

FIVE
VIEWS
OF

CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

GENRE, AUTHORIAL INTENT, AND THE NATURE OF SCRIPTURE

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Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament

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REDEMPITIVE-HISTORICAL, CHRISTOCENTRIC APPROACH

JASON S. DEROUCHIE

The only Bible Jesus had was what we call the Old Testament, and he believed many of its elements concerned him (Luke 24:27).¹ Jesus opened his disciples' minds to "understand the Scriptures," and he empowered them to see a unified, overarching message in the Old Testament regarding a suffering and sovereign messiah who would spark a global mission of reconciliation with God (Luke 24:45–47). Christ's followers should aim to properly magnify Jesus where he is evident in the Scriptures. As John Owen said in 1684, "The revelation . . . of Christ . . . deserves the severest of our thoughts, the best of our meditations and our utmost diligence in them."² I propose the most biblically faithful way of doing this is through a multifaceted approach that accounts for the central role Jesus plays in redemptive history.

Part 1: The Nature of Scripture

Christ Is Central in God's Redemptive-Historical Purposes

The fundamental presupposition of evangelical hermeneutics is that Christian Scripture, both the Old Testament and the New Testament,

1. I am deeply grateful to the editors and to my research assistants, Brian Verrett and Nicholas Majors, for their help in editing this essay.

2. John Owen, "Meditations on the Glory of Christ," in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William Goold, 23 vols. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 1:275.

is God's revealed word (2 Tim 3:16), which by nature implies inspiration, inerrancy, unparalleled authority, and unity amid the diversity. Redemptive history is the progressive unfolding of God's saving purposes disclosed from Genesis to Revelation, all of which grow out of and culminate in God's commitment to glorify himself in Christ. Jesus is, therefore, the beginning and end of the Bible, holding it and all else together (Col 1:16–17).

Scripture progresses through five distinct but overlapping covenants (see below) and through various events, peoples, and institutions, all of which climax in the person and work of Christ. The Old Testament's history (Matt 2:15), laws (5:17–18), prophecy (Acts 3:18), and wisdom (1 Cor 1:23–24) all point to Jesus. Indeed, in him the Old Testament's problems find their solution. All that the Old Testament anticipated is eschatologically realized as shadow gives rise to substance (Col 2:16–17), types move to antitype (e.g., Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 10:6, 11), and what God promised he now fulfills (Luke 24:44; Acts 3:18).

Christ Jesus stands as both the climax and center of God's saving purposes. This is why Jesus told the religious leaders, "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 ESV).³ It also explains why Jesus told his disciples that we have come to "understand the Scriptures" if we see the Old Testament's message climaxing in his death and resurrection and sparking a worldwide missions movement (Luke 24:45–47; cf. Acts 26:22–23).⁴

In Christ, the new creation, new age, and new covenant overcome the old creation, old age, and old covenant as the end of history intrudes into the middle of history. Scripture's redemptive story culminates in Christ's first and second comings, and through him God fulfills all Old Testament hopes. Hence, "no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ" (2 Cor 1:20).

3. John 5:39 provides believers a "comprehensive hermeneutical key" for rightly interpreting the entire Old Testament, according to D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 263.

4. For the central place of these verses in Luke-Acts's theology, see Brian J. Tabb, *After Emmaus: How the Church Fulfills the Mission of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021).

Jesus Is Central to Biblical Interpretation

In considering the relationship of the Testaments and their unity centered on the divine Son, G. K. Beale has identified five principles that are rooted in the Old Testament's own story of salvation history and that guided the New Testament authors' Old Testament interpretive conclusions:⁵

1. New Testament authors always assume *corporate solidarity*, in which one can represent the many.
2. The Messiah represented the true (remnant) Israel of the old covenant and the true (consummate) Israel, the church, of the new covenant.
3. God's wise and sovereign plan *unites salvation history* in such a way that earlier parts correspond to later parts.
4. Christ has initiated the age of eschatological fulfillment.
5. Christ stands as the climax and center of history such that his life, death, and resurrection provide *the key* for fully understanding the earlier portions of the Old Testament and its promises.

Within God's redemptive purposes, Jesus operates as the culmination of salvation history and provides both the beginning and end of Old Testament interpretation. This—Beale's last principle—is perhaps the most controversial, but it finds support from both Testaments and impacts all biblical inquiry.

The Old Testament Anticipates That God's People Will Only Understand Its Full Meaning When the Messiah Comes

Many texts in the Old Testament identify how the rebel majority in the old covenant were truly *unable* to know God's word, see his glory, or hear his voice (Deut 29:4 [29:3 MT]; Isa 29:9–12; cf. Rom 11:7–8). However, Yahweh's prophets had promised that God would overcome his people's resistance when he raised up a covenant-mediating

5. Summarizing G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 53, 95–102.

prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15–20), the one we know of as Jesus (John 6:14–15; Acts 3:22–26). To him the restored community would listen, and they would then obey all that Moses had taught (Deut 18:15; 30:8; cf. Matt 17:5) because through this Messiah, God would have put his words in their hearts (Deut 30:14; Isa 59:20–21), taught them (Isa 54:13), and given them spiritual sight and hearing (Isa 29:18).⁶ Thus, only in the latter days of the Messiah and the new covenant would God empower his people to more fully accept and understand his Old Testament word. Christ’s person and work supply a necessary lens for rightly grasping all that God intended through his Old Testament prophets.

Concerning the prophets, we know that they usually understood at least most of what they were predicting, for they “searched [the Scriptures?] intently and with greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow” (1 Pet 1:10–11; cf. John 1:45; 5:46; Rom 1:1–3). Most Old Testament prophets were probably like Daniel, whom God empowered to comprehend “mysteries” (Dan 2:19; 4:9) and who gained “understanding of the message” (10:1; cf. Acts 2:30–31). Nevertheless, in at least one instance, the Lord declared he would only reveal full understanding in the future “time of the end” (Dan 12:8–9).

The New Testament Identifies Jesus as the Lens for Fully Understanding the Old Testament’s Meaning

The above passages disclose (1) that believers today can understand and appropriate the Old Testament better than any of the old covenant rebel majority could, and (2) that, in at least some instances, we on this side of the resurrection can understand the Old Testament mysteries more than the prophets themselves did. The New Testament affirms that unregenerate Jews could not understand how the Old Testament pointed to Christ (John 5:37; cf. Rom 11:8; 2 Cor 3:14). It also affirms how the

6. For this future-oriented reading of Deuteronomy 30:11–14 with Romans 10:6–9, see esp. 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).

elect disciples did not even fully understand the Old Testament's meaning until Jesus's resurrection (John 2:20–22; 12:13–16)⁷ but that it was the Old Testament itself that clarified its meaning (Luke 24:27, 32; cf. 16:29–31). Indeed, it was after the resurrection that Jesus opened “their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45). The Old Testament gives necessary backdrop to Jesus's resurrection, and through Jesus's resurrection God guides our Old Testament interpretation, revealing the end, and by this allowing us now to arrive at the fullest meaning he originally intended.

Thus, God has now “revealed and made known through the prophetic writings” the full meaning of his mystery that was present but latent in the Old Testament all along (Rom 16:25–26). Through Christ, the veil is removed (2 Cor 3:14).⁸ Additionally, only by Christ's spiritually transforming us through his saving work does God enable believers to accept and understand the Old Testament's ethical expectations (cf. 1 Cor 2:14).

Grasping Authorial Intent

So how should we understand authorial intent? Scripture calls us to see both an organic unity and a progressive development between the Testaments. Often the Old Testament authors appear to have grasped both the shadow and the substance, the acorn and the oak tree, in relation to what they were writing (e.g., Dan 10:1; John 8:56; Acts 2:30–31). Other times, however, while the typological nature of an event, person, or institution was innately present from the beginning (1 Cor 10:6, 11), the full meaning (and perhaps even the predictive recognition) of that type may only have been understood in retrospect. In such instances, it is as if the Old Testament gives us the start of a pattern in which we read “2” followed by “4,” but we need the New Testament to clarify what comes next (2 → 4 → NT?). If the New Testament identifies that the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in Christ as the digit “6,” then we

7. 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.

