

Jesus and Prophetic Actions

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Historical Jesus studies today have focused on Jesus' role as prophet, but few have sought to define "what kind of prophet" Jesus might be. Since that same scholarship has usefully shaped its attention around the "actions" of Jesus, pursuing the "kind of prophet" Jesus is in light of actions narrows the evidence sufficiently. Accordingly, when one examines the so-called "prophetic actions" of Jesus, a coherent picture of Jesus as the eschatological prophet like Moses emerges. This study examines the prophetic actions of Jesus in light of the prophetic actions of the preclassical and classical prophets, as well as similar types of actions on the part of the Jewish popular movement prophets and Moses. While Jesus' actions show some similarities with the actions of the preclassical and classical prophets, his actions are more like the popular prophetic movements of the first century, especially as they evoke themes of Moses and Joshua, and his actions also show striking parallels with Moses' actions.

Key Words: prophet, prophetic actions, Moses, eschatology, Jesus, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Hosea, Josephus, christology

Albert Schweitzer, who famously dismantled Protestant Liberalism in his *Forschungsbericht* on the evolution of German historical understanding of Jesus,¹ set out four contrasting methodological orientations to examining the historical Jesus: first, from David Friedrich Strauss he learned that one can approach a life of Jesus from the angle

1. A. Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (9th ed.; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1984). The original title was *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (1906). The definitive translation is *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (trans. W. Montgomery; intr. Hillers; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). This new edition omits the introduction by Robinson of 1968, but that material, in a slightly earlier form, appears in the German edition. Besides the prefaces to the German revisions, which have gone untranslated, and the introductions by Burkitt, Robinson, and Hillers in the American editions, see also A. Schweitzer's *Out of My Life and Thought: An Autobiography* (trans. A. B. Lemke; foreword Jimmy Carter; preface R. S. Miller and A. B. Lemke; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998) 43-52.

of the *historical* or the *supernatural*; second, from the *Tübingenschule* one can approach Jesus through the lens of *John* or the *Synoptics*; third, from Johannes Weiss one can approach Jesus as either *eschatological* or *non-eschatological*; and fourth, from Bruno Bauer one can approach the traditions with *skepticism* or *affirmation* of the essential connections in the Gospel of Mark. Rudolf Bultmann accepted the fundamental insight of Schweitzer that Jesus must be understood in terms of apocalyptic (now synonymous with "eschatological") but, according to the *Zeitgeist*, proceeded to reinterpret Jesus' apocalyptic vision in terms of German, Heideggerian existentialism, which he called "demythologization."² To be sure, Bultmann could fall back on the dichotomous hermeneutic of Martin Kähler, who theologically sanctioned separating the "historical Jesus" and the "kerygmatic, biblical Christ."³ Bultmann's hermeneutic was successful, and for nearly two generations of scholarship the focus was much less on Jesus' "apocalyptic" or "eschatological" vision, when read historically, and more on how his fundamental message about God, Kingdom, and discipleship might be appropriated in modern theology. One suspects that the focus on the "presence" of the Kingdom in such scholarship as that by C. H. Dodd (who spent influential time with Adolf Harnack) and Joachim Jeremias is fundamentally a reaction to the uncomfortable theological implications of Schweitzer's conclusions about Jesus' apocalyptic vision.⁴

A definitive study that not only interrupted the search for the Pauline background in Greco-Roman religion and philosophy but set the agenda for Christian scholarship, especially in the United States and Great Britain,⁵ and returned to Judaism as the womb in which

2. See above all Bultmann's *Jesus and the Word* (trans. L. P. Smith and W. H. Lantero; New York: Scribner's, 1958 [originally published in 1926]); but see also *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Scribner's, 1958) 11-34. The concept of "demythologization" caused a serious theological debate; the sharper contours can be seen in H. W. Bartsch (ed.), *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate* (rev. R. H. Fuller; New York: Harper & Row, 1961).

3. M. Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ* (trans. C. E. Braaten; foreword P. Tillich; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964 [originally published in 1896]). I have recently taken issue with the enterprise of diminishing the significance of the historical Jesus for Christian faith in "The Hermeneutics of Confessing Jesus as Lord," *Ex Auditu* 14 (1998) 1-17; see also the essay therein by the British theologian, Colin Gunton, "Martin Kähler Revisited: Variations on Hebrews 4:15," *Ex Auditu* 14 (1998) 21-30. See also E. K. Broadhead, "What Are the Gospels? Questioning Martin Kähler," *Pacifica* 7 (1994) 145-59.

4. C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (rev. ed.; London: Religious Book Club, 1936); J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* (trans. J. Bowden; New York: Scribner's, 1971).

5. Surely the most influential, but somewhat marginalized, voice in Germany was that of J. Jeremias, *Proclamation of Jesus*, who was given more prominence later in his career when some Germans moved into historical Jesus studies with Käsemann. See

both Jesus and the early Christian movements were nourished was the 1948 study of W. D. Davies on Paul: *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*.⁶ Not only did Davies call for a Jewish origin of Paul's theology by calling attention to Jewish sources just when the Dead Sea Scrolls were being discovered, but he also prepared a generation of students to scour intensely the Jewish sources for a more historically-anchored perception of Jesus and the earliest churches.⁷ The most notable student of W. D. Davies in this regard is surely E. P. Sanders, who himself examined Paul's theology in Jewish context and, along with his diatribe against historical and theological insensitivities, turned his searching light onto Jesus to rejuvenate what Schweitzer long ago had contended: Jesus was an apocalypticist who thought the end of history would appear within a generation.⁸ Responding to the current of thought that Jesus was an apocalypticist, N. T. Wright, building on the insights of both G. B. Caird and B. F. Meyer, argues eloquently that Jesus was a prophet and this sets before us a fifth orientation toward Jesus:⁹ was he a *prophet* or an *apocalypticist*? To my knowledge, neither Sanders nor Wright would contend that the terms are mutually exclusive, nor do they neatly distinguish the two. Neither, in fact, do they define the terms identically. But it does seem that the trend today is to call Jesus a "prophet" rather than an "apocalypticist," in spite of the

J. Jeremias, *The Problem of the Historical Jesus* (trans. N. Perrin; FBBS 13; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964 [= 1958]). For all the insights N. T. Wright brings in breaking the newer studies into the New Quest and the Third Quest, and I especially welcome his pointing to the works of G. B. Caird and B. E. Meyer, I think he neglects the role that Joachim Jeremias played in this debate, not to mention the massive influence that Jeremias had on Meyer.

6. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (4th ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980). Rarely is W. D. Davies given the credit he deserves for the cataclysmic change in NT historical scholarship's conversion to Jewish studies.

7. I cannot fail to mention Davies' magisterial *Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).

8. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985). One of the later students of W. D. Davies was D. C. Allison, Jr., whose exhaustive work on Matthew will provide a generation of scholarship with a standard tool, but this work has also led to an important work on Jesus, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998).

9. N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God 2; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); G. B. Caird, *Jesus and the Jewish Nation* (The Ethel M. Wood Lecture of 1965; London: University of London [Athlone Press], 1965); see also G. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology* (completed and ed. By L. D. Hurst; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), esp. 345-408; B. F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979). Not to be neglected here is G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (London: Collins, 1973) 86-102.

recent rigorous approach of D. C. Allison or the more popular study of Bart Ehrman.¹⁰ My own study of Jesus' teachings pursues the mission of Jesus from the angle of Jesus as prophet.¹¹ It is not the purpose of this paper, however, to adjudicate the issue of prophet versus apocalypticist. Rather, my concern is with the meaning of the term "prophet" when applied to Jesus, a surprising lacuna in historical Jesus studies today. My attempt here, however, is modest: I shall attempt to see what we learn about Jesus' prophetism when viewed through the lens of his so-called prophetic actions.

