

prophecies, the OT spoke directly of the superhuman Son of David, Jesus Christ.

Illustration

Less clear is a class of passages that quote the OT seemingly out of context and which, with apparently less warrant, apply them to Christ. Opinions may differ as to which passages belong in the previous category and which in the present. But the writer would argue for a category of quotations from the OT where OT history and personages are cited to illustrate a point rather than as being direct prophecies.

One example of this class, not directly referring to Christ, is the celebrated Hagar-Sarah passage in Gal 4:21-31. Paul calls this an allegory. The NIV says the characters "may be taken figuratively." Hagar stands for unbelieving Jerusalem; Sarah stands for spiritual Jerusalem. Would anyone today get this idea from reading Genesis? Would the ancient Israelites themselves have guessed this from Genesis? Likely not. But Paul is using the historical situation of the two women as an illustration of the believing and unbelieving segments of his nation. He could as well have used other illustrations -- Jerusalem and Samaria, the Jews in Babylon and the small number remaining in Israel (the ones Jeremiah called good and bad figs, Jer 24), etc. An illustration may be drawn from many situations; the value is in the use made of the illustration by the illustrator.

Other examples are in 1 Cor 10 -- the spiritual Rock, the sin of the golden calf, and the snakes that killed the grumblers. These historical incidents are warnings for us, Paul says. indeed they are. They were warnings for ancient Israel. They are warnings for anybody. But they did not occur just for us, nor were they recorded with us in mind. They are not typical of, or prophetic of, our situation. A word about the Rock: some have claimed that Paul refers to a rabbinic notion that the Rock Moses smote trailed behind the congregation and supplied water throughout the wilderness wanderings. Paul does not say this, nor does the OT hint of this. Paul says that all had the spiritual blessings of which the manna and the water from the rock were symbols. Christ, who may be symbolized by the rock, the source of the water, did follow the camp with spiritual blessing which some did not acknowledge. There is here an illustration of blessings refused. Other illustrations could have been given, but there is nothing wrong with this one. It does not allege the truth of, or depend on, rabbinic legend.

Matthew, being a Gospel with a particular Jewish slant -- apparently intended to appeal especially to Jews -- has a number of these illustrative citations which have occasioned much comment. The first we may consider is Matt 2:18, the weeping of Rachel for her children (Jer 31:15). In Jeremiah the weeping is most probably for the woes of the Babylonian captivity. Chapter 29 is a letter to the exiles. The return is predicted in 29:10; the Babylonian captivity and return are mentioned in 32:36-37. Probably, the return of 31:17 is from Babylonian Captivity and the