

## JESUS AS THE REJECTED PROPHET AND EXALTED LORD: THE RHETORICAL EFFECT OF TYPE SHIFTING IN JOHN 12:38–41

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**Abstract:** *The Gospel of John portrays Jesus with rich images found in the Old Testament, but these types can produce seemingly conflicting results. This essay argues that John 12:38–41 purposefully confuses the imagery found in Isaiah 6, where Isaiah sees the king in his glory and is also commissioned to be a rejected prophet. First, the often-ignored connection between Jesus and Isaiah is established by considering features in John 12, John 9, and the Synoptic tradition. We will conclude that, had John not included verse 41, the readers would have only connected Jesus to Isaiah. Then we will explore how John shifts this typology in verse 41, so that the mapping changes from Isaiah—Jesus to YHWH—Jesus. Lastly, the rhetorical effect of a typology paradox is discussed to see that how the themes of rejection and glorification converge in the context of John 12.*

**Key words:** *John 12, Isaiah 6, typology, intertextuality, suffering as glory*

The Gospel of John frequently points its readers to the OT to make typological correspondences between famous images and the person of Jesus, demonstrating the claim, “If you believed Moses you would have believed me, for he wrote about me” (5:46). And so, as the reader progresses through the discourses of John, new typological connections continue to be presented. Jesus is the temple, then he is the serpent in the wilderness, then he is the true manna, and so on. Though the variable of the OT source image constantly shifts, they all map to one constant target, Jesus.<sup>1</sup> This article examines this occurrence at the end of the Book of Signs in John 12:37–41 with its reference to the scene of Isaiah 6, in which Isaiah sees the king in his glory and is commissioned to be a rejected prophet. As with so many other places in John, this passage evokes a well-known OT text and maps a significant figure to Jesus. This essay argues that, unlike other places in which one correspondence lasts throughout the discourse, there is a surprising and sudden typolog-

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<sup>1</sup> The language of “source,” “target,” and “mapping” which are used throughout this study comes from the fields of Cognitive Metaphor Theory and Conceptual Blending. For more on the use of these perspectives in the study of intertextuality, see Hugo Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth: Cognitive Poetics and Transformational Soteriology in the Gospel of Philip and the Exegesis of the Soul* (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 73; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 21–50; Beth M. Stovell, *Mapping Metaphorical Discourse in the Fourth Gospel: John’s Eternal King* (Linguistic Biblical Studies 5; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 39–50; Gregory R. Lanier, *Old Testament Conceptual Metaphors and the Christology of Luke’s Gospel* (LNTS 591; London: T&T Clark, 2018), 15–32.

ical shift in John 12:37–41 in order to reinforce one of John’s key ideas.<sup>2</sup> To explore these issues, we will begin by establishing the first typological correspondence set up in 12:37–40, namely that Isaiah maps to Jesus. Then, we will examine the sudden new typological correspondence introduced in verse 41, where Isaiah’s Lord maps to Jesus.<sup>3</sup> Lastly, we will explore the rhetorical effect of identifying this shift and how it reinforces the major Johannine theme of Jesus’s humiliation as exaltation.

## I. THE MAPPING OF JESUS TO THE PROPHET ISAIAH IN JOHN 12:37–40

John 12 concludes the Book of Signs, which records several (traditionally seven) miracles of Jesus so as to persuade the reader to believe in Jesus for eternal life (cf. 20:30–31). John 12:37–41 explains why these signs, as clear as they were, did not result in the nation reacting properly. The negative response of many Jewish people in this regard could have been a major obstacle for John in his purpose to persuade his audience to faith, so John explains this unbelief by saying it fulfills the Scriptures, namely Isa 53:1 and 6:10 (corresponding to John 12:38 and 40). John’s audience should not be surprised at the Jewish rejection of Jesus because its occurrence was necessary for Scripture to be fulfilled. This train of thought can be seen in both Isaianic citations. Though only the first reference is introduced with fulfillment vocabulary (πληρώω), the introduction to the second quotation in verse 39 also states that its prophecy, Isa 6:10, *requires* Jewish unbelief, reading διὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἠδύναντο πιστεῦειν, ὅτι πάλιν εἶπεν Ἡσαΐας<sup>4</sup> (“Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again”) and so the two citations function similarly despite being introduced with different vocabulary. This second quotation comes from the famous commissioning of Isaiah in Isaiah 6. This scene revolves around the interchange between two disparate figures, the prophet and YHWH. In fact, so wide is the chasm that separates these two that the former cries out in 6:5, וְיָיִן אֵי־לִי (“Woe is me”) because עֵינַי רָאוּ אֶת־מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה וְלֹא־הָיִיתִי־מְבִינֵהוּ (“My eyes have seen the king, YHWH of hosts”).<sup>5</sup> After the symbolic purging of Isaiah’s sin (particularly associated with

