12:8). And when he asked for clarity, God responded, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end” (12:9).

On the one hand, we read Jesus declare, “Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad” (John 8:56). Reflecting on Psalm 16:8–11, Peter too tagged King David a “prophet,” who, “knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ” (Acts 2:30–31; cf. Luke 18:31–33; Acts 3:18, 24; 10:43). Similarly, the writer of Hebrews stressed, “These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar” (Heb 11:13). The OT remnant, therefore, enjoyed some level of light, wherein they could see clearly and understand rightly many of the things God used them to declare; they themselves wrote of the Christ and hoped in him. On the other hand, we also read, “I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it” (Luke 10:24; cf. Matt 13:17). It seems that we should understand YHWH’s prophets of old as truly seeing something of the beauties that would come and the hope that awaited them, while also affirming that they did not see all. Full disclosure of the meaning of everything that they were declaring awaited a later day.¹⁶

Peter captured both sides of the interpretive framework when he wrote in 1 Peter 1:10–12:

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

¹⁵ Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 30.

¹⁶ For similar conclusions, see Robert L. Plummer, “Righteousness and Peace Kiss: The Reconciliation of Authorial Intent and Biblical Typology,” *SBJT* 14.2 (2010): 54–61; Beale, “The Cognitive Peripheral Vision of Biblical Authors,” 263–93. Beale writes, “There is always a related range of meaning that appropriately is an expansion of the explicit meaning that is expressed.... OT authors may have had some inkling of how the meaning of their texts would be later interpreted in what would appear to us surprising interpretations” (pp. 265, 283); cf. Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 343, 359.

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.

Here the apostle identified that the OT prophets were themselves studiers of earlier revelation. And under the guiding hand of the Spirit (2 Pet 1:21), they “searched and inquired carefully” to know both *who* the Messiah would be and *when* he would appear, thus predicting Christ’s sufferings and the days of the church. They may not have known Jesus’s name, but they had a general sense of the type of person he would be and of when he would come. From this perspective, we can say that the OT authors themselves (though not most of their contemporaries) already visualized something of the nature of the fulfillment that the NT identifies as culminating in Christ. This is not to deny the progress of revelation, but it is to stress that the progress can simply be between conscious, prospective prediction (whether direct or typological) and fulfillment (as opposed to a prediction of which only God was originally aware but that we now identify retrospectively).

This understanding of OT texts is fueled when we allow our grammatical-historical exegesis to consider how previous Scripture¹⁷—of which the prophets were searching and inquiring carefully—and the patterns in Israel’s redemptive-story¹⁸ inform our reading, filling out implications of a text’s meaning along with that which is explicitly stated. By “implications” I mean those subsidiary or implicit meanings that we can show fall within the author’s cognitive peripheral vision, though he may not have been conscious of them.¹⁹ A proper reading of the OT requires that we, for example, appreciate how Genesis 3:15 or 22:17b–18 shape and inform messianic hope in all the rest of the Bible, how associations between YHWH and his Messiah (e.g., Hos 3:5) may influence later readings that only include mention of YHWH (e.g., Hos 11:10–11), or how past types like sacrifice may guide a messianic reading within later texts (e.g., of the day of the Lord as sacrifice in Zeph 2:7). The OT prophets and NT authors seem to have read their Scriptures in this way.

These things stated, when Peter says that “it was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced” (1 Pet 1:12), he is highlighting that the OT prophets were very aware that their words were for us more than them. That is, they saw the things that God promised but merely “greeted them from afar,” convinced “that apart from us they should