Jesus "the prophet" is a firm motif of the early Christian traditions.¹² Jesus himself describes the response to his own mission as the same response of Israel to prophets (Mark 6:4 par.; cf. Luke 4:24), which appears to be death in Jerusalem (Luke 13:33). The crowds also seem to think he is a prophet (Mark 6:14-16 pars.; 8:28 pars.) and even rejoice when they perceive him as a prophet (Luke 7:16; Matt 21:11, 46). His form of speaking (his oracles, as it were) boldly confirms such a judgment.¹³ After his death, admirers mourn the death of Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth (Luke 24:19). The Johannine tradition affirms a prophetic status for Jesus in a variety of ways (John 4:19; 9:17), including affirmation that Jesus was the Eschatological Prophet (6:14; 7:40; cf. Mark 9:4).¹⁴ It follows then that Jesus' perception of his own dismal response by Israel

10. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth*; B. Ehrman, *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

11. S. McKnight, *A New Vision for Israel: The Teachings of Jesus in National Context* (Studying the Historical Jesus; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

12. See F. Schneider, *Jesus der Prophet* (OBO 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973); O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (rev. ed.; trans. S. C. Guthrie and C. A. M. Hall; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963) 13-50; R. N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (SBT 2/17; Naperville: Allenson, 1970) 32-38; C. H. Dodd, "Jesus as Teacher and Prophet," in *Mysterium Christi: Christological Studies by British and German Theologians* (ed. G. K. A. Bell and A. Deissmann; London: Longmans, Green, 1930) 53-66; H. McKeating, "The Prophet Jesus," *ExpTim* 73 (1961-1962) 4-7, 50-53.

13. See esp. D. E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 163-69; Dodd, "Jesus as Teacher and Prophet," 58. On prophetic speech in general, two important studies are C. Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (trans. H. C. White; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967 [= 1964, 2d ed.]); *Prophetic Oracles of Salvation in the Old Testament* (K. Crim; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991 [= 1987]). Further, cf. R. P. Gordon (ed.), *"The Place Is Too Small for Us": The Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship* (Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 5; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995) 107-272.

14. On this, cf. H. M. Teeple, *The Mosaic Eschatological Prophet* (JBLMS 10; Philadelphia: SBL, 1957) 29-73; Schneider, *Jesus der Prophet*, 89-101; Cullmann, *Christology*, 14-38; Longenecker, *Christology*, 32-38; D. C. Allison, Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 73-84.

would correlate with his being accused as a false prophet (Luke 7:39; Mark 14:65 pars.).¹⁵

If it may be granted that Jesus is penetratingly understood with the category "prophet," it must also be granted that few seem to be *defining what is meant when Jesus is called a "prophet."* One serious attempt to define what is meant when Jesus is categorized as a prophet is the study of R. A. Horsley and J. S. Hanson, who distinguish between *oracular prophets*, who draw their prototypical profile from the classical prophets of Israel and Judah, and *popular action prophets*, who draw their inspiration from God's great acts of deliverance.¹⁶ Another attempt, more focused on John the Baptist, is that of Robert Webb, who builds on the work of David Aune to find three kinds of prophets: clerical, sapiential, and popular (leadership, solitary).¹⁷ In the context of this essay, it ought to be observed that it makes a great deal of difference if Jesus is described as an apocalypticist, perhaps bordering on what Horsley and Hanson call an "oracular prophet," or is described alternatively as an "action prophet" or a "popular leadership prophet."

How might we proceed in more accurately labeling Jesus? In particular, how does one distinguish these sorts of prophets? Does the evidence about Jesus fit one profile more completely than the others? In the attempt to answer these questions, this essay will examine one well-known feature of ancient prophets, that of their *prophetic actions*, and ask if understanding of that feature sheds light on who Jesus is and how he fits within the general Jewish model of "prophet." To those actions we now turn.

10. PROPHETIC ACTIONS

When Ernst Käsemann renewed the quest for the historical Jesus, a series of portraits of the historical Jesus were produced that took their

15. Such accusations have been explored by G. N. Stanton, "Jesus of Nazareth: A Magician and a False Prophet Who Deceived God's People?" in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ—Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology* (ed. J. B. Green and M. Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 164-80. Along a similar line, Jesus was certainly accused of being the "rebellious son" of Deut 21:18-21, a category alive at Qumran (11QTemple 64:1-6), where the "glutton and drunkard" accusation is unmistakably similar to the accusation of Jesus in Q 7:34.

16. R. A. Horsley and J. S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (New Voices in Biblical Studies; Minneapolis: Winston [Seabury], 1985) 135-89; see also R. A. Horsley, "'Like One of the Prophets of Old': Two Types of Popular Prophets at the Time of Jesus," *CBQ* 47 (1985) 435-63.

17. R. L. Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Socio-historical Study* (JSNTSup 62; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) 219-60, 307-48. See also Aune, *Prophecy*.

point of origin in the "teachings of Jesus."¹⁸ The most notable early post-Käsemann studies of Jesus were those of the more-consistently Bultmannian Gunther Bornkamm and the conservative Göttingen Professor Joachim Jeremias.¹⁹ The aftermath of these two studies of Jesus was a growing consensus that one cannot establish the most accurate picture of Jesus on the basis of teachings, since (1) the criteria are not immutable, and (2) the various applications of these criteria lead to divergencies so great that the entire discipline is called into question. It was at this impasse that E. P. Sanders offered a fresh approach and comprehensive proposal for who the historical Jesus was.²⁰ Sanders contended that scholarship, since it was getting nowhere on the basis of sayings, needs to begin a study of Jesus with his actions—in part because a preoccupation with his teachings inevitably leads to a picture of Jesus as essentially a "teacher," and it is hard to connect Jesus' life and death sufficiently on that basis. As is well known, Sanders begins his study with the so-called "Temple Incident" as the point of departure for understanding Jesus' mission to Israel.

Beginning with actions is sound methodologically. Hans Frei, in the republication of his classic study on christology, moves the discussion forward here, though I am not aware that historical Jesus scholarship has availed itself of Frei's study.²¹ The following speaks of Frei's concern (though he is less interested in the historical than the theological question):

What is man? What we learn from the New Testament about this question is in part gained from its portrayal of the man Jesus of Naza-

18. E. Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," in *Essays on New Testament Themes* (SBT 41; trans. W. J. Montague; London: SCM, 1964) 15-47 [essay originally delivered on 20 October 1953]. The history of the so-called "new quest" has been traced sympathetically by J. M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (SBT 25; London: SCM, 1959); a revision with newer essays appeared later (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983). The new quest has fewer proponents today, though it does have an active presence in the American Jesus Seminar, led by R. W. Funk, *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco [Polebridge], 1996). For an up-to-date survey of this approach, see Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 28-82.

19. G. Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (trans. I. McLuskey and F. McLuskey, with J. M. Robinson; New York: Harper & Row, 1960 [translation of 1956 edition]). The German edition is currently in a 12th edition (1980); it was fully revised in 1975, in the 10th edition. On J. Jeremias, see his *Proclamation of Jesus*.

20. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, esp. 3-22.

21. See H. W. Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 1997). The edition reprints the original essays published in Crossroads along with his essay "Theological Reflections on the Accounts of Jesus' Death and Resurrection." This essay further develops his earlier ideas and is the source from which my observations come.

reth. A man—in this instance the fully human savior who, by his action peculiar to himself, bestows a particular human identity upon the mythological savior figure—is what he *does* uniquely, the way no one else does it. It may be that this is action over a lifetime, or at some climactic moment, or both. When we see something of that sort, especially if we see it at some climactic stage which recapitulates a long span in a man's life—when we see the loyalty of a lifetime consummated at one particular point, but even if we see several hitherto ambiguous strands in his character pruned and ordered in a clear and decisive way at that point—then we are apt to say: "Here he was most of all himself."²²

He continues:

Who a person is, is first of all given in the development of a consistent set of intentions embodied in corporeal and social activity within the public world in which one functions. When a person's intentions and actions are most nearly conformed to each other—and further when an intention- action combination in which he plays a part is not merely peripheral to him but is of crucial importance, involving his full power in a task—then a person gains his identity.²³

That is, if we wish to understand Jesus' identity, and that identity is a prophet, then we need to study his so-called "prophetic actions," the actions of his that characterize his existence and that most fully express that identity.²⁴ But which actions should we examine? His so-called prophetic actions? How many are there? Scholars have hardly formed a consensus: while C. H. Dodd discovers four prophetic actions and David Aune only two or three, Morna D. Hooker finds approximately fifteen.²⁵ Methodologically, it becomes necessary to have before us a clear definition of what a prophetic action is in order to discern which actions of Jesus qualify for such a category.