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel J. Brendsel, *“Isaiah Saw His Glory”: The Use of Isaiah 52–53 in John 12* (BZNW 208; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 92, argues that the use is not typological, but that Isaiah 52–53 and Isaiah 6 mutually interpret one another, so that Isaiah’s question of “how long” is ultimately answered by John “until the cross.” He rightly observes that blindness in Isaiah continues into Isaiah’s distant future. It is not certain whether or not the quotations in John have so much of the original context in mind. If not, then “typological” is the easiest explanation. If such a larger Isaianic paradigm indeed is in view, then “typology” may not be the correct terminology, but there is nonetheless a mapping from the figure of Isaiah to Jesus.

<sup>3</sup> The language of “typological” is used to describe how the figures in Isaiah map to Jesus, but this is not meant to deny that John presents Jesus actually as the divine king of Isa 6. Jesus is a “new Isaiah” but he is the same Lord of Isa 6.

<sup>4</sup> NT quotations are from UBS<sup>5</sup> or are my own translation.

<sup>5</sup> OT quotations are from *BHS* or are my own translation.

his mouth<sup>6</sup>), YHWH commissions the prophet, but with the promise that the people will not respond until after the exile. Though the people will not believe Isaiah, YHWH nonetheless sends him and he must preach to them.

When John evokes this vivid and well-known OT scene, he will eventually link Jesus with the divine glory that overwhelmed Isaiah in John 12:41. However, this paper argues that such a typological correspondence surprisingly shifts from that which the audience can rightly have been expected to make. If verse 41 had not been included, the typological correspondence would have only been between Jesus and *Isaiah*, not between Jesus and YHWH. Thus, before examining how John links Jesus with the great king of Isaiah 6, consideration must first be given to the evidence that suggests Jesus should be connected to the rejected prophet of Isaiah 6. Though John 12:39–40 clearly links the hardness of Isaiah’s listeners and the hardness of Jesus’s listeners, interpreters often overlook the connection between the characters Isaiah and Jesus in John 12.<sup>7</sup> We will give the most amount of attention to establishing this step of the argument, therefore, since exploring the rhetorical effect of a type shift in our text requires that such a mapping is clear.

1. *Evidence from the Gospel of John that Jesus corresponds to Isaiah.* Seven observations suggest the reader of John 12:38–41 would connect Jesus and Isaiah, six of which come from the gospel of John and one from the Synoptics. First, John has repeatedly brought the prophet Isaiah himself to the audience’s attention in this immediate context as someone important for the readers’ understanding. Of all other Johannine citations of the OT, only here and in 1:23 does John explicate the source.<sup>8</sup> Given John’s usual style of omitting the biblical author’s name, the three-fold mention of the person Isaiah (12:38, 39, 41) also has the effect of foregrounding the historical prophet in this context.<sup>9</sup> Not only is Isaiah an important person for John, but the spotlight is specifically shone on Isaiah in this discussion, pushing readers to think about how he figures into the discussion.

Second, both Jesus and Isaiah share the obvious similarity of being rejected. The statement, “They did not believe in him [Jesus]” (12:37) prompts the discussion in verses 38–42, which is linked with words specifically attributed to Isaiah, “Lord, who has believed our report?” (John 12:38, cf. Isa 53:1). By foregrounding disbelief in the message of the historical prophet Isaiah, John has drawn a line from him to Jesus, who also was disbelieved.

<sup>6</sup> Some have explained this as forgiveness for not prophesying earlier and see this as a recommissioning of Isaiah. See, e.g., Ben Witherington III, *Isaiah New and Old: Exegesis, Intertextuality, and Hermeneutics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 54.

<sup>7</sup> Possible exceptions include Edward W. Klink, *John* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 560–61; and J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 711.

<sup>8</sup> Both places ascribe a quotation to Isaiah the prophet, creating an *inclusio* around the Book of Signs.

<sup>9</sup> As Catrin H. Williams writes, “The unusually explicit naming of the prophet alerts attention to Isaiah and his spoken testimony” (“Patriarchs and Prophets Remembered,” in *Abiding Words: The Use of Scripture in the Gospel of John* [ed. Bruce G. Schuchard and Alicia D. Myers; RBS 81; Atlanta: SBL, 2015], 207).