¹⁷ On this point, I agree with Walter C. Kaiser Jr., who stresses that before considering how subsequent revelation handles our passage we must first use “all the divine revelation found in the books that *preceded* [historically] the selected text we are reading or studying as the context and ‘informing theology’ that could have the first input to ‘thicken’ the meaning” (“Single Meaning, Unified Referents: Accurate and Authoritative Citations of the Old Testament by the New Testament,” in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old*, ed. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde, Counterpoints [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008], 53; cf. 72, 75). Similarly, though rightfully allowing for interaction with historically later works as well, Beale writes, “When a NT writer refers to an OT passage, both the explicit and subsidiary understanding of the OT author’s meaning compose what we would call the NT writer’s respect for the OT contextual meaning. In addition to the explicit meaning from the specific text quoted and explicitly attended to by the NT author, this contextual meaning may include ideas from the immediate or nearby OT context that are in mind, as well as ideas from other OT books that are related to the meaning of the focus text” (“The Cognitive Peripheral Vision of Biblical Authors,” 273; cf. Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 349).

¹⁸ See Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 96–102.

¹⁹ See especially Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, 30–38; Stein, “The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics,” 451–66; Beale, “The Cognitive Peripheral Vision of Biblical Authors,” 263–93, esp. 266–70; Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 344–47.

not be made perfect” (Heb 11:13, 39). Jesus testified that the Scriptures “bear witness about me” (John 5:39),²⁰ but only in his coming do we gain proper perspective in order to receive this witness. As Philip declared to Nathanael, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth” (1:45; cf. 5:46).

The ultimate divine intent of OT texts (with respect to both sense and referent) can and likely often does legitimately transcend any given human author’s immediate written speech, while still organically growing out of it and never contradicting it (see John 11:51).²¹ This is so because God’s purposes often far exceed human understanding (Deut 29:29; Isa 55:8–9; Eccl 8:16–17) and because he was authoring not simply books but a book (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21) whose parts were “incomplete” until Jesus “fulfilled” them by his coming (Matt 5:17; 11:13; Rom 10:4).²²

John’s Gospel in particular highlights how Christ’s resurrection and glorification marks a turning point in our understanding of Scripture, providing us a lens for reading rightly.²³

The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” But [Jesus] was speaking about the temple of his body. When

²⁰ John frequently uses this statement to speak of a verbal testimony after a visible encounter (e.g., John 1:34; 3:11, 32; 19:35).

²¹ Since E. D. Hirsch’s landmark volume *Validity and Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), scholars have often limited meaning to human authorial intent, and I am highly sympathetic to this view. Numerous scholars, however, have offered fair critique of this perspective, seeing as one of Scripture’s authors is God, whose purpose was not simply to write books but a book (see Philip B. Payne, “The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author’s Intention,” *JETS* 20 [1977]: 243–52; Raju D. Kunjummen, “The Single Intent of Scripture—Critical Examination of a Theological Construct,” *Grace Theological Journal* 7 [1986]: 81–110; Peter Enns, “Apostolic Hermeneutics and an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture: Moving Beyond a Modernist Impasse,” *WTJ* 65 [2003]: 263–87; Jared M. Compton, “Shared Intentions? Reflections on Inspiration and Interpretation in Light of Scripture’s Dual Authorship,” *Them* 33 [2008]: 23–33; Vern S. Poythress, “The Presence of God Qualifying Our Notions of Grammatical-Historical Interpretation: Genesis 3:15 as a Test Case,” *JETS* 50 (2007): 87–103; Vern S. Poythress, “Dispensing with Merely Human Meaning: Gains and Losses from Focusing on the Human Author, Illustrated by Zephaniah 1:2–3,” *JETS* 57 [2014]: 481–99; Moo and Naselli, “The Problem of the New Testament’s Use of the Old Testament,” 702–46). Significantly, Hirsch himself has refined his statements, affirming that his original line between “meaning” (which is textually bound) and “significance” (which is fluid) is not as fixed as he once thought (E. D. Hirsch, “Meaning and Significance Reinterpreted,” *Critical Inquiry* 11 [1984]: 202–24; E. D. Hirsch, “Transhistorical Intentions and the Persistence of Allegory,” *New Literary History* 25 [1994]: 549–67; cited in Darrell L. Bock, “Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents,” in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old*, ed. Kenneth Berdin and Jonathan Lunde, Counterpoints [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008], 123 n. 15). On the question of the NT’s use of the OT, Walter C. Kaiser Jr. is perhaps the strongest voice arguing that human authorial intent *exhausts* the full meaning of every OT text, so that the NT authors are in *every instance* simply identifying what the OT authors already meant in full (*The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* [Chicago: Moody, 1985]; Kaiser, “Single Meaning, Unified Referents,” 45–89). Another following this basic approach to biblical interpretation is Robert Stein (see “The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics,” 451–66; *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*).