22. Ibid., *Identity*, 12.

23. Ibid., 19. The entire discussion is worthy of reading (pp. 14-30). For his earlier exposition, see pp. 94-106, 132-55.

24. Identity ties into "intention," on which see G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention* (2d ed.; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).

25. Dodd, "Jesus as Teacher and Prophet"; Aune, *Prophecy*, 161-63 (though he misses a fourth action by Dodd on p. 64); Schnider, *Jesus der Prophet*, 79-88 (Schnider focuses too much on the literary form as articulated by G. Fohrer, though he does rightfully point out that the NT authors did not model Jesus' prophetic actions on the prophets of the Bible; see pp. 85-86); McKeating, "The Prophet Jesus," 50-53; J. W. Bowker, "Prophetic Action and Sacramental Form," in *Studio Evangelica*, vol. 3/2: *The New Testament Message* (TU 88; ed. F. L. Cross; Berlin: Akademie, 1964) 129-37; M. D. Hooker, *The Signs of a Prophet: The Prophetic Actions of Jesus* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity, 1997). I am grateful to Professor Hooker, whose own works over the years have shaped my thinking, for graciously answering a question about the research of her husband (David Stacey) and whether he explored the Mosaic prophetic actions.

For instance, David Aune discards many actions included by Morna Hooker because he thinks that for an action to qualify as a prophetic action it must have a predictive element.²⁶ In order to wrestle our way out of this thicket, we need then to look at the prophetic actions of the OT. Our intention here is to examine the "actions" of prophets with a view to examining the actions of Jesus that might be plausibly explained as similar prophetic actions in order to see if and how Jesus might be defined as a prophet. In particular, we want to know if any of the prophetic actions are most like the actions of Jesus. That is, is Jesus more like an Isaiah or a Jeremiah or an Ezekiel?²⁷

Before turning to the prophetic corpus, I shall look at the isolated incidents recorded in the "early prophets." In each I shall mention the text, the action itself, whether the action is explained in the text (which probably is redundant because of the conventional nature of most of the actions), and the divine intention, or "point," of the prophet's action.²⁸ Some confusion has arisen over what to call the so-called symbolic actions of prophets, though most now admit that such a debate is more semantics than substance. David Stacey's decision to label them as "prophetic drama" usefully avoids the sense that these actions are "mere" play-acting, a kind of ancient street-theater,²⁹ while Kelvin Friebel's utilization of communication theory provides an insightful point of departure: "sign-acts."³⁰ It is my conviction that not only should "street-theater" be avoided as a conceptual category within which to understand these actions but also that scholarship has proved that "magic" is not a helpful parallel to these actions.³¹ Under the spell of A. J. Heschel's wondrously evocative category of

26. See Aune, *Prophecy*, 162.

27. The most important studies of prophetic actions now are W. D. Stacey, *Prophetic Drama in the Old Testament* (London: Epworth, 1990); K. G. Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts: Rhetorical Nonverbal Communication* (JSOTSup 283; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999). The older study of Georg Fohrer, *Die symbolischen Handlungen der Propheten* (2d ed.; Zurich: Zwingli, 1968), is more concerned with the formal features of the narratives when describing a prophetic action, and that concern is outside this study.

28. While I am inclined to think that these actions actually occurred, evidence for it is not the purpose of this paper. Clearly, on at least one occasion the action is imaginary (#24) and at another the action is an allegory (#44), and I do not want to prejudge all as historical events. On the other hand, Friebel has made the case for the probability of "prophetic sign-acts" as events that occurred in order to make sense. See Friebel, *Sign-Acts*, 20-34; see also Fohrer, *Die symbolischen Handlungen*, 74-93; Stacey, *Prophetic Drama*, 225-33, who argues in general for their occurrence but who sees the difference as unimportant to the ancient Hebrew way of thinking.

29. See Stacey, *Prophetic Drama*, 14-72; see also pp. 260-82.

30. Friebel, *Sign-Acts*, 11-78, 370-406.

31. See esp. Stacey, *Prophetic Drama*, 234-59.

"pathos,"³² I will use the expression "prophetic actions" for these actions as "personal embodiments of what the prophet perceived to be his calling to reveal to Israel and Judah." They are the prophet's pathos coming into physical form. To be sure, these actions are intentional drama, enactments of what God has revealed,³³ and they are at the same time "sign-acts" that express in nonverbal form the burden of God in order to elicit the divinely-intended response.³⁴ The contingency of prophecy, however, tosses counterwinds into the sails of those who think that the actions set in motion an irreversible process.³⁵ Nonetheless, the "social conventions" surrounding a given prophetic word or action may well create an environment in which that word or action becomes an illocutionary or perlocutionary speech-act.³⁶

1.1. The Deuteronomic Histories

	<i>Text</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Point</i>
1.	1 Sam 15:27-29	Saul tears Samuel's robe.	Samuel explains: YHWH has torn kingship from Saul.	Embodies YHWH's intention: disobedience leads to punishment.
2.	1 Kgs 11:29-40	Ahijah tears Jeroboam's cloak into twelve; gives Jeroboam ten.	Ahijah acts and explains.	YHWH controls history; embodies YHWH's judgment.
3.	1 Kgs 18:20-46	Challenge between YHWHY and Baal; Elijah kills.	Action/explanation mixed.	YHWH is God; Elijah is his prophet; embodies YHWH's victory.

32. A. J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (2 vols.; New York: Harper & Row, 1962) 2.1-103; see also E. R. Fraser, "Symbolic Acts of the Prophets," *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 4 (1974) 45-53.

33. So McKeating, "The Prophet Jesus," 50-53. McKeating stretches the concept to include Jesus himself as an embodiment of the prophetic enactments.

34. In what follows I am dependent upon Stacey, *Prophetic Drama*, and, for Jeremiah and Ezekiel, also on Friebel, *Sign-Acts*.

35. E.g., Bowker, "Prophetic Action," 130, 135-36.

36. See R. R. Hutton, "Magic or Street-Theater? The Power of the Prophetic Word," *ZAW* 107 (1995) 247-60. See p. 257: 'Appropriate words in appropriate contexts uttered by appropriate persons are ascribed power.' It is unfortunate that Yehoshua Gitay does not explore the rhetorical function of prophetic actions in his otherwise informative essay: "The Realm of Prophetic Rhetoric," in *Rhetoric, Scripture and Theology: Essays from the 1994 Pretoria Conference* (ed. S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht; JSNTSup 131; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press; 1996) 218-29.

	<i>Text</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Point</i>
4.	1 Kgs 19:19-21	Elijah invests Elisha by casting cloak over him.	None; implied in "following."	YHWH commissions Elijah to anoint Elisha; embodies divine investiture.
5.	1 Kgs 19:21	Elisha slaughters oxen and yokes.	Narrative implication.	Embodies commitment to prophetic task; total disruption of life; social event.
6.	1 Kgs 22:1-12; 2 Chr 18:1-11	Zedekiah makes horns of iron.	Narrative implication; Micaiah's words reveal truth.	Embodies strength of army; false prophet's view of the divine will.
7.	2 Kgs 2:12-18	Elisha rends his own cloak in two; uses Elijah's cloak. Strikes Jordan.	Narrative implication. identity?	Embodies mourning? Destruction of old Embodies transferred power.
8.	2 Kgs 13:14-17	Elisha instructs Joash to shoot an arrow.	Elisha explains action.	Embodies YHWH's defeat of Syria. Embodies attack.
9.	2 Kgs 13:18-19	Elisha instructs Joash to strike the arrows.	Elisha's rebuke implies explanation.	Embodies YHWH's will; rebuke for shallow desires; theme of judgment.