8. For more on the theme of mystery and the centrality of Jesus in biblical interpretation, see Jason S. DeRouchie, “The Mystery Revealed: A Biblical Case for Christ-Centered Old Testament Interpretation,” *Them* 44 (2019): 226–48.

know not only the final answer but also that the Old Testament problem was “2 + 4.” If, however, the New Testament establishes that the next digit is “8,” then we know both the answer and that the Old Testament problem was “2 × 4.” The coming of Christ often supplies both the answer key and the algorithm that clarify how the divine author desired all along for us to read the Old Testament and to grasp the relationship of the parts.

Part 2: Interpretive Steps for Readers

Interpret through Christ and for Christ

Though elements of discontinuity exist, we must presuppose a fundamental unity from Old to New Testaments since all Scripture comes from God. The whole Bible progresses, integrates, and climaxes in Christ, and Scripture discloses a God-intentioned unity in how the unchanging Lord is working out his purpose of exalting himself through Jesus (Eph 1:9–10, 20–21).⁹

In God’s good purposes already set forth in the Old Testament, when John, Peter, and Paul met the resurrected Christ, their reading of the Old Testament was never the same. Indeed, “only in Christ” is the veil removed that allows one to read and appropriate the old covenant material as God intended (1 Cor 2:13–14; 2 Cor 3:14). By disclosing Christ as the Old Testament’s goal, the Father also illuminates his intent for the earlier parts. And in turn, those earlier parts then clarify the meaning of Jesus’s person and work. We may initially come to Scripture, reading it front to back. However, when God the Father has given us “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation” and “enlightened the eyes of [our hearts]” through Christ (Eph 1:17–18), we read Scripture back to front and then front to back.

The flow of God’s saving purposes in history demands that Christian Old Testament exposition starts and ends with Christ. That is, our Old Testament interpretation is both redemptive-historical and Christocentric: it must flow from Jesus and point to him. The divine Son is at the heart of all exegesis and theology because he is the means

9. For more on the centrality of Jesus in whole Bible theology, see Jason S. DeRouchie, Oren R. Martin, and Andrew David Naselli, *40 Questions about Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2020).

and focus of God's self-revelation through his Scriptures.¹⁰ This is what I mean when I say that my approach is Christocentric.

Assess a Passage's Three Overlapping Contexts

Faithfully seeing and celebrating Christ in his Scriptures requires a multiform approach, because Jesus fulfills the Old Testament in various ways (Matt 5:17; Luke 24:44). Working through rigorous exegesis and theology, the Christian interpreter must follow the signals God supplies us to properly magnify the Messiah and his work.¹¹ Rightly identifying these signals requires that we interpret Scripture along three distinct but overlapping contexts,¹² enabling us to understand most fully what God intended a given Old Testament passage to mean and how a passage points to Jesus.

1. The "close context" (C1) focuses on a passage's immediate literary context within the whole book. Here we observe carefully what and how the text communicates, accounting for both the words and the theology that shapes those words.
2. The "continuing context" (C2) considers the passage within God's story of salvation. We examine how an Old Testament text is informed by antecedent Scripture (e.g., the OT use of the OT) and contributes to God's unfolding drama, whether by progressing the covenants or developing a biblical theme or typological pattern that culminates in Christ.
3. The "complete context" (C3) concerns a text's placement and use within the broader canon. We consider whether and how later Scripture uses or builds upon this passage and keep in mind revelation's progressive nature, the way Christ's work influences

10. This study approaches the question of Christ in the Old Testament in a broad rather than narrow sense by seeking to identify any legitimate means for magnifying Jesus from his Scripture.

11. Elsewhere I have summarized a twelve-step exegetical and theological process in Jason S. DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2017).

12. For these headings, see Trent Hunter and Stephen J. Wellum, *Christ from Beginning to End: How the Full Story of Scripture Reveals the Full Glory of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 42–69. My categories are similar to but not identical with the textual, epochal, and canonical "horizons" found in Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 293–310.

all history, and how the divine authorship of Scripture allows later passages to clarify, enhance, or deepen the meaning of earlier texts.

Principles for Seeing and Celebrating Christ in His Scriptures

My redemptive-historical, Christocentric approach identifies at least seven possible ways of faithfully magnifying Christ in the Old Testament. All seven principles assume that we are reading the Old Testament through the lens of Christ, for only in him are we empowered to see, live, and hope as God intended from the beginning.¹³

1. See and Celebrate Christ through the Old Testament's Direct Messianic Predictions (P1)

Christ fulfills the Old Testament as the specific focus or goal of direct messianic predictions and redemptive-historical hopes. The Old Testament contains many explicit and implicit predictions.¹⁴ For example, Peter agrees that Isaiah's words directly predict the Messiah: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds we have been healed" (1 Pet 2:24 ESV; cf. Isa 53:5).

2. See and Celebrate Christ through the Old Testament's Salvation-Historical Story and Trajectories (P2)

Scripture's entire story line progresses from creation to the fall to redemption to consummation and highlights the work of Jesus as the decisive turning point in salvation history (cf. Luke 16:16; Gal 3:24–26). Five major covenants guide this story line, each of which finds its terminus in Christ (Adamic/Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, David, new).¹⁵ Furthermore, various themes develop or progress as God gradually reveals more of himself and his ways, including covenant, God's

13. For more on these seven areas, see Jason S. DeRouchie, "Question 3: How Does Biblical Theology Help Us See Christ in the Old Testament?," in DeRouchie, Martin, and Naselli, *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, 41–47.

14. For a few examples, see Gen 22:17–18 with Gal 3:8, 14; Ezek 34:23 with John 10:16; Micah 5:2 with Matt 2:6.

15. See Jason S. DeRouchie, "Question 22: What Is a Biblical Theology of the Covenants?," in DeRouchie, Martin, and Naselli, *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, 215–26.

kingdom, law, temple and God's presence, atonement, and mission. Christ fulfills all of the Old Testament's salvation-historical trajectories.

3. See and Celebrate Christ through the Similarities and Contrasts of the Old and New Ages, Creations, and Covenants (P3)

Jesus's saving work creates both continuities and discontinuities between the old and new ages, creations, and covenants. For example, while both the new and old covenants contain a similar structure (i.e., God redeems and then calls his people to obey), only the new covenant supplies freedom from sin and power for obedience to *all* covenant members; the old covenant did not change hearts (Deut 29:4; Rom 8:3). Similarly, whereas Adam disobeyed and brought death to all, Christ obeys and brings life to many (Rom 5:18–19). Whereas access to Yahweh's presence in the temple was restricted to the high priest on the Day of Atonement, Christ's priestly work opens the way for all in him to enjoy God's presence (Heb 9:24–26; 10:19–22). These kinds of similarities and contrasts between the old and new ages, creations, and covenants encourage a messianic reading of the Old Testament within the redemptive-historical approach.

4. See and Celebrate Christ through the Old Testament's Typology (P4)

The author of Hebrews said the Old Testament law was “a shadow of the good things to come” (Heb 10:1), and Paul spoke similarly (Col 2:16–17). In the New Testament, these anticipations and pointers are called “types” or “examples” (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 10:6) that in turn find their counter in Jesus as their ultimate realization. God structured the progressive development of salvation history in such a way that certain Old Testament characters (e.g., Adam, Melchizedek, Moses, David), events (e.g., the flood, the exodus, the return to the land), and institutions or objects (e.g., the Passover lamb, the temple, the priesthood) bear meanings that clarify and predictively anticipate the Messiah's life and work.