²² So too, Moo and Naselli, “The Problem of the New Testament’s Use of the Old Testament,” 735.

²³ See especially D. A. Carson, “Understanding Misunderstandings in the Fourth Gospel,” *TynBul* 33 (1982): 59–91; Ardel Caneday, “The Word Made Flesh as Mystery Incarnate: Revealing and Concealing Dramatized by Jesus as Portrayed in John’s Gospel,” *JETS* 60 (2017): 751–65. Caneday notes the difference between the two articles as follows: “While Carson’s focuses on the disciples’ *reception* of Christ’s revelation, my thesis accents Christ’s revelatory *impartment*” (“The Word Made Flesh as Mystery Incarnate,” 753).

therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. (John 2:20–22)

Jesus’s resurrection moved the disciples to embrace in a fresh way both “the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.”

They took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!” His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. (John 12:13–16)

Only when the Father glorified his Son did Christ’s followers connect how the OT Scriptures testified to Christ’s triumphal entry.

In the NT, Jesus, Paul, and John speak of God’s revealing a “mystery” (μυστήριον) in order to capture the idea of how in Christ we gain full disclosure of things that were somewhat if not significantly hidden in the meaning of the OT.²⁴ This is the language that stands behind Jesus’s statement to his disciples in Mark 4:11: “To you has been given the *secret* of the kingdom of God” (cf. Matt 13:11; Luke 8:10). So too in Rom 16:25–26 Paul speaks of the “mystery” of the good news of Christ that he preached: “Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith.” The gospel bound up in the preaching of Jesus Christ is in many respects a revelation of a mystery that for centuries was not understood and not appreciated, yet it is the very OT books—the prophetic writings—that make it known.

Jesus’s appointment as the Son of God in power (Rom 1:4) gives fuller insight for our OT interpretation, for through him we gain the OT’s fullest meaning. Prior to Jesus’s arrival, the OT was still “a messianic document written from messianic perspective and designed to instill messianic hope.”²⁵ The OT prophets grasped some of the meaning, seeing patterns in history, celebrating promises of hope, and anticipating that God’s blessing would overcome global curse only through a male deliver who would gain victory over the evil one through substitutionary sacrifice. Nevertheless, in many respects the OT was still a mystery hidden through the ages—an acorn waiting to become a mighty oak. But when the offspring of the woman, the seed of Abraham, and the son of David appeared, Jesus’s own

²⁴ See Matt 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10; Rom 11:25; 16:25; 1 Cor 2:1, 7; 4:1; 14:2; 15:51; Eph 1:9; 3:3, 9; 5:32; 6:19; Col 1:26–27; 2:2; 4:3; 2 Thess 2:7; 1 Tim 3:9, 16; Rev 1:20; 10:7; 17:5, 7. The most thorough assessment of all of these texts is Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*; cf. Carson, “Mystery and Fulfillment,” 393–436. Beale and Gladd write, “The revelation of the mystery is not a totally new revelation but the full disclosure of something that was to a significant extent hidden” (*Hidden but Now Revealed*, 30). Similarly, writing with respect to John’s Gospel, Carson elsewhere asserts, “Thus we come by another route to something analogous to the dominant notion of μυστήριον in the Pauline corpus: the gospel is simultaneously said to be hidden in times past but now disclosed, and prophesied in times past and now fulfilled” (D. A. Carson, “Reflections on a Johannine Pilgrimage,” in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies*, ed. Tom Thatcher [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007], 91–92).