These deuteronomic portraits of prophetic actions permit several observations: first, on several occasions a natural "prop" is used in the embodiment of the message, and a *cloak/robe* is used four times (events #1, 2, 4, 7), while an instrument, at some level, of weaponry is used three times (#6, 8, 9). Such "props" functioned, of course, at a conventional level to embody the message so desired by the prophet. Iron works for strength as a cloak works for investing someone as a successor.³⁷ Second, these prophetic actions overwhelmingly embody a message of judgment and function either as warnings or actual manifestations of that judgment. Third, in two events, both involving the transition between Elijah and Elisha, the action embodies a crucial moment in the prophetic vocation: investiture and individuation (#5, 7). Fourth, in none of these instances is YHWH one of the "persons" involved in the action itself. This will carry significance as further prophetic actions are examined. Finally, the actions nearly always embody a "divine" revelation rather than a human point of view, even if that human is a prophet. The actions, in other words, are contrived to reveal what God is saying to his people.

37. See Stacey, *Prophetic Drama*, 23-29. I suppose that, the higher the frequency of a conventional act, the less likely it is that it requires explanation.

1.2. *Hosea*

	<i>Text</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Point</i>
10.	Hos 1:2-3	Takes a wife/ Gomer by name; God commands.	Analogy to YHWH's relationship to Israel. graphic,	Embodies YHWH's relationship to his people; socially evocative action; Hosean pathos.
11.	Hos 1:4-9	Names children: Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah, Lo-Ammi.	Name expresses Hosea's mission.	Embodies a revelation from YHWH; Jezreel: violent defeat; Lo- Ruhamah; judgment; Lo-Ammi: covenant undone. Hosean pathos.
12.	Hos 3:1-5	Marries a prostitute.	Analogy to YHWH's relationship with Israel.	Embodies the relationship with Israel; deprivation; hope beyond deprivation. Hosean pathos.

Scholars are divided over the order of events in the life of Hosea, an innovative and powerful prophet during the prosperous years of Jeroboam II, in the middle of the eighth century (cf. 1:1): did he marry Gomer as a virgin, after which she became unfaithful, and only then was Hosea ordered to marry her again? Or, in what would be more socially provocative and significant but less analogous to the perceived relationship of Israel to YHWH, was Hosea asked to marry Gomer even though she was already a prostitute? Arguments can be mounted on both sides but, because it matters little for our discussion, a decision is not important. Besides the fundamental insight that Hosea is asked to convey—that God's covenant relationship with Israel is like a marriage relationship—first, Hosea's prophetic actions all involve YHWH as part of the action. While the deuteronomic history accounts may have had YHWH commanding each action (though it is never mentioned), here in Hosea the reason for each action is spelled out: YHWH told me to do this. Second, a name is now used to embody a revelation from God, setting out the prophet's message in permanent (as least as long as the child is alive) and constantly reminding form. Third, each of Hosea's prophetic actions embodies a message of judgment: the woman's status is a moral judgment on Israel; the children's names evoke defeat, depressing distance, and disengagement on the part of God from his holy, irrevocable covenant (Genesis 12; 15; 17; Exodus 20-24). Fourth, Hosea's second encounter with a(nother?) woman, whether it was the first time he took her (Gomer?) in as a prostitute or not, embodies a message of hope—but this action may be seen as hopeful only when so explained. Hos 3:4-5 explains that Hosea's abstinence, which is part of the action itself, forms an analogy with Israel's deprivation (at the hand of God's punishment) of king, covenantal

sacrifice, and access to God for knowledge. However, after such deprivation Israel will return to YHWH to restore the covenant—"in the latter days" (3:5). The action, as mentioned above, does not imply hope; it implies only "chilly cohabitation," surely a graphic embodiment of YHWH's cold relationship to an idolatrous people, an embodiment of pathos. This personal embodiment of the will of God now begins to characterize the prophetic actions.

1.3. *Isaiah*

	<i>Text</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Point</i>
13.	Isa 7:3	Names son Shear-yashub ³⁸	Self-explanatory, even if evocative.	Either only a remnant will return; or at least a remnant will return. Includes exilic themes. Embodies hope/doom.
14.	Isa 7:10-17	Predicted sign: son named Immanuel.	Period of time before destruction.	Embodies judgment from Babylon; God will be with his people; embodies time, relationship, doom, hope.
15.	Isa 8:1-4	Names son Maher-shalal-hashbaz.	Self-explanatory; narrative explains time factor.	Embodies YHWH'S intention for Syria and Israel's defeat.
16.	Isa 20:1-6	Walks about naked for three years.	Narrative/YHWH explains action.	"Embodies" what Egypt and Ethiopia will experience at the hand of Assyria. Graphic shame; Isaian pathos.

Isaiah, whose prophetic ministry finds its genesis during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah and extended well beyond (ca. 740-701 BCE),³⁹ performs actions that are only of two sorts: he uses names as a graphic embodiment to reveal God's message to Israel, and he walks about naked. First, in anticipation of Ezekiel's bizarre behaviors, if not also consistent with Hosea's provocations, the command to walk about naked for three years (iteratively, no doubt) is the first of the prophetic actions that might be fairly labeled "over the top"—so much so that Josephus omits the action, and Targum Isaiah only describes the Egyptians and Ethiopians as naked. Isaiah is "ill-clad" and is to bind sack-cloth to his loins. Second, consonant with Hosea, Isaiah's prophetic actions are prescribed by YHWH. Third, unless #13 is taken as a message of hope (cf. Isa. 10:20), all of Isaiah's prophetic actions embody a message of doom and judgment.

38. Tg. *Isa* 7:3: "And the LORD said to Isaiah, 'Go forth now to meet Ahaz, you and remnant which did not sin and repented from sin—your disciples . . .'" (B. D. Chilton).

39. For a recent study of Isaiah, cf. H. G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

1.4. *Micah*

	<i>Text</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Point</i>
17.	Mic 1:8	Does Micah go naked?	Narrative implication.	Embodies the depth of mourning; proximity of the judgment; Mican pathos.

Since the action of Micah is not clear, but mentioned poetically, we only mention this text as a possible reference to Micah's being seen naked in an intentional manner—to embody mourning in the context of captivity.⁴⁰

1.5. *Jeremiah*

	<i>Text</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Point</i>
18.	Jer 13:1-11	Waistcloth: worn, buried, and excavated.	Action performed and explained. <i>Post eventum</i> parable?	Embodies Judah's history of a snug relationship spoiled by sin. Embodies warning of judgment. Israel's "pride" is spoiled. ⁴¹
19.	Jer 16:1-4	Prohibited from marriage and children.	Command and explanation: the children here will die of disease.	Embodies YHWH's judgment on Judah and Jeremiah's separation from his people; Jeremian pathos.
20.	Jer 16:5-7	Mourning prohibited	Command and explanation: the people will die but no one will mourn.	Embodies YHWH's pathos regarding judgment; peace and love are gone; Jeremian pathos.
21.	Jer 16:8-9	Feasting prohibited.	Command and explanation: God will end joy in Judah.	Embodies the results of God's punishment; Jeremian pathos.
22.	Jer 18:1-12	Potter reuses clay to make a new vessel.	Command and explanation: as potter can restart, so also God.	Embodies God's relationship in history with Judah: he can refashion his covenant. Emphasis on contingency and repentance.
23.	Jer 19:1-13	Jeremiah breaks pot in front of select audience.	Command and explanation: "So will I break this people . . ." (v. 11).	Embodies God's judgment on Jerusalem; irrevocable (v. 11).

40. So H. W. Wolff, *Micah: A Commentary* (Continental Commentary; trans. G. Stansell; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990 [= 1982]) 58.

41. *Tg. Jer* 13:9: "strength" replaces "pride."