Third, the correspondence between Jesus and Isaiah is also supported by the similarity of both figures being “sent.” The interaction which prompts Isaiah’s commission is in Isa 6:8 (LXX), τίνα ἀποστέλλω, καὶ τίς πορεύσεται πρὸς τὸν λαὸν τοῦτον; καὶ εἶπα Ἴδοὺ εἰμι ἐγώ· ἀπόστειλόν με (“Whom will I send, and who will go to this people? And I said ‘Behold, I am [here]. Send me’”). Πορεύομαι occurs in a significant theological sense in John, but in these cases, it refers to his return to the Father, not his coming into the world.<sup>10</sup> But several occurrences in John describe Jesus as the one whom God has sent (ἀποστέλλω occurs fifteen times in reference to Jesus<sup>11</sup> and πέμπω twenty-six times<sup>12</sup>).

Fourth, there is a typological correspondence between Jesus and Isaiah since both are involved in hardening their audience. While this concept raises significant theological issues, the purposes of this argument only require demonstrating that the literary description of both Isaiah and John portray both as involved in hardening, whatever theological significance that may take.<sup>13</sup> Isaiah’s active role in this process is clearly seen in the MT of Isa 6:10, with its second person imperatives. YHWH tells Isaiah, עֲשֵׂה לִבְהֵמָה וְאִזְנוֹתָם כִּשְׂמֵרָה וְעֵצְמוֹתָם כִּשְׂמֵרָה (“make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy and close their eyes”). John’s citation in 12:40 does not fit easily with the MT in this regard, since he uses the third person, Τετύφλωκεν αὐτῶν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ ἐπώρωσεν αὐτῶν τὴν καρδίαν (“He has blinded their eyes and he has hardened their hearts”). John’s use is similar in this regard to the LXX, but sufficient dissimilarity exists to suggest he does not have any known Greek version in front of him. The nature of John’s source here is highly complicated,<sup>14</sup> but something like the MT may be in view and the shift in person results from John adjusting the text for stylistic reasons (see chart below).<sup>15</sup> Because Isaiah says the quotation, John cannot use the second person since then Isaiah would be commanding someone to harden the hearers. If something like the MT is in view, then clearly Isaiah is foregrounded as involved in God’s hardening activity.

<sup>10</sup> 14:2, 3, 12, 28; 16:7, 28; possibly also 10:4.

<sup>11</sup> 3:18, 34; 5:36, 38; 6:29, 57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21.

<sup>12</sup> 4:34; 5:23, 24, 30, 27; 6:38, 39, 40, 44; 7:16, 18, 28, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29; 9:4; 12:44, 45, 49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21, 26; 16:5.

<sup>13</sup> See discussion of theological issues, for example, in D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 448. Furthermore, Isaiah 6 seems to be saying that Isaiah’s words, though a divine revelation, function to keep the people blind. They may also serve the rhetorical role of provoking the listeners to pay more careful attention.

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of issues, see Maarten J. J. Menken, “Die Form des Zitates aus Jes 6:10 in Joh 12:40: Ein Beitrag zum Schriftgebrauch des vierten Evangelisten,” *BZ* 32 (1988): 189–209.

<sup>15</sup> However, an unvocalized form of the Hebrew text would allow for John’s translation.

LXX Isa 6:10	MT Isa 6:10	John 12:40
<p><sup>10</sup>ἐπαχύνθη γὰρ ἡ καρδία τοῦ λαοῦ τούτου, καὶ τοῖς ὠσίν αὐτῶν βαρέως ἤκουσαν καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν ἐκάμμυσαν, μήποτε ἴδωσιν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς καὶ τοῖς ὠσίν ἀκούσωσιν</p>	<p>הַשְׁמַן לִב־הָעָם הַזֶּה וַיִּכְבְּדוּ וַיִּנְיֹוּ וַיִּשְׁמְרוּ וַיִּנְיֹוּ מִן וַיִּסְתְּרוּ כְּעֵינֵי וַיִּסְתְּרוּ כְּעֵינֵי</p>	<p>Τετύφλωκεν αὐτῶν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς --- καὶ ἐπώρρωσεν αὐτῶν τὴν καρδίαν, ἵνα μὴ ἴδωσιν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ---</p>

But whatever the source, it seems extremely likely that John and his readers would have seen Isaiah as the one who, in some sense, caused his listeners to reject the message since this is repeated in both the MT and LXX of many portions of Isaiah. Even in the LXX of chapter 6, the hardening of the people is still linked with the commission of Isaiah as a prophet. The wider context of Isaiah also suggests the prophet’s words were used to create hardness. For example, in Isa 29:9–14 (both the LXX and MT), God is the one who puts to sleep (MT) / makes drunk (LXX, v. 10), who closes the eyes (v. 10), and who destroys the wisdom of the wise (v. 14). And yet this is connected specifically to the words of Isaiah’s prophecy (v. 11). Similarly, 8:16 describes a binding of his “testimony” (הַתְּעוּדָה) and a sealing of the “law” (הַתּוֹרָה).<sup>16</sup> To be sure, the antecedent of the third person verbs in John’s version must be God. But the Isaianic framework includes the prophet as an instrument through whom God hardens the audience.