²⁵ From personal correspondence with James M. Hamilton Jr., Professor of Biblical Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

person and work provided both the spiritual light to see and savor the OT's author's intent, and the interpretive lens for properly understanding and applying the OT itself in a way that most completely magnifies God in Christ.

6. *The Centrality of Christ for Interpreting the Old Testament*²⁶

I believe the Scripture is calling us to see both an organic unity and a progressive development between the Old and New Testaments. The move from Old to New is a shift neither from apple seed to oak tree nor from oak tree to oak tree but from acorn to oak tree. There is an organic connection between what the OT human authors intended and what the NT human authors saw fulfilled in the person of Jesus, but the OT meaning is now often fuller, expanded, or deepened because through Christ God reveals the mystery. Often the OT prophets fully grasped both the shadow and substance of their writings (e.g., John 8:56; Dan 10:1; Acts 2:30–31), but at times we can assume their awareness was like one who plants an acorn that he knows will grow into a mighty oak, but who has little grasp of how glorious that oak would indeed be that you and I now visualize. In still other instances, though probably not too often, the OT authors may not have even recognized that the person, event, or thing that they were recounting actually foreshadowed something greater.²⁷ While a type's predictive nature was innately present from the beginning (see 1 Cor 10:6, 11), we may at times only recognize the anticipatory elements in retrospect.²⁸

The OT is filled with declarations, characters, events, and institutions that bear meaning in themselves but that also find that meaning enhanced and clarified in the coming of Christ. It is as if the OT often gives us the start of a pattern in which we read “2” followed by “4,” but we need the NT to clarify what comes next (2, 4, ?). If the NT identifies that the OT finds its fulfillment in Christ as the digit “6,” then we know not only the final answer but also that the OT problem was “2 + 4.” If, however, the NT establishes that the next digit is “8,” then we know both the answer and that the OT problem was “2

²⁶ My focus in this paper has been on the need to interpret the OT through the light and lens of Christ's coming and not on how to properly see and savor the divine Son in the OT. For this, see DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*, 481–89; Jason S. DeRouchie, “Lifting the Veil: Reading and Preaching Jesus's Bible through the Light and Lens of the Divine Son,” *SBJT* 22.3 (2018): 157–79. The former volume includes a host of further sources on the topic, to which I would now add Dennis E. Johnson, *Journeys with Jesus: Every Path in the Bible Leads Us to Christ* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2018). You also can view a recent lecture I gave related to the issue titled “Thinking How to See and Savor the Divine Son in All of Scripture,” Bethlehem College & Seminary, 20 October 2019, <https://jasonderouchie.com/how-to-see-and-savor-the-divine-son-in-all-of-scripture/>.

²⁷ While I believe the norm was that the OT prophets grasped at least the seed of what they were proclaiming, we know that they did not always understand (Dan 12:8)—much like the disciples themselves failed to grasp Christ's statements about his passion until after his death and resurrection (Mark 6:51–52; Luke 2:50; 9:45; 18:31–34; 24:16; John 12:16). In other instances, the prophet could have been fully unaware that he was predicting anything (specifically with respect to typological predictions). We see a comparable example when we read, “Caiaphas ... said to them, ‘... It is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.’ He did not say this of his own accord, by being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad” (John 11:50–52).

²⁸ For an example of typology that is viewed to be primarily retrospective and not prospective, see Andrew David Naselli, *From Typology to Doxology: Paul's Use of Isaiah and Job in Romans 11:34–35* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012).

x 4.”²⁹ The coming of Christ supplies both the answer key and the algorithm that clarify how the divine author desired all along for us to read the OT.³⁰

In this respect, some have helpfully compared Scripture to “double narratives” like detective stories. Leithart writes,

Detective novels tell two stories at once: the story on the surface and the real story unveiled to the gathered suspects in the final chapter. Once the detective gives his solution to the crime, the reader cannot go back to the first narrative; the second completely overshadows it.... Under the circumstances, reading backwards is not merely a preferred reading strategy; it is the only sensible course of action for a reasonable person.³¹

The Bible’s last “chapter” (the NT) supplies us the necessary lens for reading the initial three-fourths the way God intends us to read it. Through Christ we can see and savor elements in the OT’s plotline, content, and structure that were there all along but that were not clear apart from him.