	<i>Text</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Point</i>
24.	Jer 25:15-29	Imaginary taking of cup and giving to nations to drink.	Command and explanation: cup is God's wrath/sword (v. 16). <i>A fortiori</i> (v. 29).	Embodies YHWH's wrath against the nations, including Jerusalem.
25.	Jer 27:1– 28:17	Jeremiah makes and wears yokes; ⁴² Haniah breaks; patriotism will not work.	Action and explanation: analogy to submission to Babylon.	Embodies YHWH's decree that Babylon will conquer and all must submit. Jeremiah acts contrary to his people.
26.	Jer 32:1-15	Purchases a field in Anathoth.	Command and explanation: the promise of reownership obtains.	In spite of coming judgment, YHWH knows there is a good future for Israel. Embodies the Covenant respecting Land. Embodies a down-payment.
27.	Jer 35:1-19	Rechabites refuse to drink wine in faithfulness.	Reverse analogy: as Rechabites are faithful, so Judas is unfaithful.	Embodies the divine intention in an example: Rechabites are faithful as Judah should be. A warning of judgment.
28.	Jer 36:1-32	Jeremiah writes on a scroll; Baruch reads it; king destroys scroll; scroll rewritten.	Complex action: Jeremiah's word is permanent as Word of God.	Jeremiah's words embody the word of YHWH.
29.	Jer 43:8-13	Buries stones in mortar of royal palace in Egypt.	Command and explanation: the stones anticipate throne of Nebuchadnezzar in Egypt.	Stones are first in a series of acts embodying the establishment of Babylonian rule in Egypt. Embodies YHWH's intention regarding Egypt.
30.	Jer 51:59-64	Jeremiah commands Seraiah to write and read words before Babylon; throw into Euphrates.	Two acts, each explained: read words to Babylon of its destruction; throw words into river as analogy to permanent demise.	Embodies the destruction of Babylon and its permanent destruction.

With Jeremiah, for whom the textual and critical issues are nearly insurmountable but who probably began his ministry in ca. 627 or 626 BCE and continued until probably around 575 BCE, we encounter the one who must be seen as the "master of prophetic actions" for, apart from perhaps Ezekiel, no one uses actions in such a complex, communicative manner. First, in all but one account (#30), YHWH plays the initiating role in the prophetic action. One might suspect that YHWH instructed Jeremiah to command Seraiah to write but, since that component is present in all others, one is on surer ground thinking otherwise in this instance. At the least, it is unusual for a

42. Tg. Jer 27:2 has "chains" and "yokes."

prophetic action in Jeremiah to take place without divine initiation. Second, eleven of twelve of Jeremiah's prophetic actions embody the theme of *judgment*, with only the purchase of the field at Anathoth (#26) embodying a message of hope. One ought also to take note of the strong dimension of pathos in many of these embodiments of judgment (#19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 28), most notable probably in the commands not to marry (cf. 11:14; 17:16; 18:20; 28:5-6), mourn, or feast. Third, one act is almost certainly to be understood as imaginary (#24). While Micah's lone instance of a prophetic action could be taken as poetic language, this "act" of Jeremiah could not have been performed as described. In the words of W. D. Stacey, "It is doubtful, therefore, whether the spoken word and the acted drama were, to Jeremiah, essentially different from the mental image."⁴³ This visionary/imaginary "action," however, significantly embodies the burden of Jeremiah. Finally, as with perhaps the opponents of Elijah (1 Kgs 18:20-46) but certainly with the prophetic action of Zedekiah (1 Kgs 22:1-12), countered as he was by Micaiah, so also with Jeremiah and Hananiah: prophets with different messages from God can embody those revelations in a "contest" (#25).

1.6. *Ezekiel*

	<i>Text</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Point</i>
31.	Ezek 2:8-3:3	Eat honey-sweet scroll. Imaginary?	Narrative implication.	Embodies Ezekiel's role in absorbing (so as to declare) YHWH's word of judgment.
32.	Ezek 3:22-27; 24:25-27; 33:21-22	To plain and house; bound to house.	Command and explanation: YHWH shows glory but prevents speaking.	Embodies Ezekiel's divine "dumbness"; YHWH controls times of revelation. ⁴⁴
33.	Ezek 4:1-3, 7	Constructs a mini-Jerusalem under war conditions.	Command and called a "sign."	Action embodies hostility against the city for its sin; YHWH's iron resolve. ⁴⁵

43. Stacey, *Prophetic Drama*, 149. See the extensive note in Friebel, *Sign-Acts*, 18 n. 16.

44. a. Friebel (*Sign-Acts*, 169-95) contends that Ezekiel here embodies Israel's communication/relationship with God and that the silence represents Israel's silence, and the resumption of communication represents their resumption of communicating with God. The issue need not be settled here. Though the careful attention to terms on the part of Friebel leads him to an innovative solution here, it appears to me that Friebel gives too much weight to Ezekiel's representative, mediatorial role. It is, after all, the prophet Ezekiel who does not communicate (whether voluntarily or involuntarily) the divine will to the people (3:25: "so that you cannot go out among the people"; 3:26: "unable to reprove them").

45. So Friebel, *ibid.*, 206-9.

	<i>Text</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Point</i>
34.	Ezek 4:4-6, 8	Lies on left side 390 days; lies on right side 40 days.	Command: simple analogy to days of exile for Israel and Judah.	Embodies the number of years of YHWH's punishment of his people for sin. ⁴⁶
35.	Ezek 4:9-17	Eats unclean bread and drinks rationed water.	Command and explanation: famine conditions and impurities.	Dual focus: embodies both YHWH's judgment on Judah and the impure conditions of exile. ⁴⁷
36.	Ezek 5:1-4 (5-12)	Shaves head with sword; divides in three: burn, strike with sword, toss to wind.	Command and explanation: clear analogy to judgment.	Embodies YHWH's judgment on Jerusalem in three forms: famine, sword, exile.
37.	Ezek 6:11-14	Clap hands, stomp feet.	Command and explanation: anger.	Embodies the anger of YHWH against Jerusalem.
38.	Ezek 12:1-16 cf. 2 Kgs 25:1-6	Acts out an "exile trip": bag, dig through wall, carry bag on shoulder.	Direct analogy to "prince."	Embodies YHWH's judgment and kingdom's exile trip to Babylon; esp. Zedekiah.
39.	Ezek 12:17-20	Eats/drinks in fear.	Command and explanation: fear of capture.	Embodies Jerusalem's fear of impending doom.
40.	Ezek 21:6-7, 12	Sigh, cry, strike thigh.	Self-explanatory.	Embodies Jerusalem's pain in suffering destruction/exile.
41.	Ezek 21:8-17, 28-32; cf. Josh 8:18; 1 Kgs 22:11;2 Kgs 13:17	Sharpen, polish sword; let it come down 3x.	Command and explanation: instrument of violence and destruction.	Embodies YHWH's sovereign use of Babylon to destroy his people and city.
42.	Ezek 21:18-22	Construct a sign for the Babylonian invaders.	Command and explanation: give them clear directions.	Embodies YHWH's will to punish his people.
43.	Ezek 24:1-2	Write day of siege.	Self-explanatory.	In Babylon an action is to embody what is occurring in Jerusalem.

46. Friebel (*ibid.*, 28-222) sees the numbers as indicating the numbers of years of Temple-life existence which, instead of procurring expiation, had actually incurred guilt, but it is hard to see how "the years of their punishment" in 4:5 can be understood as years of Temple-incurring guilt. Furthermore, the text explicitly affirms a difference here between the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.

47. Many would argue the "impurity" dimension of this action is a later, post-exilic redaction.

	Text	Action	Explanation	Point
44.	Ezek 24:3-14	<i>Allegory</i> of rusty pot. ⁴⁸	Story told and explained: boil, empty, burn.	Embodies the vengeance of YHWH against the sins of the people in the exile.
45.	Ezek 24:15-24	Mourning for his wife prohibited.	Command and explana- tion: direct analogy to exile's condition when Jerusalem is sacked.	Embodies lack of mourning on part of exiled people; not possi- ble to know their deaths. Inevi- table and irresistible? ⁴⁹
46.	Ezek 37:15-28	Join two sticks.	Command and explana- tion: as the sticks are joined, so also North and South will join again.	Embodies the hope of reunion of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms; twelve tribes. Themes of David and purity.