Before moving on to other reasons to think John would have expected his readers to connect Jesus and Isaiah, the significance of the above observations should be seen from intertextuality theory. The citation of Isa 6:10 results in “the simultaneous activation of two texts.”<sup>17</sup> Intertextuality theorists disagree about the extent to which elements in the referred-to text are meant to contribute to the understanding of the allusion or citation. Richard Hays, for example, is well known for his use of metalepsis, which sees that the “figurative effect of such an intertextual linkage lies in the unstated or suppressed points of correspondence between the two texts.”<sup>18</sup> However, the argument here does not rely on “unstated or suppressed points” and should thus even appeal to those who have reservations for a maximalist approach like Hays’s. Instead, John has explicitly turned the readers’ attention to the historical prophet Isaiah. Moreover, John has reminded the reader that God orchestrated the failure of Isaiah’s mission to create blindness and then John specifically invites his audience to compare this to Jesus’s situation. Since John himself has brought out these connections between Jesus and Isaiah, one does not need a maximalist approach like metalepsis in order to see a link between the two characters.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Opening the Sealed Book: Interpretations of the Book of Isaiah in Late Antiquity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 13, persuasively argues these words refer to Isaiah’s written prophecy.

<sup>17</sup> To use an often-referenced definition of allusion from over 40 years ago in Ziva Ben-Porat, “The Poetics of Literary Allusion,” *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature* 1 (1976): 108.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scriptures in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 11.

Fifth, outside the immediate context, John 9:39 has also typologically mapped Isaiah to Jesus. In John 9, Jesus confronts the once-blind man, who comes to believe and worship Jesus. Jesus responds, with Pharisees in earshot and in mind (v. 40), saying in verse 39, *Εἰς κρίμα ἐγὼ εἰς τὸν κόσμον τοῦτον ἦλθον, ἵνα οἱ μὴ βλέποντες βλέπωσιν καὶ οἱ βλέποντες τυφλοὶ γένωνται* (“For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see might see and those who see may become blind”). Jesus coming to give blind people sight clearly has the previous pericope in mind and finds resonances in several OT prophetic portions, particularly Isaiah (e.g. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7, 18). But the surprising feature of this saying is that he has come into the world to bring blindness.<sup>19</sup> The allusion to Isa 6:10 is only thematic, not lexical, but still the connection is noted by commentators as the primary OT connection for this surprising statement.<sup>20</sup> Carson states regarding Isa 6:10 and John 12:40,

The Hebrew text of Isaiah moves from heart to ears to eyes, and then reverses the sequence, running from sight to hearing to understanding. John drops all reference to ears and hearing, and puts eyes first. Following hard on the mention of the miraculous signs (v. 37), the stress on sight is not surprising. Indeed, this emphasis also harks back to the miracle of John 9, with its concluding damning indictment (9:39–41).<sup>21</sup>

Thus, when John returns to the scene of Isaiah’s commission in chapter 12, the previous connections created in chapter 9 can be expected to remain in the implied reader’s mind. John 9:39 has already mapped Jesus to Isaiah and this identification lies in the background when one reaches chapter 12. Moreover, the lexical links between the two passages centering around blindness suggests that the readers should recall the earlier pericope to understand the latter.<sup>22</sup>

For a sixth reason to think Isaiah would have been connected with Jesus, we can consider the observation of Brendsel as he discusses the shift from the third person verbs (*Τετύφλωκεν; ἐπώρωσεν*) to the first person in *ἰάσομαι αὐτούς* (“I will heal them,” in agreement with the LXX but in departure from the MT; see chart above). Brendsel argues successfully that the statement most likely makes Jesus the agent of healing.<sup>23</sup> This results in Jesus becoming the speaker of Isa 6:10, since it reads “Isaiah said ... I will heal them. Isaiah said these things ...” (John 12:39–41). The shift from “He blinded ... he hardened” to “I will heal” is awkward and invites the reader to ponder who this “I” might be. The way John has worded

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<sup>19</sup> Since John seriously equivocates between Jesus and God in terms of judgment, John surely would have seen Jesus as having more of an active role in hardening that what could be said of Isaiah. Still, for the purposes of the argument of this paper, the significance is their literary description of being an instrument of hardening.