In regard to these matters, Darrell Bock writes, “Later revelation can complete and fill meaning that was initially, but not comprehensively, revealed in the original setting, so that once the progress of revelation emerges, the earlier passage is better and more comprehensively understood.”³² He continues, “The force of earlier passages in God’s plan becomes clearer and more developed as more of the plan is revealed in later events and texts. This increase in clarity often involves the identification of new referents, to which the initial referents typologically point forward.”³³ Similarly, G. K. Beale notes,

It is quite possible that the OT authors did not exhaustively understand the meaning, implications, and possible applications of all that they wrote. Subsequently, the NT Scripture interprets the OT Scripture by expanding its meaning, seeing new implications in it and giving it new applications.... This expansion does not contravene the integrity of the earlier texts but rather develops them in a way which is consistent with the OT

²⁹ We could also find in the NT “-2” (2 – 4), “16” (2², 4²), etc.

³⁰ Moo and Naselli assert, “The most basic of all NT ‘hermeneutical axioms’ ... is the authors’ conviction that the God who had spoken in the OT continued to speak to them and that it was this final divine context for all of Scripture that determines the meaning of any particular text” (“The Problem of the New Testament’s Use of the Old Testament,” 737).

³¹ Peter J. Leithart, *Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 66, following historian David Steinmetz. Reckoning with how later realities in space and time can influence and inform the meaning of earlier realities, Leithart cites Arthur C. Danto as follows: “The whole truth concerning an event can only be known after, and sometimes only *long* after the event itself has taken place, and this part of the story historians can only tell.” Leithart then later adds, “The event is brought into relation with subsequent events and acquires new properties that change the very thing that it is.” Leithart, *Deep Exegesis*, 40, 43. With respect to the biblical text, I am more comfortable speaking about layers of meaning and how later interpreted events or messages *illuminate*, *enhance*, and *extend* the single meaning God intended from the beginning but which was only realized progressively through greater revelation and realized fully with tribulation and triumph of Jesus Christ. Such a view alone maintains the organic link between type and antitype and the unified, omniscient, and omnipotent working of the single divine author.

³² Darrell L. Bock, “Response to Kaiser,” in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old*, ed. Kenneth Berdin and Jonathan Lunde, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 92.

³³ Bock, “Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents,” 114.

author's understanding of the way in which God interacts with his people--which is the unifying factor between the Testaments.³⁴

What these authors are stressing is that even if the OT authors were not always *fully* aware of all that God was speaking through them, they at least retrospectively would have affirmed the trajectories defined by the later biblical authors.³⁵ As Beale states,

When there is a divine understanding that transcends the conscious intention of the human author, the divine understanding is still organically related to the human author's understanding or "willed type." What God knew more fully than the prophet consciously knew would be an interpretive implication that would fit within the human author's "willed type," and, if asked later, the prophet would say, "Yes, I see how that is the wider, thicker meaning of what I intended originally to say." We must say that in every case God had a more exhaustive understanding than biblical authors had of what they wrote.³⁶

Figure 1 tries to unpack how I see what is happening with respect to Scripture's progressive revealing of OT meaning. The horizontal axis represents the progress of revelation from the OT to the NT eras through Christ, and the vertical axis distinguishes the unregenerate from the regenerate in both periods. In the OT age, the remnant of faithful (like Abraham and Moses, Rahab and Hannah, David and Isaiah) had light for seeing and savoring God's purposes that would climax in Christ, but they did not have the full lens for discerning the ultimate significance of what they saw. In contrast, the unregenerate, which included the majority of Israel, had neither light nor lens due to their hardness of heart and spiritual disability. Now, with Christ's coming, God is enlightening more eyes and has supplied the full lens for reading the OT faithfully, but the unregenerate continue to live in the dark, having the lens of Christ available but not the light of Christ to see. The "mystery," therefore, remained permanently hidden for some (cf. 1 Cor 2:8–9 with Isa 64:4; Eph 1:17–18) but was only temporarily hidden for others (see Dan 12:8–9, 12; Matt 11:25).³⁷

³⁴ Beale, "Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?" 394.