As with Jeremiah, our first point is that all but one (#46) of Ezekiel's prophetic actions embody a message of judgment. Ezekiel, whose ministry was probably carried out in Babylon as an exile after his capture in 597 BCE (cf. 2 Kgs 24:10-17), was also preoccupied with the destruction of the Southern Kingdom and the exile in Babylonia. It might be argued that the action connected with his prophetic call, his eating of a scroll, since it was experienced as "sweet" (3:3), better finds itself in a theme other than judgment, but the contents of that scroll, spelled out as "words of lamentation and mourning and woe," permits a more accurate assignation to the theme of judgment. Second, every prophetic action of Ezekiel is initiated by YHWH, which evinces and legitimates the sources of his odd behaviors. Third, it is possible that two of Ezekiel's prophetic "actions" are in fact not actions at all but are instead "imaginary" or "allegory" (#31, 44): it is possible that Ezekiel did not actually ingest a scroll (2:8-3:30 as it also possible that the pot was simply an allegory relayed to his audience. Fourth, as with Jeremiah, the note of pathos frequently reverberates throughout his prophetic actions (#31, 32, 34-36, 38-42, 45). While Ezekiel is not known for his emotions as much as Jeremiah, the pathos dimension, which is not to be equated with emotional displays, of Ezekiel's embodying the divine disposition

48. If completely an *allegory*, Ezek 24:3-14 would fall out of consideration for prophetic *actions* (so Friebel, *Sign-Acts*, 17-18). However, one's suspicion arises at v. 10 that an action may have been performed and the use of "allegory" (משל) in v. 3 is the interpretive framework. That is, the "action" is "allegorical." See Stacey, *Prophetic Drama*, 204-5.

49. So Friebel, *Sign-Acts*, 339-45. Friebel argues that mourning was intended to evoke the Davidic tradition (2 Sam 12:15-23): as it was not effective after the death of his child to mourn, so now with the exiled in Babylonia. One must ask if the analogy to the sudden death of Ezekiel's wife (which was not anticipated by mourning, as is the case with David) and prohibiting mourning after her death (which is normal) supports such an explanation.

and emphatically identifying with that disposition is a consistent feature of his prophetic actions.

1.7. Zechariah

	<i>Text</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Point</i>
47.	Zech 6:9-15	Coronates Joshua before witnesses. Two crowns? ⁵⁰	Command and explanation: anticipates the day when Joshua is high priest.	Embodies YHWH's will for Israel and Joshua as priest.
48.	Zech 11:4-17;51 cf. Ezek 37:15-28	Shepherd makes two staffs: Grace and Union.	Command and implication: direct analogy to Israel's leadership.	Embodies YHWH's of a worthless leader who ruins grace and union.

Zechariah's two prophetic actions embody, first, the themes of hope in the coronation and judgment in the graphic embodiment of a false leader's destroying the peace and hope of the nation. Second, each of Zechariah's actions are initiated by YHWH.

If one were to cut off the investigation at this point, one would find very little that forms a substantial parallel to Jesus as a prophet. To be sure, as when Jeremiah and Ezekiel refrained from normal social customs and sensitivities, such as marriage or mourning, so also Jesus refrained from similar things. However, apart from the odd parallel here and there, the actions of these prophets and the distinctive actions of Jesus have very little in common—even if some important things about Jesus can be said in light of this charting of data. Before we turn to Jesus, however, we need to move forward to the first century to observe some distinctive prophetic actions of "prophetic figures" who were contemporary with Jesus.

2.0. ACTIONS OF FIRST-CENTURY JEWISH PROPHETIC FIGURES

Josephus, in his narration of the ancient prophets, focuses his attention on their *predictive* powers rather than their actions, even though on at least one occasion he records a Moses-before-Pharaoh-like (non)action on the part of Michaiah and Zedekiah. Josephus typi-

50. The text is not clear whether one figure is in view (a royal high priest) or two figures (king and high priest). Since "Joshua" does not mean "Branch" (cf. Zech 6:12) and a priest is distinguished from the royal figure (6:13), it is more likely that a double coronation is in view. See Stacey, *Prophetic Drama*, 209-13.

51. *Tg. Zechariah* completely rephrases this incident.

cally attributes the fact that the false prophet could prevail to "Fate" (*Ant.* 8.408-9). However, Josephus does record as a hostile witness six actions of prophet-like figures whose actions need to be on the table when considering the actions of Jesus.⁵² These figures, who are neither identical in status nor always similar in intention,⁵³ have been labeled "messianic prophets," Jewish "Sign Prophets," "Action Prophets," and "Popular Leadership Prophets."⁵⁴

	<i>Text</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Point</i>
49.	<i>Ant.</i> 18.85-87, ca. 36 CE	Samaritan promises to reveal Mosaic vessels on Mt. Gerizim; Pilate attacks violently.	Unexplained: "disturbance" for Josephus; "a man who made light of mendacity"(18.85).	Embodies the arrival of the Restorer (<i>Taheb</i>). ⁵⁵
50.	<i>Ant.</i> 20.97-99, ca. 44– 48 CE	Theudas gathers many to Jordan River to see it part take possessions. ⁵⁷	Unexplained: an "impostor"; ⁵⁶ claims to be "prophet"; cf. 2.327; <i>Ag. Ap.</i> 2.145, 161.	Embodies God's redemption eschatologically. "Exodus," "entry," or "conquest."
51.	<i>Ant.</i> 20.167-68; <i>J.W.</i> 2.259; ca. 52– 60 CE	Unnamed gets some to follow into desert to see signs and wonders. Felix punishes them.	Unexplained: impostor/ deceiver; Mosaic/ Joshuaic signs.	Embodies revolutionary changes, liberation, and national restoration.

52. See the very interesting parallel to this concern in the "New Deuteronomy" of the "New Moses" at Qumran in 11QTemple 54:8-18 (Deut 13:1-6); 61:1-4.

53. See esp. R. Gray's excellent study: *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence from Josephus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 131-32. Gray sees both Theudas (#50) and the Egyptian (#52) as special.

54. P. W. Barnett, "The Jewish Sign Prophets—A.D. 40-70: Their Intentions and Origin," *NTS* 27 (1981) 679-697; Horsley, "Two Types," 454-61; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 307–48; D. Hill, "Jesus and Josephus' 'Messianic Prophets,'" in *Text and Interpretation: Studies in the New Testament Presented to Matthew Black* (ed. E. Best and R. McL. Wilson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 143-54; see also Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 112–44. Horsley criticizes Barnett for emphasizing too much the term "sign" but it remains a fact that each of the prophets induces a large crowd to see a *specific action* that either authenticates their prophetic vision or propels the work of God into action. In my view, "sign" remains fundamental to these figures; see Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 198-99 n. 2.

55. See L. H. Feldman, *Josephus* (LCL 433; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981) 9.61 note c, who here refers to M. Gaster for this view. But cf. M. F. Collins, "The Hidden Vessels in Samaritan Traditions," *JSJ* 3 (1972) 97-116.

56. See Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 143-44.

57. See *ibid.*, 114-16.

	<i>Text</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Point</i>
52.	<i>Ant.</i> 20.169-72; 2.261; Acts 21:38 ca. 52-60 CE	Egyptian prophet gets mob to follow him to Mt. Olivet to watch walls collapse so that they can enter Jerusalem. Felix kills 400; 200 imprisoned; leader escapes. ⁵⁸	Unexplained: impostor/deceiver.	Embodies deliverance and conquest; Joshua; 4QTestim 21-30.
53.	<i>Ant.</i> 20.188, ca. 60-62 CE	Unnamed "impostor" gets "dupes" to follow him to desert, where they would find "liberation." <i>Ant.</i> 2.327, 345; 4.42.	Unexplained: impostor.	Embodies wilderness redemption; Mosaic conquest; Exodus (Ant. 3.64).
54.	<i>J.W.</i> 6.285-86; <i>Av</i> 10, 70 CE	(False) Prophet declares followers will find tokens of deliverance.	<i>J.W.</i> 6.259, 310. Unexplained: "false"; <i>J.W.</i> 6.285, 291, 295.	Embodies Temple deliverance.