<sup>20</sup> Klink, *John*, 451; Michaels, *John*, 572. Judith M. Lieu, “Blindness in the Johannine Tradition,” *NTS* 34.1 (1998): 85, argues that the quotation in 12:40 “seems to continue an allusion to Isa 6.9 in Jesus’s words in John 9.39.”

<sup>21</sup> Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 449.

<sup>22</sup> Lieu, “Blindness,” 83. See pages 85 and 89 for other similarities.

<sup>23</sup> “*Isaiah Saw His Glory*,” 94, 112.

the text seems to put Isaiah as the antecedent. This surprising portrayal of Isaiah is probably an example of prosopological exegesis, which “explains a text by suggesting that the author of the text identified various persons or characters (*prosopa*) as speakers or addressees in a pre-text, even though it is not clear from the pre-text itself that such persons are in view.”<sup>24</sup> By depicting Isaiah as the healer, John indicates that he should be seen as a type of Jesus.<sup>25</sup>

2. *Evidence from the Synoptics and/or Synoptic tradition.* A seventh reason for thinking John would have expected his readers to see Isaiah as a type of Jesus comes from the Synoptic tradition, where the Isaiah-Jesus link is clear. The significance of the early portion of Isaiah suggests a common understanding of the imagery can be assumed. More than 75 years ago, C. H. Dodd argued that Isa 6:1–9:7 was of central importance for the early Christ movement.<sup>26</sup> Isaiah 6 is clearly referenced not only in John 12 (and alluded to in chap. 9), but also in Mark 4:12, Matt 13:14–15, Luke 8:10, and Acts 28:26–27. Moreover, it seems highly likely that at least some positive relationship exists between the Gospel of John and the Synoptic sources in general. The history of scholarship regarding John’s sources and its relationship to the Synoptics is complicated.<sup>27</sup> Porter describes four approaches currently in the marketplace of ideas today: (1) “restricted dependence,” in which John relies on the Synoptics, particularly Mark; (2) “interlocking,” in which all four have access to common material, whether oral or written, so that John provides missing information to the Synoptics and vice-versa; (3) “semi-independence,” in which John uses the same sources as well as others; and (4) that John does not use sources related to the Synoptics. All that is required for our purposes in establishing the validity in looking to Mark for insight on how the Isaianic typology would have been understood in John 12 is to note that (4) is unlikely due to the several common

<sup>24</sup> Matthew W. Bates, *The Hermeneutics of the Apostolic Proclamation: The Center of Paul’s Method of Scriptural Interpretation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), 183.

<sup>25</sup> The fact that Isaiah saw YHWH / the king may also suggest that John may have understood Isaiah 6 messianically. C. H. Williams, “‘He Saw His Glory and Spoke About Him’: The Testimony of Isaiah and Johannine Christology” in *Honouring the Past and Shaping the Future: Religions and Biblical Studies in Wales: Essays in Honour of Gareth Lloyd Jones* (ed. Robert Pope; Leominster, Herefordshire, UK: Gracewing, 2003), 56, notes that “Jesus’ claim that ‘no one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man’ (3:13) is to be read as the author’s refutation of claims made by those who argued, especially through Jewish interpretation of certain biblical theophanies, that figures like Abraham, Moses and Isaiah had ascended to heaven and were granted revelations of God. The fourth evangelist reacts vigorously against such claims by asserting that the only one to have seen and communicated directly with God is Jesus, who descended to earth from his heavenly dwelling place.” Thus, since Isaiah saw YHWH, it may be that John would have linked Isaiah with the only one who saw God, the Son of Man.

<sup>26</sup> C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology* (London: Nisbet, 1952), 78–82. Lieu, “Blindness,” 90, argues that “a theological understanding of unbelief as blindness, with a degree of tension as to the question of ultimate responsibility, had already been worked out both in direct exegesis of Isa 6.9–10 and in the interpretation of the healing of the blind in the light of that tradition. The verbal links John shares with Mark and Paul point to the origin of that working out in the wider exegetical traditions of the early church with their background in Jewish exegetical patterns.”