³⁵ LaSor once stated, "An ordinary seed contains in itself everything that will develop in the plant or tree to which it is organically related: every branch, every leaf, every flower. Yet no amount of examination by available scientific methods will disclose to us what is in that seed. However, once the seed has developed to its fullness, we can see how the seed has been fulfilled" (William Sanford LaSor, "Prophecy, Inspiration, and Sensus Plenior," *Tyn-Bul* 29 [1978]: 55–56). I appreciate here the stress on the organic connection between an acorn and oak, or apple seed and apple tree. However, while not true in every instance, the OT authors do often appear to have known a lot both about both the organic trajectory and its ultimate fulfillment.

³⁶ Beale, "The Cognitive Peripheral Vision of Biblical Authors," 283; cf. Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 358.

³⁷ Gladd notes, "Temporary hiddenness operates on a redemptive-historical plane and concerns the unveiling of end-times events, whereas permanent hiddenness refers to the persistent inability to understand revelation even after the mystery has been revealed." Benjamin L. Gladd, "Mystery," in *Dictionary of the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, forthcoming); cf. D. A. Carson, "Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul's Understanding of the Old and New," in *The Paradoxes of Paul. Vol. 2 of Justification and Variegated Nomism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, 2 vols., WUNT 2/181 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 432; Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 60–63.