Above and beyond the obvious bias that one finds in Josephus, we ought to notice, first, that these actions are each intended to embody *redemption, political liberation* (cf. *J.W.* 2.259; *Ant.* 20.163), or *restoration*. That is, in direct contrast to the prophets of the Hebrew Bible, these "prophets" (and they do not always receive that designation from Josephus) perform actions that embody redemption rather than judgment. Even if some of the actions of the Hebrew prophets are concerned with hope or redemption, they do not enact the sorts of redemptive acts that these prophets perform.⁵⁹ Second, the actions of most of these prophets (excluding #54) evoke the actions of Moses and Joshua (even if referential confusion exists), as opposed to the ancient prophetic actions.⁶⁰ That is, their actions are bigger and more significant: it is more significant to reenact the parting of the Jordan to usher in a new people into the Land than to embody a warning about a false leader. I do not, however, intend to suggest that the behaviors of an Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Ezekiel with respect to captivity and exile are not somehow significant acts. What I am saying is that the actions of these leadership prophets are major acts of redemp-

58. *J.W.* 2.261 says that the Egyptian gained 30,000 followers! This text also suggests that the entry into Jerusalem would be by force (2.262) and that he would be the king (Josephus says he would "tyrannize" the people). See Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 116-18.

59. Horsley, "Two Types," 454.

60. See Hill, "Jesus and Josephus' 'Messianic Prophets'," 149; Horsley, "Two Types," 454, 461.

tion.⁶¹ Third, again in contrast to the behaviors of the prophets of ancient Israel, the Jewish leadership prophets frequently embodied acts of *eschatological* liberation and restoration. Some of these actions intended to usher in the new age; put in other categories, they saw themselves inaugurating the Age to Come. In the words of Richard Horsley, "From Josephus' brief general description, therefore, it is evident that the action-oriented prophets and their movements should be understood as apocalyptically inspired movements convinced that eschatological fulfillment was at hand."⁶² It ought to be observed in this context that none of these prophets claimed to be the Eschatological Prophet.

In examining these actions one finds a certain similarity in spirit to the redemptive acts of Jesus—say, the baptism (though performed at the hand of John, Jesus clearly enthusiastically joins in the action and makes it his own), the feeding of the multitudes, or the entry into Jerusalem. While there are clearly major differences between Jesus and these Jewish leadership prophets,⁶³ a connection is made here that is worthy of further explanation. That connection is that the Jewish leadership prophets generally embody actions that evoke the stories of *Moses and Joshua*. If it is the case that the so-called deuteronomic editors of ancient traditions influenced mightily the works of the prophets and if it is also the case that they influenced the portrait of Moses, then it is somewhat astounding that scholarship concerned with prophetic actions does not examine the "actions of Moses." This observation is all the more remarkable when one simply observes that the Dtr composed the portrait of Moses as the Ideal Prophet (e.g., Deut 13:1-5; 18:15-22;⁶⁴ 34:9-12). While one cannot guess at the reasons for neglect of a given set of data, I suspect that Moses has been neglected by Christian scholarship as the quarry out of which Jesus

61. Gray (*Prophetic Figures*, 123-33) probes the meaning of σημεῖα in Josephus and sets out a case for their being "authenticating signs." I am less concerned here with the meaning of the term "sign" than with the intention of the action connected with that "sign."

62. Horsley, "Two Types," 456. However, Gray contends that the eschatological dimension has been overdone; cf. *Prophetic Figures*, 141-43.

63. In particular, both Horsley ("Two Types," 454) and Gray (*Prophetic Figures*, 134) separate these prophets from Jesus on the basis of the *numbers* of their followers but restrict Jesus' followers to his special disciples. I would think that the large crowds attending Jesus' way would be sufficient to alter such a judgment—and one must consider the "nature" of the following of the leadership prophets and ask if their followers are any different from the general makeup of Jesus' followers. Further, one ought to exercise caution in making judgments about the followers of the leadership prophets because of our lack of information.

64. Acts 3:22 binds together Deut 18:15-18 with Lev 23:29, so it is argued. However, Lev 23:29, in spite of having the important "will be cut off," does not have "the prophet," while LXX Deut 18:19 does. Furthermore, 4QTestim 7 has "prophet." It is likely here that Luke is working from memory from both Deuteronomy and Leviticus.

emerged⁶⁵ because either Christian scholars do not have the same estimation of Moses that Jews had at the time of Jesus and in the early churches (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 3.38, 212, 317-22; 4.320-23; 1Q22; 2Q21; 4Q374; 375; 378 frag. 3, col. ii, lines 3, 6; 387a; 388; 389; 390; cf. also Mark 9:4, 7; Acts 3:22-24; 7:37; John 6:14; Rev 11:3-13)⁶⁶ or because connection with Moses robs Jesus of his Christian message or unique status.⁶⁷ Furthermore, it is not infrequent that scholars fail to include Moses when they are thinking of ancient prophets. Josephus, for one, says of Moses: "As general he had few to equal him, and as prophet none, insomuch that in all his utterances one seemed to hear the speech of God Himself " (*Ant.* 4.329; cf. also 2.327). Therefore, to complete our understanding of Jewish prophetic actions, I will now turn to the "prophetic actions" of Moses.

3.0. MOSES AND PROPHETIC ACTIONS

When one pauses to consider the "actions" of Moses, one is confronted with the need to rehearse what made Israel what it was to come to be. In what follows, I focus on those actions that embody Moses' vision for Israel and the great acts of redemption.

	<i>Text</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Point</i>
55.	Exod 5:1-12:51 ⁶⁸	Moses and Aaron perform ten signs along with the Passover event. Use of the rod.	Complex: pre-account and inter-account explanations.	Embodies YHwH's judgment on Egypt, legitimation of Israel, establishment of God's sovereignty and deliverance. Exod 10:1-2 (cf. Deut 4:35); 18:10-12 (cf. Josephus <i>Ant.</i> 2.274).

65. A notable exception can be seen in W. Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978) 11-27, 80-108.

66. See here Cullmann, *Christology*, 30-42; Schnider, *Jesus der Prophet*, 89-101; for Matthew, Allison, *New Moses*, 97-106; on John, see M.-E. Boismard, *Moses or Jesus: An Essay in Johannine Christology* (trans. B. T. Viviano; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), who places Johannine Mosaic christology into the context of the development of the Fourth Gospel and perceives an early Samaritan thrust that eventually gives way to other themes, including Wisdom, Word, and Only-begotten, God. See also R. Kysar, *The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel: An Examination of Contemporary Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1975) 141-44.

67. See Allison, *New Moses*, 267 n. 322.

68. Israel's liberation from Egypt has enjoyed a popular history of accretions and explanations. For a notable, if somewhat uneventful, retelling of the Exodus account, cf. Josephus *Ant.* 2.293-314. For an uncritical, but highly enjoyable, summation of Jewish accounts, see L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (trans. P. Radin; 7 vols.; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), esp. vols. 2-3.

	<i>Text</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Point</i>
56.	Exod 14:1-15:12; Josephus Ant. 2.334-44	Red Sea deliverance; rod. ⁶⁹	Self-explanatory.	Embodies YHWH's deliverance: YHWH is warrior (14:14), sal- vation (14:30-31), YHWH's leadership (14:18). ⁷⁰
57.	Exod 15:23-26	Moses throws tree into water and it becomes sweet. ⁷¹	Self-explanatory.	Embodies God's pro- visions and healing (15:26); also zeal and impatience of God.
58.	Exod 16:1-36; cf. Num 11:1-15	Quail and manna are provided to Israel. ⁷²	Self-explanatory.	Embodies the provi- sions YHWH and proof.
59.	Exod 17:1-7	Moses provides water at Rephi- dim with rod as he strikes the rock.	Self-explanatory.	Embodies divine provi- sion.
60.	Exod 17:8-13	Moses elevates rod in battle; when up, victory. ⁷³	Self-explanatory.	Embodies YHWH's protection and presence.
61.	Exod 19:9- 20:26; cf. 24:12-18	Moses/Aaron ascend Mt. Sinai to receive Torah.	Self-explanatory.	Embodies the revelation of the Torah to Israel.
62.	Exod 24:1-8	Moses visits YHWH; informs people; builds altar and enacts ritual.	Action and explanation: "the blood of the covenant" (v.8)	Embodies the sacred ritual of covenant; intermediation; covenant established.