<sup>27</sup> D. M. Smith, *John Among the Gospels: The Relationship in Twentieth-Century Research* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992). See also the important corrections to common perceptions of the problem in Stanley E. Porter, *John, His Gospel, and Jesus: In Pursuit of the Johannine Voice* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 41–42.

details between John and the Synoptics.<sup>28</sup> The argument below will be all the more persuasive for those who are convinced of Bauckham's thesis that the Gospels circulated widely and that John and many of his readers would have known Mark, so that John includes allusions to that Gospel.<sup>29</sup>

In Mark 4, Jesus delivers the parable of the sower and then explains to the twelve and those around him that only they can know the mysteries of the kingdom (v. 11). The Markan Jesus then states that for others "all things come in parables" and then connects this with a periphrastic citation of Isa 6:9–10 with the explanation ἵνα ("so that").<sup>30</sup> The agency of Jesus is strengthened by Matthew, who records Jesus saying in 13:13 διὰ τοῦτο ἐν παραβολαῖς αὐτοῖς λαλῶ ("therefore I speak to them in parables"). Nevertheless, though Mark's version foregrounds the ignorant "outsiders" and their correspondence to Isaiah 6, the passage still portrays Jesus as the one who does not allow certain ones to know the truth *by speaking in parables*, while privileging others by only giving the interpretation in a restricted setting. Craig Evans well notes that, in contrast with other translations and interpretations of Isaiah 6, both Mark and John's versions retain the punishment of obduracy motif.<sup>31</sup> Thus, Mark has already portrayed Jesus as a kind of "new Isaiah," whose parabolic ministry means he speaks so as to harden people's hearts. The details of Mark 4, let alone Matthew 13 or Luke 8, are not important for our purposes. The significant observation is that the early Christ movement appealed to Isaiah 6 to explain why Jesus was met with so much rejection. Like Isaiah, the negative Jewish response is not only predicted despite Jesus's ministry, but in some sense because of it. With this connection in the background, when John similarly evokes the temple scene of Isaiah 6 in John 12, he likely expects readers to continue their previous typological correspondence between Jesus and Isaiah. Thus, there is evidence to think that the Isaiah-Jesus type was part of the "cultural encyclopedia" of John's readers even before they read his gospel. We have also seen that John himself con-

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<sup>28</sup> Porter, *John*, 43–44, rightly concludes, "Such episodes as the feeding of the five thousand and the clear parallels between various episodes of the passion narrative illustrate that full independence is not plausible. . . . Many scholars, before the wave of skepticism hit Johannine studies, recognized a number of common episodes between John's Gospel and the Synoptics. . . . Theories of flexible dependence or semi-independence thus seem to have the only reasonable chance of being shown to be correct."

<sup>29</sup> Richard Bauckham, "John for Readers of Mark," in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 147–71. Craig L. Blomberg's warning is appropriate, that "methodologically it is probably impossible to distinguish between John's presupposing knowledge of Mark's finished Gospel, a pre-Markan source or core oral tradition proclaiming the major contours of the life of Christ" (*The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues & Commentary* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2001], 48). He concludes on p. 49, "John was familiar with many if not all of the contents of the Gospels that preceded him even if he did not borrow from them in a strict, literary fashion. We may assume that he knew that at least some, if not many, in his audience would be familiar with the basic stories about Jesus and that he did not want to repeat many of these accounts."

<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, others have noted important parallels between Mark 4 and Isaiah 6, strengthening the proposal that the whole scene is being evoked. Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (rev. ed.; Biblical Studies Library; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 197–98; idem, "Mark," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 248.

<sup>31</sup> "The Function of Isaiah 6:9–10 in Mark and John," *NovT* 24 (1982): 125–26.



firms this connection with his allusion to Isa 6:10 in John 9:39. Most significantly, we have seen that John 12:39–41 reinforces this type by foregrounding the prophet Isaiah and pointing out ways he and his role as rejected prophet, hardener, and healer compare with Jesus.

## II. THE MAPPING OF JESUS TO ISAIAH'S LORD IN JOHN 12:41

Thus, there is solid evidence that John connects Jesus with Isaiah in John 12:37–40. This often gets overlooked because of John's following editorial comment in verse 41, ταῦτα εἶπεν Ἡσαΐας ὅτι εἶδεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ ("these things Isaiah said because he saw his glory"). Most commentators agree with the interpretation found in the NIV, "he saw Jesus' glory,"<sup>32</sup> so that when John evokes the commission scene in the temple, readers map Jesus to Isaiah's Lord.