5. See and Celebrate Christ through Yahweh's Identity and Activity (P5)

When we meet Yahweh in the Old Testament, we are catching glimpses of the coming Christ. Recall that Jesus said that “no one has ever seen God” the Father except the Son (John 1:18; 6:46), but

that “whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9 ESV). Minimally, this means that those who saw God in the Old Testament enjoyed preliminary and partial glimpses of his glory (Exod 33:18–23). It also may imply that, at least in some instances where Yahweh becomes embodied in a human form in the Old Testament, we may be meeting the preincarnate Son (e.g., Gen 18:22; 32:24–30; Josh 5:13–15). Additionally, since the New Testament identifies Jesus with Yahweh (cf. Phil 2:10–11; Isa 45:23), when we hear God speaking or acting in the Old Testament as the object of people’s faith, we are seeing the very one who would embody himself in the person of Jesus (see, e.g., Heb 11:26; Jude 5).

6. See and Celebrate Christ through the Ethical Ideals of Old Testament Law and Wisdom (P6)

The Old Testament’s laws and wisdom provide fodder to magnify Christ’s greatness. The Mosaic law pointed to the importance for Christ in the way it identified and multiplied sin (Rom 3:20; 5:20), imprisoned the sinful (Gal 3:10, 13, 22), and showed everyone’s need for atonement. The law by its nature, therefore, predicted Christ as “the end of the law” (Rom 10:4 ESV).

Moreover, as God’s word was made flesh, Jesus manifests in his person the essence of every ethical ideal aligned with Yahweh’s revealed will, and he then imputes this perfection to believers (Rom 5:18–19; cf. Phil 3:9). When you observe how the Old Testament law and wisdom express ethical ideals, know that the justifying work of the divine Son fulfills them all.

7. See and Celebrate Christ by Using the Old Testament to Instruct or Guide Others in the Law of Love (P7)

Jesus came not “to abolish the Law or the Prophets . . . but to fulfill them” (Matt 5:17), and the way he fulfills the various precepts guides our pursuit of love. While old covenant instruction no longer bears *direct* authority in the Christian’s life, it still indirectly guides us when read through the mediation of Christ (2 Tim 3:15–16). Through Christ, the very texts that used to condemn now lead us in a life of love, and God empowers such love (Rom 13:8–10) by changing our hearts and filling us with his Spirit (Ezek 36:27; Rom 2:26, 29). The Old Testament helps

guide our Christian obedience, and every step of this obedience magnifies Jesus's sanctifying work.

Part 3: Applying the Approach—Three Case Studies

Having presented seven principles for seeing Christ in the Old Testament Scriptures, I now apply this redemptive-historical, Christocentric approach to Genesis 22, Proverbs 8, and Isaiah 42.

Genesis 22:1-19: Proof and Pledge That Yahweh Will Fulfill His Offspring Promise

Placing the Offspring Promise in the Context of Genesis

Before considering Genesis 22's messianic predictions, which are both typological (P4) and direct (P1), the interpreter must first place the passage within the continuing context of God's story of salvation (C2). Genesis is threaded by the promise of "offspring," which includes not only peoples but a person. Due to Adam's sin bringing both curse upon the whole world and corruption within all humanity (3:14–19; 6:5, 11–12), the Lord declared that a single male "offspring" (*zera'*) of the first woman would, through his own personal tribulation, triumph over the evil serpent, thus reversing the curse and bringing new creation (Gen 3:15).¹⁶ From this point forward, the world's only hope for blessing and reconciliation with God rested on Yahweh's preserving and realizing the promise of this singular offspring.

The narrator ties the offspring promise of Genesis 3:15 to the patriarchs by the book's repeated heading ("this is the account of X's family line") and the linear genealogies in 5:1–32 and 11:10–26.¹⁷ Genesis 22:1–19 occurs within Terah's family line cycle (11:27–25:11). This cycle begins with Yahweh promising that Abra(ha)m would (1) become a great nation (12:2), (2) be the agent of curse-overcoming blessing (12:3), and

16. Collins rightly notes that Hebrew authors make explicit whether the collective singular noun *zera'* ("seed, offspring") bears a singular or plural referent by including singular or plural adjectives and/or pronouns (whether independent, object, or suffix pronouns). The lexicalized singular pronoun *hu'* in 3:15 identifies that the woman's "seed" is a male individual (cf. 2 Sam 7:12–13). C. John Collins, "A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15): Is the Woman's Seed Singular or Plural?" *TynBul* 48 (1997): 139–48, esp. 142–44.

17. See Gen 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1; 37:2; Jason S. DeRouchie, "The Blessing-Commission, the Promised Offspring, and the *Toledot* Structure of Genesis," *JETS* 56 (2013): 219–47.

(3) have offspring who would inherit the promised land and become numerous like the dust (13:15–16).

Genesis 15 builds on these promises by stressing that the patriarch has yet “no offspring” (v. 3 ESV) but believes (v. 6) Yahweh’s promise that *one* “offspring” from his own loins will be his heir and become countless as the stars (v. 5).¹⁸ This astronomical imagery connects directly with the singular seed of Genesis 22:17 (see below), where God promises, “I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars in the sky” (author’s translation). Abraham would become the father of many nations (17:4; cf. Gen 12:2–3) in many lands (26:3–4; cf. Rom 4:13) through the promised offspring’s arrival (Gen 22:17–18).

Two elements in Genesis 22:1–19 indicate that the offspring promise provides a governing backdrop for the narrative. First, the narrator stresses that the patriarch must sacrifice his “son” (22:2), frequently repeats the word “son” (22:3, 6–10, 12–13, 16), and notes Abraham’s fatherhood (22:7). These elements recall God’s earlier pledge, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned” (21:12; cf. 17:19, 21), which distinguishes Isaac from the coming offspring (cf. 26:3–4). Second, Yahweh directly predicts how the individual offspring will multiply like the stars, possess the gate of his enemies, and be the instrument of blessing to the nations (22:17–18). Thus, I summarize the point of Genesis 22:1–19 as follows: God tests whether Abraham will fear him and obey the divine call to sacrifice his only son, thus proving that he truly believes that Yahweh will fulfill his promise of a singular male offspring through Isaac who will deliver and bless all nations.

Indirect/Typological Foreshadowing of Christ in Genesis 22:1–19

Genesis 22:1–19 narrates Abraham’s obedient willingness to offer his son as a burnt offering, Isaac’s sacrificial role and deliverance, and Yahweh’s providing the ram as a substitute sacrifice. Through these features, the passage typologically foreshadows (i.e., P4) that God would not spare his own Son (Rom 8:32; cf. Isa 53:6, 12), Christ would die and rise to life (Heb 11:19), and he would serve as a substitute sacrifice for sinners (2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13–14; 1 Pet 2:24). Scripture suggests that

18. Note the singular pronoun and verbs in verse 4. For more on Genesis 15:1–6, see Jason S. DeRouchie, “Lifting the Veil: Reading and Preaching Jesus’ Bible through Christ and for Christ,” *SBJT* 22.3 (2018): 167–77.

the patriarch himself understood to some degree the predictive nature of his test.

The father did not spare his son. By recalling the complete context (C3), we see that the Synoptics (Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 20:13) and John's writings (John 3:16; 1 John 4:10) may present Jesus as the antitypical beloved son whom Isaac foreshadowed (cf. Gen 22:2, 12, 16). Romans 8:32 likely provides a more direct allusion, however: "He who *did not spare his own Son* [*idiou huiou ouk epheisato*], but gave [*paredōken*] him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (emphasis added). Along with seeing an allusion to Isaiah 53:6, 12 (Yahweh gave up [*paredōken*, LXX] his servant to death for our sins), many scholars propose Paul is alluding to Genesis 22:12, 16, where the Lord declares to Abraham, "You *have not spared* your beloved son [*huiou . . . ouk epheisō*, LXX]."¹⁹

Ironically, while Father Abraham, like Father Yahweh, was willing to give up his son, God did not allow the patriarch to complete the sacrifice. The typology in this instance is therefore only partial, or perhaps better, inverted (or ironic). That is, Jesus alone as God's Son fulfills Abraham's hope that "Yahweh will see" (cf. Gen 22:14) and stands as the antitype to the substitutionary role Isaac foreshadowed but could *not* fulfill and that the ram supplied.²⁰

Isaac, the potential burnt offering. Abraham's test required that he willingly "sacrifice [Isaac] . . . as a burnt offering" at Moriah (Gen 22:2–3; cf. 22:6–8, 13). Prior to the tabernacle's construction and the incorporation of the sin and guilt offerings, the burnt offering was the only atoning offering for human sin.²¹ Texts like Leviticus 9:24–10:2 (C3) demonstrate that burnt offerings can consist of *substitutes* (9:24) or *sinners* (10:1–2),²² but only the killing of the substitute allows the repentant rebel a renewed relationship with God.