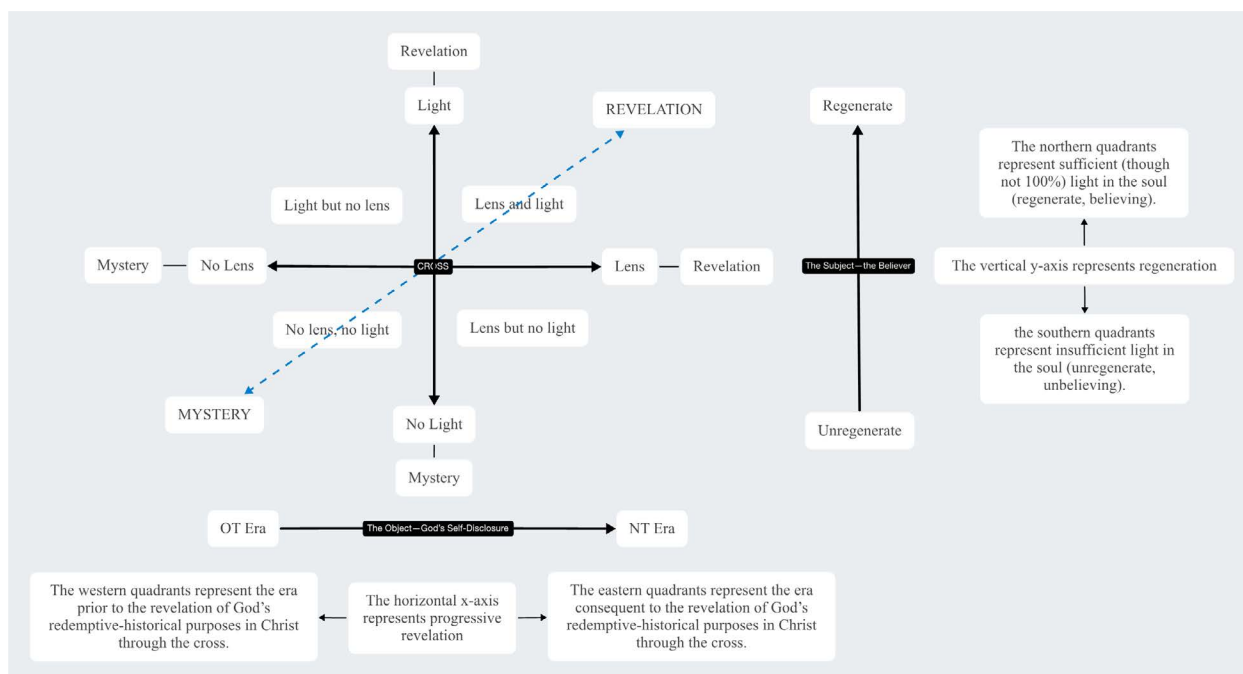


Figure 1. The Bible's Progressive Revelation of OT Mystery³⁸

Figure 2 unpacks further the way Christ operates as a lens, supplying us a developed understanding of the OT's meaning. The NT in Christ more fully interprets and clarifies OT visions and declarations; it identifies the realization or fulfillment of the OT's direct promises and predictions; it gives substance to the various types or shadows (persons, events, things; cf. Col 2:17; Heb 8:5; 10:1); and it identifies the ultimate *telos* of the law of Moses in Christ and the law associated with him.

When Saul encountered the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus, the murderer became a missionary, the blind man gained sight, and Jewish Pharisee became an apostle of Jesus to the Gentiles who from that point forward only read the OT through the light and lens of Christ. By means of the resurrected Jesus's appearing, a veil was lifted that now allowed Paul to read the old covenant materials with fresh eyes (2 Cor 3:14–16), and in them he found a clear message of the Messiah and the mission he would spark (Acts 26:22–23; cf. Luke 24:47). This OT preacher could now assert, "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2; cf. 1:23). Because he also identified that the gospel was of "first importance" (15:3) and not *sole* importance, we know he found more in the OT than the gospel. However, the death and resurrection of Jesus now supplied the apostle with an unparalleled lens for reading the OT as God intended.

³⁸ I thank my student Joey Karrigan for helpfully capturing in this image what he heard me teach in class.