A couple variations within this approach can be briefly considered. Some claim verse 41 applies to both to the citation of Isa 53:1 and 6:10.<sup>33</sup> The plural ταῦτα ("these things") in John 12:41 allows for this, though it does not require it. For Johannine examples, see 9:6, 22; 11:28; 18:22. In these instances, only one statement is given, followed by the explanation that the person said "these things" (ταῦτα). But while ταῦτα can point to only one statement, the antecedent could be both citations. This seems to be the case since the LXX of Isaiah 52–53 utilizes the language of "glory" (δοξασθήσεται in 52:13; δόξα in 52:14 and 53:2; ἀδοξήσῃ in 52:14). However, Isaiah 6 also uses this language. The LXX translates verse 1 πλήρης ὁ οἶκος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ and both the MT and LXX describe glory in verse 3 (יְבֹדֵב רַגְלֵי־לֵלְאֵי מְלִיךָ; πλήρης πᾶσα ἡ γῆ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ), so one need not go back to Isaiah 52–53 to think about concepts of glory. Still, there is no reason to rule out both being in view.

Another variation of Jesus being linked with YHWH in Isaiah 6 focuses on the object of Isaiah's vision being δόξαν αὐτοῦ ("his glory") as opposed to αὐτόν ("him"). This may connect with the Targumic tradition of using circumlocutions for YHWH. *Targum Jonathan* has for v 1, יָרָא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אַדְוֹנַי ("I saw the glory of Adonai") and for verse 5, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי מְלִיכָא עֲלָמֵי וְיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי מְלִיכָא עֲלָמֵי ("the glory of the majesty of the eternal king, the Lord of hosts [are] the vision of my eyes").<sup>34</sup> John

<sup>32</sup> E.g. D. Moody Smith, *John* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 243; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 537; George Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC 36; Dallas: Word, 1999), 216–17; Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (AYB 29; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 487; Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 2:884–85; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Crossroad, 1990), 2:416; Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (trans. John Vriend; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 445.

<sup>33</sup> E.g. Andreas Köstenberger, *John* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 391–92; Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 54. Williams, "He Saw His Glory," 67, also buttresses this connection by arguing that Isaiah's perception contrasts with those who saw signs, yet "failed to perceive the revelation of God's glory and 'the arm of the Lord' in Jesus (12:37–38; cf. 2:11, 11:4, 40) because of the blinding of their eyes."

<sup>34</sup> Evans, "Function," 132 states, "The paraphrase of Isa 6:9–10 in Mark 4:12 probably betrays acquaintance with the Aramaic version, but it is going too far to say that Mark's version is dependent upon

seems to have taken this approach earlier with his use of the Targum's מִקְרָא (word) tradition in chapter 1, though this interpretation is far from well accepted.<sup>35</sup> However, this may complicate the antecedent of αὐτοῦ (“him”) in verse 41 being Jesus since John is not linking Jesus with YHWH’s glory, but Jesus’s glory to YHWH’s glory, thus connecting Jesus and YHWH.<sup>36</sup> However, for the purposes of this paper, either of the variations above will work, so long the divine image seen in Isaiah 6 somehow maps to Jesus.

Witherington has recently rejected this connection and claimed John 12:41 only references Isa 53:1. He rightly observes that John separates the Father and Jesus throughout his gospel and allows that “John certainly sees the Son as part of the *divine identity*.”<sup>37</sup> However, he goes on to argue that John “does not confuse things by suggesting that the passages in the OT about Father Yahweh are actually, or also, about Jesus the Son.”<sup>38</sup> This is unlikely for several reasons. First, though Witherington does rightly observe the theme of glory in Isaiah 52–53, no mention is made of glory themes in Isaiah 6. Lexically, there is no reason to prefer the context of Isaiah 52–53 over Isaiah 6. Moreover, there is no reason both cannot be in view. Second, this interpretation fails to explain why the editorial comment is not placed after Isa 53:1. It would be strange for the antecedent of ταυτᾶ in verse 41 to skip verse 40 and go back exclusively to verse 38 without explanation. Third, this interpretation assumes that the Father alone must be identified with YHWH. And even if Trinitarian concerns did rule out mapping YHWH to Jesus, then the option above about the reference being only to the glory of God would be more likely than avoiding any reference to Isa 6:10 at all.

Thus, after evoking the memorable scene of Isaiah’s commission, John adds his editorial comment in 12:41 so that readers will link Jesus with Isaiah’s glorious king. If verse 41 had not been included, then we have seen several reasons for thinking that John would expect readers only to link Jesus with Isaiah. Not only would this probably have been the typological correspondence if the Synoptic tradition of the parable of the sowers was in mind, but John himself has confirmed this connection in 9:39 and 12:37–40. Verse 41 thus comes as a surprising shift.