19. For example, Mark A. Seifrid, "Romans," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 634; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, 2nd ed., BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 451.

20. For more on inverted typology, see Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 92–93.

21. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 176–77.

22. Other texts identify as sacrifices the sinners Yahweh destroys at the day of his coming (e.g., Isa 34:6; Jer 46:10; Ezek 39:17; Zeph 1:7).

Was Isaac to die as a substitute or a sinner? Scripture most commonly uses the language of “burnt offering” with respect to substitution, and nothing in the close context (C1) draws attention to a wickedness in Isaac demanding immediate justice (contrast Deut 9:4–6). Hence, God likely sets Isaac forth as a vicarious sacrifice standing in for the sinner Abraham or a broader community.

However, God did not allow Isaac to stand as a substitute sacrifice, likely because he himself was a sinner. The complete biblical context (C3) informs us that burnt offerings would continue until the ultimate substitute’s arrival since they functioned as an “illustration/figure” (NIV/ESV, *parabolē*) pointing to what God would accomplish in Christ during “the time of the new order” (Heb 9:9–10). Abraham, like Noah before him (Gen 8:20–22), required sustained substitutionary expressions. Isaac could not stand as the substitute, for he himself bore sin’s blemish.

God supplies a curse-bearing substitute. Within the story of God’s salvation (C2), the Lord had promised Abraham, “Whoever curses you I will curse” (Gen 12:3). When ratifying his covenant of land, offspring, and blessing to the patriarch, Yahweh dramatically passed between the animal parts, signaling that he would bear the curse of death if his fulfilling the covenant with Abraham was jeopardized (15:9–18; cf. Jer 34:18–20).²³ But since he also conditioned the fulfillment of the covenant promises on the obedience of Abraham’s children (Gen 18:19) and because all people were innately wicked (8:21), Genesis both anticipates that God would be forced to curse them and implies that the Lord would, in turn, have to curse himself.

We now see the significance of the coming offspring and the way Genesis 22 points to the Son of God who would himself stand as humanity’s substitute. At the beginning of Genesis (C1), God promised that an offspring of the woman and divine-image-bearing son would destroy the evil one and his sinful work (3:15; cf. 5:1–3). Thus, where the first man and son of God failed to provide and protect (2:15 with

23. On reading the covenant ratification ceremony as a self-maledictory oath sign, see Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 16–17, 41–42; Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 286–94.

3:6), thereby bringing curse to the original creation, the logic of Genesis 3 and complete biblical context (C3) teaches that this new man and Son of God would succeed, thereby securing blessing for a new creation (cf. Rom 5:18–19; 1 Cor 15:45; 2 Cor 5:17). Nevertheless, while God would raise up this new son, his victory would be costly. The serpent would smite the man's heel (Gen 3:15), which when considered from the complete context (C3), at least implies that this son would endure a blow from the one who has been "a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44). From the start, therefore, Genesis anticipates that the promised offspring would in some way bear the curse but overcome (smiting the serpent's head, Gen 3:15), thus reconciling the world to God.²⁴ Before Genesis 22, the narrator has already intimated for the reader the future curse of both the offspring and God himself. Later prophetic revelation (C3) further associates the self-sacrificing royal deliverer with Yahweh (e.g., Ps 2:1–7; Isa 7:14; 9:6) and God with his wise royal son (e.g., Ps 45:6–7 [45:7–8 MT]).

Prior to Genesis 22 (C1 and C2), the narrator has already associated Isaac with the coming offspring (Gen 15:3–5; 21:12; cf. 26:3–4), such that Isaac's arrival reinforces the certainty that the deliverer will come after (and from) him. Since Isaac's life is so bound with the offspring who is to experience tribulation unto triumph, one is not surprised that Isaac will endure suffering to foreshadow the one to come. Yet he is not sufficient for the role. In Abraham and Isaac's dramatic dialogue up the mountain, the father declared, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son" (22:8). The Hebrew term rendered "lamb" is *se* (Gk. *probaton*), a generic term for any small livestock beast. After Yahweh's angel held back the patriarch's death-bringing hand, the specific type of beast God supplied was a "ram" (22:13). Perhaps to distinguish the type from its antitype, Isaiah notes that the suffering servant was "led like a lamb [Heb. *se*; Gk. *probaton*] to the slaughter" (Isa 53:7). Both Isaac and the substitute are figures for the greater substitute that Genesis itself anticipates (cf. John 1:29; Acts 8:32–35; 1 Pet 1:18–19).

24. See Alan F. Segal, "He Who Did Not Spare His Own Son . . . : Jesus, Paul, and the Aqedah," in *From Jesus to Paul: Studies in Honour of Francis Wright Beare*, ed. Peter Richardson and John C. Hurd (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984), 175–77.

Abraham rejoiced that he would see Christ's day. At least two features within Genesis 22:1–19 (close context) suggest that Abraham himself understood the predictive significance in his test. First, even after seeing the substitute ram and offering it “as a burnt offering instead of his son” (22:13), Abraham called the place “Yahweh *will see*” (*yhwh yir'eh*), not “Yahweh *has seen*” (22:14). Abraham recognized the replacement ram as a foreshadowing of how “Yahweh will see” to fulfilling the offspring promise and overcome the curse with blessing (22:18). Thus, his testimony became a perpetual statement of hope in the one we call the Christ: “At the mount of Yahweh it will be seen” (22:14, author’s translation).

A second feature indicating that Abraham saw his test as predictive further supports this reading. The three-day journey from the region of Beersheba in the Philistines’ land (Gen 21:33–34) to Moriah (approximately 91 kilometers, or 56.5 miles) was unnecessary if Yahweh only desired to test Abraham, for this could have been done without distant travels.²⁵ By means of this journey, the patriarch would have recognized something more about the promised offspring as a person and about the location, means, and timing of how God would secure his victory.

As for the *location*, God brings Abraham to a mountain in “the region of Moriah” (Gen 22:2), the future location of temple sacrifices (2 Chr 3:1) and, ultimately (C3), Christ’s sacrifice (Mark 10:33; Acts 10:39). The chronicler explicitly identifies Moriah as the place of sacrifice, showing that he saw Abraham’s words as prospective.

With respect to the *person*, in coming to Moriah, Abraham has returned to the region of (Jeru)Salem and the King’s Valley where the priest-king Melchizedek of (Jeru)Salem blessed him (Gen 14:18–20). By this act and for Abraham’s benefit, Yahweh is likely associating Melchizedek, the “king of righteousness” and “peace,” with the promise of the offspring whose coming the patriarch’s obedience at the mountain would secure (cf. Ps 110:1–2, 4; Heb 7:17, 21).

As for *means*, Yahweh calls a father to give up his son. Within the complete biblical context (C3), this act points to the Father’s greater

25. So, too, Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “Genesis 22:2: Sacrifice Your Son?,” in *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, by Walter C. Kaiser Jr. et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 126–27.

gift in Christ (cf. John 3:16; Rom 8:32; 1 John 4:9–10). The Lord also restores this son and supplies a substitute to bear the wrath that Abraham or a broader community deserved (John 1:29; 2 Cor 5:21). Abraham knew his son would return with him, by whatever means the Lord chose. Thus, Abraham told his servants regarding him and his boy, “*We* will worship and then *we* will come back to you” (Gen 22:5, emphasis added). The author of Hebrews saw in Abraham’s statement his belief that God could “even raise the dead” (Heb 11:19). Within the complete context (C3), Isaac’s “resurrection” anticipates the promised offspring, who likewise would triumph through tribulation (Gen 3:15; 49:8–12; cf. Col 2:13–15).