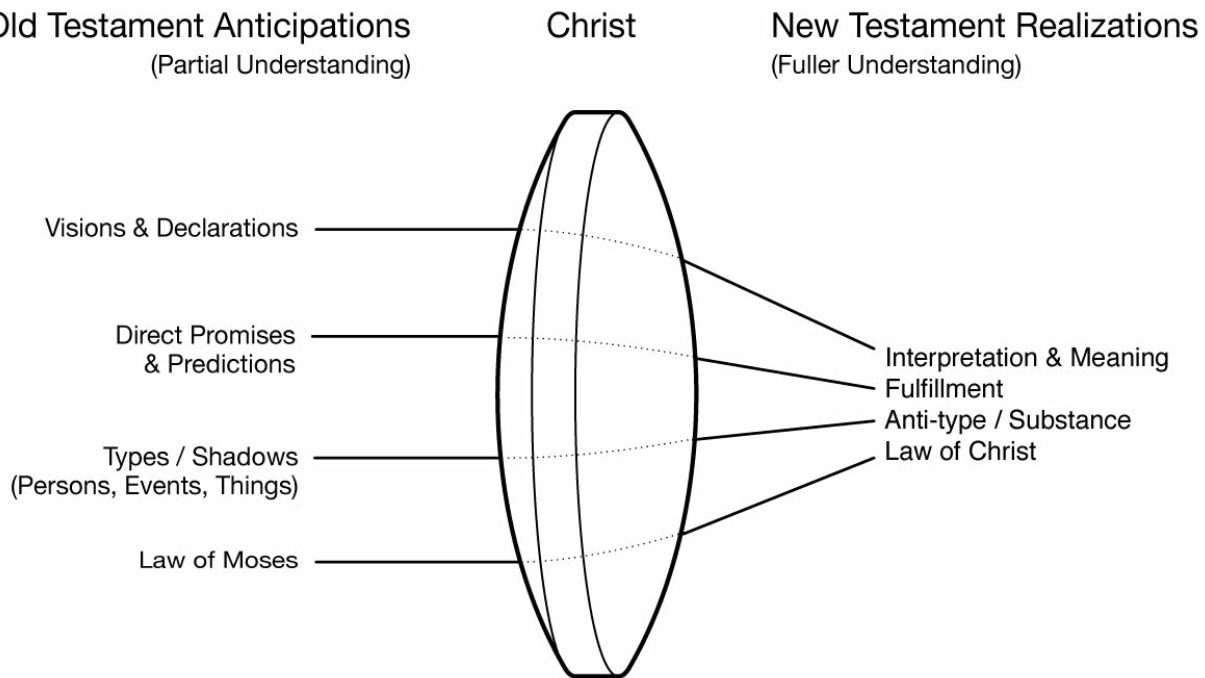


Figure 2. Interpreting the OT through the Lens of Christ³⁹

The NT church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (Eph 2:20). In light of Paul’s earlier statements that the OT “prophetic writings” are the very means by which God *through Christ* is today making known the revelation of his mystery to the nations (Rom 16:25–26; cf. 1:1–3), the “prophets” in Eph 2:20 may actually be the OT prophets, whom we should now encounter only through the guidance of the NT apostles.⁴⁰ Regardless, it is “the apostles’ teaching” that is to ground the church’s proclamation (Acts 2:42). And because the OT was their Bible, we must seek to understand and follow the apostle’s pattern of interpreting the OT in the light of Christ’s appearing, which will in turn enable us to see better the divine author’s intent in Scripture. It also gives us protective guides for keeping our interpretations grounded and not overly subjective.

We must read the OT as Christians and not as if Christ has not come, for this is how the divine author intended us to read his book. We must read the Scripture forward, then backward, and then forward again. Moses anticipated that during the restoration, post-exile, those who once had no ears to hear his words would now be able to listen and obey all his teaching (Deut 29:4[3]; 30:8). Isaiah foresaw an age far beyond his own when his words would matter and when those who were spiritually deaf and for whom his words were sealed would now be able to hear and see, being taught by the Lord (Isa 29:10–11, 18; 30:8; 54:13). Jeremiah, too, wrote his book for a future generation living in the latter days

³⁹ I thank my former students Joel Dougherty and Ryan Eagy for helping me prepare this image.

⁴⁰ So Chrysostom; see Philip Schaff, ed., *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church 13 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), s.v. Eph 2:20. Against this reading of Eph 2:20, however, is that these OT “prophets” would be different than the NT “prophets” mentioned in 3:5 and 4:11.

of the new covenant who would now fully understand (Jer 30:2–3, 24; 31:1, 33). Finally, God told Daniel that he would not fully understand all that was revealed to him, but the Lord also said that he would remove his book’s “seals” and give understanding “at the time of the end” (Dan 12:8–10). Thus, Paul declared that the details of the OT “were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come” (1 Cor 10:11; cf. Rom 15:4), and Peter noted, “It was revealed to [the OT authors] that they were serving not themselves but [us]” (1 Pet 1:12).

As interpreters of the OT, we must recognize that bound up in the gospel of Jesus Christ is the revelation of a “mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations” (Rom 16:25–26). As we seek to see and to savor the beauties of God and his purposes, we must do so through the light and lens of Christ. The light of Christ supplies us the needed spiritual sight for understanding the things of God (1 Cor 2:12–13; 2 Cor 3:14), and the lens of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection provides the needed perspective for reading the OT meaning to its fullness (Matt 5:17–18; Mark 4:11; Rom 16:25–26). God wrote the OT for Christians, and it is Christians who are enabled more than any others to fully grasp both the meaning and intended effect of the initial three-fourths of the Christian Scriptures.