### III. THE RHETORICAL EFFECT OF SHIFTING THE TYPOLOGICAL CORRESPONDENCE FROM ISAIAH TO ISAIAH’S KING

This shift in typology causes the audience to stop and wonder, “Is Jesus the failing and rejected prophet Isaiah or the glorious king, Isaiah’s Lord?” By mapping both figures to Jesus, John creates a typological paradox for his readers.

it. The Markan version is abbreviated, the clauses that correspond to Isa 6:9 are transposed, and all of the vocabulary, with the admittedly important exception of ἀφῆθη αὐτοῖς, is as Septuagintal as it is Targumic.”

<sup>35</sup> See overview of issues in Martin McNamara, *Targum and Testament Revisited: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible: A Light on the New Testament* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 154–66.

<sup>36</sup> See discussion in Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 449–50.

<sup>37</sup> Witherington, *Isaiah Old and New*, 69.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

But this seeming contradiction reinforces the overall point in the conclusion to the Book of Signs. The hour of the Son of Man's glorification (v. 23) involved his dying as a grain of wheat (v. 24) so at that time (νῦν) the world was judged and Satan was exorcised from it (v. 31). The typological confusion corresponds to the playful paronomasia of ὑψόω, meaning *both* crucifixion and exaltation. Marianne Thompson well states,

With the death of Jesus, it might appear that the forces of evil have conquered, that those who betrayed Jesus have won. But in fact, by means of Jesus' death, the "ruler of this world" is judged, overthrown, cast out. ... In John, the powers of evil are not judged and overthrown by physical force or military might, but by the death of Jesus, itself the manifestation of God's love for the world. The God who loves the world has sent his Son into the world to bring life to it and thus to triumph over the powers of death and darkness. All this happens through and on the cross, where the Son of God is "lifted up" ("exalted") and "glorified" ("honored") as God's life-giving agent.<sup>39</sup>

Speaking on John's use of Isaiah 53 in 12:3–41, Bauckham writes,

John appears to have taken the opening of the Suffering Servant passage ... as a kind of heading for the whole of the subsequent passage. ... The point of Jesus's deepest humiliation is, paradoxically, also his glorification. Whereas the more common early Christian way of thinking envisaged humiliation followed by exaltation, suffering followed by glory, John sees exaltation and glory in the humiliation and death.<sup>40</sup>

We noted earlier that John's conclusion of the Book of Signs explains how the negative Jewish response to Jesus's miraculous signs fulfilled prophecy. But in these quotations, John goes one step further than this. Not only is Jesus the exalted Lord even though he was rejected. Incredibly, Jesus is the exalted Lord because he was rejected. The paradox created by the double mapping scheme of John 12:38–41 causes readers to think about how, though there was an immeasurable gulf between Isaiah and his king in Isaiah 6, Jesus occupies both places. Jesus's royal glory as exalted Lord does not just exist despite his role as humiliated and rejected prophet, but because of it as well.

From this perspective, there may be more significant nuances to John's citation of Isa 53:1 than what first meets the eye. By linking the two passages so closely together, John certainly invites us to read them together. The passage has definite connections with Isaiah 6, including the repetition of **רום**, **נשא**, **נגבה**, and **מאד**.<sup>41</sup> Thus, John's connection may reflect a correspondence internal to Isaiah itself. But John's invitation to understand the two seemingly disparate figures of Isaiah 6, the

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<sup>39</sup> Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary* (NLT; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015), 271.

<sup>40</sup> Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory*, 54.

<sup>41</sup> Jaap Dekker, "The High and Lofty One Dwelling in the Heights and with His Servants: Intertextual Connections of Theological Significance between Isaiah 6, 53 and 57," *JSOT* 41.4 (2017): 475–91. See also Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory*, 53.

rejected prophet and exalted Lord, as both mapping to Jesus may suggest there is importance in his reproduction of the whole question *Κύριε, τίς ἐπίστευσεν τῇ ἀκοῇ ἡμῶν;* (12:38). John reminds readers that the speaker of Isa 53:1, foregrounded as Isaiah the prophet (John 12:38, 39, 41), who laments his rejection, also includes his Lord in this rejection by being sure to cite the vocative *Κύριε* and the plural pronoun *ἡμῶν*. Thus, this passage links the seemingly disparate figures of the rejected prophet Isaiah and the exalted Lord. Both are glorified—this servant is also the one who receives the glory elsewhere in Isaiah’s prophecy reserved for YHWH alone (i.e. 42:8; 48:11). Both are rejected. And by presenting a typological paradox in John 12:41, John causes his readers to think deeply about how both find their fulfilment in Jesus.