Regarding *timing*, the narrator identifies that Abraham’s test, culminating in his figuratively receiving back his son from the dead, occurred “on the third day” after he began his journey (Gen 22:4). As such, this narrative may be one of the instances where in Scripture (C3) “this is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead *on the third day*” (Luke 24:46, emphasis added; cf. 15:3–4).²⁶

Direct Predictions of Christ in Genesis 22:1-19

In his second speech, Yahweh’s messenger makes two promises, both expressed by an infinitive absolute + *yiqtol* construction in Hebrew: “I will surely bless you and will surely make your offspring as the stars of the heavens and as the sand that is on the seashore” (22:17, author’s translation). Yahweh’s commitment to bless recalls his words in 12:2. His mention of the stars alludes to 15:5, which identified that the offspring who would come from the son from his loins would become countless like the stars. Against the NIV, we should regard the offspring in 22:17b as singular since the verb “multiply” (*rbb*) commonly means to produce children when it governs living organisms (e.g., 1:28; 9:1, 7; 17:2, 20).²⁷ In light of this, it seems possible that the “offspring” in Genesis 22:17 is actually the singular deliverer who will himself multiply into a community. The masculine *singular* pronoun “his” modifying “offspring” in verse 17 further supports this conclusion. Moreover, Genesis’s overall

26. See Jason S. DeRouchie, “Why the Third Day? The Promise of Resurrection in All of Scripture,” *Midwestern Journal of Theology* 20.1 (2021): 19–34.

27. I thank my research assistant, Brian Verrett, for this observation.

plot structure witnesses a narrowing of vision that moves from the world to Israel to a royal offspring in Judah's line upon whom all the world's hopes rest (Gen 49:8–12).²⁸

The offspring in Genesis 22:17–18 is singular according to C. John Collins's understanding that an adjective or pronoun's number makes explicit whether *zera'* ("seed, offspring") bears a singular or plural referent.²⁹ The close proximity of the three instances of *zera'* in 22:17–18 suggests that *all* are singular in this context.³⁰ The flow of thought is as follows:

1. The singular male offspring of the woman who will strike a death blow to the head of the serpent (3:15) and whom Yahweh will name through Isaac (21:12) will multiply like the stars (22:17).
2. The first result of this community will be that the singular offspring will possess the gate of his enemies (22:17; cf. 24:60).
3. The second result is that all the nations of the earth will regard themselves blessed in this offspring (22:18; cf. Ps 72:17; Isa 65:16; Jer 4:2).

The earth's nations counting themselves blessed (22:18) constitutes the promised great multiplication (22:17) and likely signals the eschatological shift from Abraham fathering one nation (Israel during the old covenant) to fathering many nations (the church, united to Jesus the true Israel, in the new covenant) (17:4–5). All these are in some way incorporated into the singular offspring (22:18), and through their multiplying, he claims enemy turf (22:17). This suggests that during the reign of the male deliverer, the "land" promised to Abraham will expand to "lands," which is exactly what Yahweh promised Isaac in 26:3–4. Furthermore, when considering the complete context (C3), both Peter and Paul regarded 22:18 as a messianic text (see Acts 3:13, 18, 24–26;

28. DeRouchie, "Blessing-Commission," 235.

29. Collins, "Syntactical Note," 142–44.

30. Contra Alexander and Steinmann, who affirm a singular referent for *zera'* in 22:17c–18 but a plural referent in 22:17b (T. Desmond Alexander, "Further Observations on the Term 'Seed' in Genesis," *TynBul* 48 [1997]: 365; Andrew E. Steinmann, "Jesus and Possessing the Enemies' Gate [Genesis 22:17–18; 24:60]," *BSac* 174 [2017]: 17).

Gal 3:8, 13–14, 16, 29). I suggest, therefore, that Genesis 22:15–19 amounts to a direct messianic prophecy (P1).

Summary

In Genesis 22:1–19 Yahweh tests Abraham to reveal whether he would fear God and obey the divine call, thus proving that he truly believed that Yahweh would fulfill his promise of a singular male offspring through Isaac (21:12). In response to the patriarch's obedience (22:18; cf. 26:5), Yahweh both typologically confirms (P4) (22:11–14) and directly predicts (P1) (22:15–19) that he will indeed realize what he has promised. He will do this by providing a penal substitutionary sacrifice for sinners (vv. 13–14) and by multiplying the male offspring into a massive community, which will result in the singular offspring overcoming his enemies' stronghold (v. 17) and in his being the one in whom some from all the earth's nations regard themselves blessed (v. 18).

Proverbs 8:22–31: Wisdom Is God's Royal Son by Whom He Creates the World

Overviewing the Poem

In the immediate context (C1) of Proverbs 8, personified Wisdom urges listeners to embrace the truth of her instruction (vv. 4–11), identifies her noble associations and the benefits she brings (vv. 12–21), notes her eternal origins and joyful involvement in creation (vv. 22–31), and charges her “sons” to heed her voice to experience life rather than death (vv. 32–36). This meditation on creation includes many semantic and conceptual links with Genesis 1:1–2:3 (C3).³¹ Analyzing the discourse suggests that the unit divides into two parts (Prov 8:22, 23–31), both of which offer interpretive challenges.

Concerning the first part, Wisdom declares that Yahweh “possessed” (*qnh*) her before he did any acts (Prov 8:22 ESV). The verb *qnh* in Proverbs 8:22 means “to possess,” whether by *acquisition* (e.g., Exod 15:16; Isa 11:11; Prov 1:5; 4:5, 7), *purchase* (e.g., Gen 47:22; 49:30; Lev 25:30; Jer 32:9), or *generation* (Gen 4:1; Deut 32:6; Ps 139:13). The NIV’s “brought forth” derives from the verb’s use in contexts of generation,

31. See Michael B. Shepherd, *The Text in the Middle*, StBibLit 162 (New York: Lang, 2014), 10.

but “to possess” still appears to be the base meaning of *qnb*.³² God has always “possessed” Wisdom, which was present with him before he created anything. It was present as an underlying divine quality or function that his being generates and that is essential or organic to his nature.³³ I render Proverbs 8:22 as follows: “Yahweh possessed me, the beginning of his way, earlier than his acts from then.” The phrase “the beginning of his way” stands in apposition to “me” and likely marks Wisdom as the preeminent element of his purposes (cf. Job 40:15; Col 1:15).

Second, Wisdom declares herself to be Yahweh’s means for carrying out his intentions both before creation (Prov 8:23–26) and at creation (vv. 27–31). *Before creation*, Yahweh installed Wisdom as his representative (v. 23: “I was formed” [NIV] or “I was set up” [ESV]). The verb *nsk* with this meaning occurs elsewhere only in Psalm 2:6: “I have *installed* my king on Zion” (emphasis added). Solomon likely associates Wisdom’s primordial exaltation in Proverbs 8:23 with the future anointed king’s exaltation in Psalm 2:6 (see below). At the very least, the link probably identifies Wisdom’s royal status in relation to God even before time began. Thus, the Complete Jewish Bible renders Proverbs 8:23 as “From the distant past I was enthroned.”³⁴

Wisdom portrays itself as God’s commissioned image bearer or royal agent who has enjoyed this post “from eternity [*me’olam*] . . . from the beginning, from times before earth” (Prov 8:23, author’s translation). The noun *’olam* means only “a remote time,” but the close context (C1) concerns eternity past. As Seth Postell notes, “Because Wisdom precedes creation, it must be regarded as uncreated, and, as a consequence, eternal.”³⁵

Yahweh “brought forth” or “strengthened” (*hyl*) Wisdom before the waters, mountains, and fields (8:24–26 ESV). While interpreters debate the precise meaning of the Hebrew verb *hyl*, the text’s overall flow depicts Wisdom as an eternal effect of God himself.

32. See R. B. Y. Scott, *Proverbs–Ecclesiastes*, AB 18 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 72; Bruce Wawter, “Prov 8:22: Wisdom and Creation,” *JBL* 99 (1980): 205–16.

33. See the discussion below on Proverbs 30:4.

34. See the rendering of the Complete Jewish Bible at www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16379/jewish/Chapter-8.htm.

35. Seth D. Postell, “Proverbs 8—The Messiah: Personification of Divine Wisdom,” in *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy: Studies and Expositions of the Messiah in the Old Testament*, ed. Michael Rydelnik and Edwin Blum (Chicago: Moody, 2019), 652.

Next, *at creation* Wisdom was Yahweh's constant companion (8:27–31)—present when he established the heavens (v. 27) and joyfully and faithfully (*'amon*) serving beside him when he made the earth (vv. 28–31). The noun *'amon* in verse 30 is likely a bi-form of the adjective *'emun* (“faithful”) and noun *'emunah* (“faithfulness”). While some point to Song of Songs 7:1 [7:2 MT] and Jeremiah 52:15 to render *'amon* “artisan” or “craftsman” (CSB, ESV, NASB, NET, NKJV, NRSV), the meaning “faithful one” works fine in these contexts. The NIV’s “I was *constantly* at his side” adequately captures the meaning.³⁶ At creation Wisdom constantly rejoiced before Yahweh, in his earth’s soil, and with the sons of Adam (8:30–31).

Wisdom as God’s Son in Proverbs 8:22–31

Solomon portrays Wisdom as a woman to entice his royal son(s) to desire her (cf. 1:8; 2:1; 4:10). Nevertheless, Wisdom’s female persona is secondary to the book’s message, for the royal son(s) should not only embrace but also embody Wisdom. Furthermore, in Proverbs 8:22–31 Wisdom is neither a feminine part of God nor his consort. Instead, the first-person speech (“I, me, my”) mutes the feminine portrayal, thus allowing Wisdom to be both with God and of God.

Significantly, at the book’s end (close context) a certain Agur son of Jakeh asks four rhetorical questions whose contents recall Yahweh’s queries in Job 38 and echo Yahweh’s creative acts that Proverbs 3:19–20 and 8:27–31 describe: “Who has gone up to heaven and come down? Whose hands have gathered up the wind? Who has wrapped up the waters in a cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth?” (30:4). He then queries, “What is his name, and what is the name of his son? Surely you know!” John Sailhamer claims that this verse intentionally alludes to Wisdom’s part in creation (8:27–31) to raise “the question of the identity of the One who is with God.”³⁷

More specifically, 30:1–6 is prophetic speech, making up what 30:1 terms an “inspired utterance” (NIV) or “oracle” (ESV, *massa*). The text reinforces this through the phrase “the man’s utterance”

36. Cf. Proverbs 3:19–20; see Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1–15*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 417–20.

37. John Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 354.

(*ne'um haggeber*), which occurs elsewhere only three times and always at the head of (messianic) predictions (see Num 24:3, 15; 2 Sam 23:1).³⁸ Contemporary translations consistently render 30:3b negatively, as the last of four declarations of ignorance. However, the Hebrew retains no negative in 30:3b, and the word order suggests a contrast with what precedes: “I have not learned wisdom, *but knowledge of Holy Ones I know*” (author’s translation). Despite being weak and uneducated (30:2–3a), Agur received an “oracle” (30:1)—a truthful “word of God” (30:5) that supplied “knowledge of Holy Ones [*qedoshim*]” (30:3b). The plural form “Holy Ones” is unexpected as a reference to God. In Scripture its only other unambiguous use as a substantive with reference to God is in Proverbs 9:10, which captures the book’s thesis at the end of the first main unit: “The beginning of wisdom is the fear of Yahweh, and knowledge of Holy Ones is understanding” (author’s translation). Most interpreters view these examples as plurals of majesty, following the pattern of *'elohim* (“God”), so they give the plurals a singular referent, “Holy One.”³⁹ However, these would be the only such examples in Scripture, and the singular forms *'el* (30:1) and *'eloah* (30:5) for “God” draw further attention to the plural *qedoshim*. Tracy McKenzie and Jonathan Shelton rightly note, “The occurrence of the duo at the end of verse 4 suggests a plurality in the holy ones here in verse 3.”⁴⁰ Similarly, the Father and Son in 30:4 naturally point back to the “Holy One[s]” of 30:3. This link identifies a united holy nature in the distinct persons of the Father and his Son. Furthermore, the connection with 9:10 (cf. 1:7) strongly associates the relationship of the Father and Son in 30:4 to Yahweh and an eternally begotten Wisdom in 8:22–31. Targum Neofiti ties these texts together by rendering Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning, with wisdom, the Son of Yahweh completed the sky and the land” (cf. Jer 10:12; Ps 104:24).⁴¹

38. For these links, see Tracy J. McKenzie and Jonathan Shelton, “From Proverb to Prophecy: Textual Production and Theology in Proverbs 30:1–6,” *Southeastern Theological Review* 11.1 (2020): 8–11.

39. The NRSV is an exception, rendering *qedoshim* as “holy ones” in Proverbs 30:3 but not 9:10. Nevertheless, the phrase’s limited use within Proverbs suggests both instances envision the same referent.

40. McKenzie and Shelton, “From Proverb to Prophecy,” 13.

41. As cited in Shepherd, *Text in the Middle*, 11.

The Wise King as God's Son in Proverbs and Beyond

Additionally, Proverbs most commonly uses the language of “sonship” with respect to the royal line, which we learn elsewhere will culminate in a king whose dominion will never end. While Proverbs never explicitly mentions the promises of 2 Samuel 7:12–16, the superscription identifies Solomon as the “son of David, king of Israel” (1:1), which places Proverbs within this historic and prophetic continuing context (C2).⁴² Furthermore, Proverbs intends to train the royal “son[s]” whose wisdom is grounded in the fear of Yahweh. It is here that Solomon’s allusion to Psalm 2 becomes significant. Just as Yahweh from eternity past installed his Wisdom-Son to represent him (Prov 8:23), so also Yahweh designates his messianic King his “begotten Son” (Ps 2:7, author’s translation) upon his installation as King in Zion, having triumphed over his enemies (Ps 2:1–2, 6; cf. Acts 4:24–28; 13:32–33). Utilizing the complete biblical context (C3), Thomas Schreiner notes, “If Proverbs is viewed from a canonical perspective, the ideal picture of the king points to a future king—a king who fulfills the promise of the covenant with David . . . Jesus Christ.”⁴³

The internal witness of Proverbs suggests that those who composed and/or compiled the book portrayed Wisdom as God’s eternally begotten Son and also believed that the royal son of David and of God would be Wisdom incarnate. This accords with the complete context (C3) when one considers the New Testament’s description of Jesus. What “the Wisdom of God said” (Luke 11:49–51 ESV), Jesus said, thus identifying himself as Wisdom.⁴⁴ Jesus’s wisdom exceeds Solomon’s (Matt 12:42), and he proves it in his deeds and testifies to it in his teaching (11:2, 19; 13:54). Christ is God’s wisdom who stands against foolish human speculations (Col 2:1–8) and who becomes our wisdom through his cross-victory (1 Cor 1:24, 30; cf. 2:7–8).

Other New Testament texts identify Jesus as Wisdom when they declare him to be the divine Word through whom “all things were

42. So, too, Barry R. Leventhal, “Messianism in Proverbs,” in *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy: Studies and Expositions of the Messiah in the Old Testament*, ed. Michael Rydelnik and Edwin Blum (Chicago: Moody, 2019), 639–40.

43. Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 294.

44. Hartmut Gese, “Wisdom, Son of Man, and the Origins of Christology: The Consistent Development of Biblical Theology,” *HBT* 3 (1981): 43.

made” (John 1:1, 3, 14) and “in very nature God” who becomes human, dies a substitutionary death, and then is “exalted . . . to the highest place” (Phil 2:6–11). Perhaps the clearest parallels appear in Colossians 1:15–20. Here Paul alludes to the Wisdom-Son of Proverbs 8 and 30 when he identifies that God has brought believers “into the kingdom of the Son” (Col 1:13), who is “the image of the invisible God, the first-born over all creation” (1:15), the one who “is before all things, and in [whom] all things hold together (1:17), and the one in whom all God’s “fullness” dwells (1:19).

Summary

As Yahweh’s eternally begotten Son, Wisdom was the beginning of God’s way, which manifests itself both in Yahweh’s appointing Wisdom as his representative even before creation and by Wisdom’s serving joyfully and faithfully beside Yahweh at creation. Alongside the Father, the Wisdom-Son was one of the Holy Ones, which implies the Father and Son enjoyed a unified nature but were distinct in person. As Son, Wisdom incarnate would represent the Father by reigning as the messianic King, fulfilling the promises to David and standing greater than Solomon as the bestower of wisdom on future children of God. Thus, Proverbs 8:22–31 magnifies Jesus through a blend of principles 5 (Jesus as Yahweh) and 6 (Jesus as Ethical Ideal).

Isaiah 42:1–9: The Servant-Person Will Give Justice and Bring Light to the World

An Overview of Isaiah 42:1–4

Inspecting Isaiah 42:1–9 (close context) reveals that these verses provide a direct messianic prediction (P1) in that they communicate the servant-person will faithfully give justice to the nations and be empowered by Yahweh as a covenant for the people and light for the nations. After identifying the world’s folly in pursuing idolatry (41:21–29), Yahweh advances his servant as the remedy—one who will care for the wounded and the weak and faithfully give justice to the nations. Yahweh upholds and delights in his servant, who is endowed by God’s Spirit (42:1). Yahweh then highlights both the nature and certainty of the justice that the servant will bring. He will give justice “to the nations” (42:1d), and he will do so “in faithfulness” (42:3c). His pattern of justice will be neither

self-advancing and assertive (42:1d) nor dismissive and abusive (42:3ab). And he will persevere until his task is accomplished—establishing justice throughout the earth and satisfying the longing coastlands with his law (42:4). The Lord of creation (42:5) commits to empower his servant as a covenant for people and a light for nations (42:6–7), all for the sake of his own name and purpose (42:8–9).

Significantly, 42:10–17 rings out that Yahweh will accomplish the very things he calls his servant to fulfill: the coastlands will sing his praise (42:10, 12; cf. 42:4) as he leads the blind (42:16; cf. 42:7), shines light into darkness (42:16; cf. 42:6), and receives the worship he is due (42:17; cf. 42:8). These links suggest that the servant of 42:1–9 is closely associated with Yahweh and serves as the very means by which God fulfills his restoring work.

Isaiah's King, Servant, and Anointed Conqueror

Isaiah 42:1–9 is the first of four Servant Songs (cf. 49:1–13; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12), which, along with many other texts from Isaiah, Christians have long believed anticipate an eschatological king, servant, and anointed conqueror who will reign in righteousness over a righteous community (11:1–9; 32:1–8), save the Lord's multiethnic people by providing them righteousness (49:6; 53:11; 54:14, 17), and effect righteousness by overcoming opposition, delivering the wounded and bound, and inaugurating the new creation (59:21; 61:1–3; 63:1–6).⁴⁵ Yahweh chooses his servant (42:1; 49:7), empowers him with his Spirit (42:1; cf. 11:2; 59:21; 61:1) and word (49:2; 50:4), and declares him righteous (50:8–9; 53:11). Bearing no guilt (50:5, 8–9; 53:9) and triumphing through struggle and abuse (42:4; 49:4, 7; 50:6–7; 53:3, 7–8), this servant will instruct and give justice to the nations (42:1, 3–4; cf. 9:7; 11:3–4), sustain the weary by his teaching (42:3; 50:4), be highly exalted and praised by kings (49:7; 52:13, 15), and restore Israel and save many from the world (49:6; 53:11). He will accomplish this by serving as a vicarious, atoning sacrifice (53:4–6, 10–12) and as a covenant for people and light for nations (42:6–7; 49:6, 8; 55:3; cf. 54:10; 60:3) in order to herald the good news (52:7; cf. 61:1), heal the disabled (42:7;

45. See J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 13–16.

53:5; cf. 61:1), free captives (42:7; 49:9; cf. 61:1), generate a context of security and justice (42:3; cf. 4:6; 9:7; 11:6–9; 61:2), and create lives that evidence the new creation (53:11; cf. 4:2–4; 61:3), all for God’s glory (42:8; 49:3; cf. 11:9; 61:3). At least six key conceptual connections working along all three interpretive contexts indicate that Isaiah’s portraits of king, servant, and anointed conqueror throughout the book all refer to the same person:

1. Yahweh endows this figure with his Spirit and the word (Isa 11:1–2, 4; 42:1; 49:1–3; 50:4; 59:21; 61:1–3).
2. Righteousness distinguishes both the person (Isa 9:7; 50:8; 53:11; 61:10) and his work (11:4; 53:11; 54:17; 61:3).
3. The prophet equates the individual with the Davidic descendant who would be God’s Son and reign forever over God’s kingdom (Isa 9:6–7; 55:3; cf. 2 Sam 7:14).
4. Operating as a signal or banner to which the nations will gather (Isa 11:10, 12; 49:22; 62:10), this person will reign over and redeem a global people (Isa 11:6–12; 19:23–25), extend revelation and salvation to the ends of the earth (Isa 42:1–4; 49:6; 52:13–53:12; 55:3–5), and deliver a multiethnic remnant (Isa 56:6–8; 66:19–20)—all of whom Yahweh will centralize in a restored Zion that will stretch across the new creation (Isa 2:2–4; 11:6–9; 54:2–3; 55:5; 59:20; 60:1–22; 62:11–12; 65:17–18, 25; 66:20–22).
5. The person is human yet truly God. He is both David’s descendant (Isa 11:1) and the source from which David came (11:10)—“Immanuel [God with us]” (7:14) and the “mighty God” (9:6). While bearing human form and ancestry (52:13; 53:2) and experiencing human suffering (49:7; 50:6; 52:14), he was sinless and righteous (50:5, 8–9; 53:9, 11) and the very “arm of Yahweh” (53:1), who is endowed with Yahweh’s garments of salvation (11:5; 59:17; 61:10) and through whom Yahweh delivers and conquers (51:9; 52:10; 59:16; 63:5).
6. The New Testament clearly associates Jesus with the king (e.g., Matt 1:23; 4:15–16; Rom 15:12), servant (Matt 8:17; 12:18–20; Acts 8:32; 13:34; 26:22–23; 1 Pet 2:22–25), and anointed conqueror (Luke 4:18–19).

Isaiah's Messianic Hope in the Servant-Person

Recognizably, some, like the Ethiopian eunuch, have wondered whether the servant of the Servant Songs refers to Isaiah himself: "Who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" (Acts 8:34). Yahweh refers to the prophet as "my servant" in Isaiah 20:3, and Isaiah may be "his servant" in 44:26 (ESV). The autobiographical, first-person speech in the second and third Servant Songs (49:1–6; 50:1–9; cf. 61:1–3, 10–11; 63:1–6) certainly could also point in this direction, but it does not explain the biographical portrayal of the servant in third person in 42:1–9 and 52:13–53:12.⁴⁶ Moreover, the prophet appears to include himself among those for whom the servant's atoning death works (53:6), and no one who is merely human has sprinkled many nations with atoning blood (52:15) and served to see God's "salvation . . . reach to the ends of the earth" (49:6).

The term "servant" occurs twenty times in Isaiah 40–53, always in the singular. Some of these instances clearly refer to the collective and rebellious nation of Israel (42:19, 22; 43:8, 10). But this chosen servant does not need to fear, for the Lord will strengthen him (41:8–10) and pour out his Spirit on his offspring, making them blossom in new creation (44:1–5). With predictive certainty, as if already accomplished, God has forgiven his servant's sins and redeemed him. He will confirm this coming redemption by raising up Cyrus to return Israel from Babylon to the land (44:21–28; 48:17–20).

Many texts, including 41:8–10, support reading the "servant" in 42:1–4 as corporate Israel. The LXX made this view explicit by including "Jacob" and "Israel" before "servant" and "chosen," respectively, thus reversing the order found in 41:8 but identifying the same referent—the nation. However, the following reasons lead me to see the eight instances of "servant" in the Servant Songs (42:1; 49:3, 5–7; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11) (C1) as direct prophecies (P1) of the singular eschatological messiah of whom the earlier and later parts of the book speak.⁴⁷

46. G. P. Hugenberger, "The Servant of the Lord in the 'Servant Songs' of Isaiah: A Second Moses Figure," in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. Philip E. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1995), 113.

47. Cf. Hugenberger, "Servant of the Lord," 108–11; Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "The Identity and Mission of the 'Servant of the Lord,'" in *The Gospel according to Isaiah 53: Encountering*

1. The Lord gives his servant as “a covenant for the people and a light for the gentiles” (42:6; cf. 49:8). The singular “people” contrasts with the plural “gentiles” and refers to collective Israel. The servant here is not the people but represents them, and his covenant-mediating sacrifice will be for them and on behalf of the broader nations (cf. 55:3–5).
2. Isaiah 49:3 and 6 explicitly distinguish the servant-person named Israel from the servant-people also named Israel. Yahweh gives the former a mission to restore the latter and also to save peoples to the ends of the earth.
3. The chosen servant of Isaiah 49:1–13 is the one Yahweh redeems, whom kings worship, and who is “despised and abhorred by the nation” (49:7; cf. 50:6; 52:15; 53:3).
4. Unlike the nation of Israel (Isa 1:4; 42:18–25; 43:8–13; 46:12; 59:2; 64:7), within Isaiah (C1), the servant-person is righteous (50:8; 53:11) and guiltless (50:9), having not rebelled (50:5) and done no violence or deceit (53:9). Indeed, he can operate as “an offering for guilt” (53:10 ESV), which Leviticus 5:15, 18 declare had to be “without defect.” None in the nation could save (Isa 59:16), so Yahweh would act by raising up the messiah who stands distinct from the nation of Israel, just like the servant from our passage in question (cf. 42:6; 53:6).
5. In Isaiah 53:1 the prophet queries, “Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” (cf. John 12:38; Rom 10:16). In the close context (C1), the “arm of the Lord” is none other than the “servant” (Isa 53:10, 12), whom God reveals to an unbelieving people (53:1) and to believing outsiders (52:13; cf. Rom 15:21). Later Yahweh asserts, “All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people” (Isa 65:2; cf. Rom 10:20), and this people is none other than corporate Israel, whom, therefore, we cannot equate with the servant.
6. This servant was “cut off,” and Yahweh “punished” him “for the transgression of my people” (Isa 53:8). The stress here is on

penal substitution, with God's just wrath falling on the substitute rather than on the sinners. A collective servant does not die on behalf of itself and still live, but the servant-person does just this and brings righteousness and life to the many (53:11).⁴⁸

7. The nation Israel was incapable of fulfilling the demands of worldwide justice and restoration for the weak within Isaiah 42:1–4. Israel's inability to accomplish such a task suggests that an individual messianic figure rather than the nation is the servant from verse 1.

The New Testament Identifies Isaiah's Servant-Person as the Christ

Matthew notes how Jesus's healing ministry fulfills Isaiah's assertion: "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases" (Matt 8:17 ESV; cf. Isa 53:4). Peter, too, after noting how "Christ suffered for you," cited Isaiah 53:7–9, stressing how Jesus never sinned or retaliated under abuse as he bore our sins and brought healing (1 Pet 2:21–25). When the Jews rejected Messiah Jesus (John 12:38; Rom 10:16) and the gentiles received him (Rom 15:21), they fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy (Isa 52:15–53:1).

More specifically with respect to Isaiah 42:1–9, Yahweh marked Jesus as his promised "chosen" one (Luke 9:35; cf. 23:35), and Jesus identifies himself with Isaiah's Spirit-empowered agent of God's good news who would give sight to the blind (Matt 11:5; Luke 4:18–19; cf. Isa 42:1, 7; 61:1–2). Matthew freely translates the Hebrew text of Isaiah 42:1–4 in its entirety, declaring that Jesus willingly healed those who followed him "to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah" (Matt 12:17–21). While one could posit that Matthew treats Jesus as ultimate Israel (via typology or *sensus plenior*) or portrays Jesus's healings as a second fulfillment after the nation of Israel's prior acts (whatever those would be),⁴⁹ my argument above clarifies that Isaiah (and Matthew) would have seen Jesus's person and work *directly fulfilling* the earlier predictions (P1). Drawing together Isaiah's images of the hoped-for king

48. Thomas D. Petter, "The Meaning of Substitutionary Righteousness in Isa. 53:11: A Summary of the Evidence," *TJ* 32 (2011): 165–89.

49. For example, Craig L. Blomberg, "Matthew," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 43.

and servant (Isa 9:2; 42:7; 49:6), Zechariah highlighted how Jesus would “give light to those who sit in darkness” (Luke 1:79 ESV). Similarly, Simeon stressed that Jesus was “a light for revelation to the gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel” (Luke 2:32; cf. Isa 42:6; Acts 26:23). Jesus claimed that he was “the light of the world” (John 8:12), and Paul asserted that Jesus brought “the message of light to his own people and to the gentiles” (Acts 26:23; cf. Isa 42:7; 49:6)—a mission he continued in Christ (Acts 13:46–47; 26:18). Without exception, the New Testament identifies the individual of Isaiah’s Servant Songs as Jesus.

Summary

Isaiah directly predicted a messiah who would be king, servant, and anointed conqueror (P1). Isaiah 42:1–9 speaks of a servant-person who would right every wrong, heal the hurting, proclaim God’s law, and mediate a covenant that would bring saving light to many, resulting in blind eyes seeing and bound lives being freed. Jesus realizes Isaiah’s hopes and ours.

Conclusion

Scripture bears an overarching unity and Christocentric framework, which we grow to appreciate only when God grants us spiritual sight and discloses to us the revealed mystery of the gospel through Jesus’s saving work (Rom 16:25–26; 2 Cor 3:14; 4:6). Christian interpreters are uniquely qualified to allow the Bible to speak in accordance with its own contours, structures, language, and flow. Doing so should disclose both an overall consistent message concerning Christ and varied organic (i.e., natural, unforced) salvation-historical and literary-canonical connections between the parts, all of which directly or indirectly relate to Christ, in whom “all things hold together” (Col 1:17).

As Christians, we must approach the Old Testament through Christ and for Christ, using a multi-orbed approach that assesses Scripture’s close, continuing, and complete contexts (C1–3) and considers in what way(s) the Old Testament magnifies Jesus. I propose seven possible ways: (P1) direct messianic predictions; (P2) the salvation-historical story and trajectories; (P3) similarities and contrasts between the old and new ages, creations, and covenants; (P4) typology; (P5) Yahweh’s

identity and activity; (P6) ethical ideals; and (P7) obedience to the law. Interpreting in the light of all three contexts, I identify Christ through typology and direct messianic prediction in Genesis 22:1–19, through Yahweh's identity and ethical ideals in Proverbs 8:22–31, and through direct messianic prediction in Isaiah 42:1–4.