69. *Mekilta Beshallah* 5.107-19 (on Exod 14:16-21) contends that the use of "water" rather than "sea" shows that all the waters on the earth, including waters in cisterns, ditches, and caves, were also split in two (trans. J. Z. Lauterbach; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976) 1.231.

70. On this, cf. R. Rendtorff, *The Covenant Formula: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation* (trans. M. Kohl; OTS; Edinburgh: T. & T Clark, 1998), who develops the "covenant formula" and shows its many connections as it expresses the essence of the covenant.

71. Josephus *Ant.* 3.5-8 explains the reasons for the problem (women and children) and resorts to prayer. Moses then picked up a stick, split it, and tossed it into the water. Those at the acme of life were to form a ring, draw off the bad water, and then permit the rest to draw from the purified water. Cf. also 4Q364-365, frag. 6, col. ii, lines 10-11.

72. Josephus *Ant.* 3.22-32 explains quail and manna otherwise: (1) quail, an abundant bird in the Arabian Gulf, weary from flight, lit in their camp and the children of Israel collected them; (2) manna is a dew-like substance provided directly from God.

73. Josephus *Ant.* 3.39-62 adds many war preparations but omits the "rod." He also adds a Moses eulogy (3.63-65).

	<i>Text</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Point</i>
63.	Exod 32:15-24	Moses descends Sinai; discovers golden calf; breaks tablets, powders golden calf; people drink.	Self-explanatory.	Embodies YHWH's wrath at idolatry/ breaking covenant; Mosaic anger.
64.	Exod 32:25-29	Moses' challenge: "Who is on YHWH's side?" Levites kill 3,000.	Self-explanatory.	Embodies the zeal of YHWH.
65.	Num 11:16-30	YHWH transfers some of Moses' spirit to 70 others. ⁷⁴	Command, action.	Embodies YHWH's sovereign dispensing of prophetic spirit.
66.	Num 16:1-50; cf. 1 Kgs 18:20-46.	Korah rebels against Moses; Korah destroyed; Aaron atones.	Self-explanatory.	Embodies YHWH's judgment on Korah and defense of Moses.
67.	Num 17:1-13	Moses gathers rods from each tribe; places in the tent; Aaron's rod buds.	Self-explanatory.	Embodies YHWH's choice of the Aaronic priesthood; judgment against rebels.
68.	Num 20:2-13	Moses strikes rock 2x with rod; water is provided.	Command, action, and denunciation.	Embodies God's provision and judgment on Moses' action.
69.	Num 20:22-29;	Moses strips Aaron and clothes Joshua on mountain. ⁷⁵	Self-explanatory.	Embodies investiture of Joshua; priestly succession.
70.	Num 21:4-9	Moses constructs a fiery serpent; those who look at it will be saved.	Sin, command, action, and explanation: Mosaic leadership.	Embodies Mosaic role in deliverance; faith prominent.
71.	Num 27:12-23	Moses invests Joshua as successor to lead Israel.	Command and action.	Embodies YHWH's election of Joshua in line of Moses.

74. The appointment of seventy elders became a source of much speculation in rabbinic Judaism. To escape the charge of prejudice in favoring one tribe (12 does not divide evenly into 70), Moses wrote "elder" on seventy slips of paper with two left blank so that the choice would be random; in dispersing the spirit of prophecy Moses was much like a candle which, in giving light to others, does not diminish its own light. See for a collection of rabbinic speculation, Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3.248-51 (6.87-88).

75. Josephus *Ant.* 4.82-84 severely curtails the role of Moses in the divestiture of Aaron and the investiture of his son Eleazar; further, in this account the congregation watches the investiture on Mt. Hor.

The actions of Moses, while bearing some similarities to the actions of the later prophets, are foundational actions in Israel's cult and national identity. The dissimilarities, however, do not discount that Moses is portrayed as the Prophet par excellence. As with the later prophets, Moses is called by YHWH to speak on his behalf to Israel (Exod 3:1-5, 7-8, 16-17) to deliver Israel (cf. Hos 12:14[13]). To heighten the role of Moses it is said that, whereas YHWH speaks to prophets in a vision, to Moses he speaks "mouth to mouth" (Num 12:6-8; cf. Exod 7:1). Moses, then, becomes the prototypical (deuteronomic) prophet (Deut 18:15-18).

One notable feature of the Mosaic prophetic actions is the presence of the *rod* (Exod 4:2) as the instrument by which he was to evoke the power of God and perform signs and wonders (4:17; #55, 56, 59, 60, 68). This rod has no parallel among other prophets who, though at times they use "props," are not attached to any one instrument, nor are they commanded by God to use one. Second, the *themes* of Moses' actions vary greatly. Undoubtedly, the most significant theme connected to Mosaic prophetic actions is the theme of redemption as liberation (#55, 56, 60, 70) along with its variant of redemption as covenant establishment through revelation and ritual enactments (#55, 61, 62). Although not typical of later prophets, Moses' actions at times embody a message of election, an election that emphasizes the mediatorial role of Moses, not to mention a note of self-legitimation or possibly the dimension of legendary development (#62, 64, 65, 67, 69, 71). The intercessory and mediatorial role of Moses becomes fundamental, not only in the traditions about Moses, but especially in his prophetic actions. Accompanying this theme is one that pertains to actions that involve investiture (#65, 66, 67, 69, 71). An aspect of Moses' mediatorial role is how YHWH uses him to provide for Israel in extreme situations (#57, 58, 59, 68). Finally, Moses' actions anticipate the later dominating theme of the prophets when his actions embody judgment on both enemies and disobedient Israelites (#55, 56, 60, 63, 64, 66, 67).

We may roughly define a "prophetic action" as an act performed by a prophet that is (1) intentional, (2) conventional--as opposed to a spontaneous, natural action, and (3) designed specifically⁷⁶ to embody God's purposes and the mission/message of that prophet to his people/audience. There is a lack of uniformity among prophetic actions because prophets have a variety of messages and missions. At

76. An action performed more than once does not thereby eliminate it for consideration. Thus, Schnider (*Jesus der Prophet*, 82-83) eliminates table fellowship because it is an "allgemeine" Zeichen as opposed to "einer bewußt gesetzten Zeichenhandlung." Some prophetic actions are repeated (#16, 19, 20, 21, 32, 34, 58).

the same time, conventional acts are so numerous that a multitude of actions may be utilized to embody a particular message and mission. The action, whether commanded by YHWH (the vast majority) or invented by a particular prophet, is "staged" as an intentional act to embody the message or mission. If Isaiah gives a son an ordinary name, though clearly intentional and conventional, that act does not thereby become a "prophetic act" since it lacks the "embodiment" necessary for the conventional act to be lifted from the ordinary into the special. The sheer diversity of actions that might qualify as "prophetic actions" leads, of course, to differing definitions of prophetic actions. Morna Hooker provides a guiding light here: "Perhaps it would be better to speak, on the one hand, of prophetic actions which mediate manifestations of divine power in events that bring with them either salvation or judgment, and on the other, of prophetic actions which point to a divine activity which cannot otherwise be observed at present."⁷⁷ Actions of the first sort lead to epiphanies while the second are expressions of God's will. I believe the concept of "embodiment" covers both dimensions of Hooker's definition.

On the basis of this definition, one might exclude specific miraculous cures of Jesus since they are, as recorded in the Jesus traditions, spontaneous, even though in general they are intentionally designed to embody the mission of Jesus in ushering in the long-awaited Kingdom of God. On the other hand, one might include the regular practice of Jesus of sitting at table with sinners and other unlikely, unacceptable figures to be a prophetic action, since it meets all the requirements: it is intentional, conventional (in its oddity), and it is specifically designed to embody his mission and message of inclusion at the table of God through forgiveness and fellowship. In light of this definition, we need now to see which prophetic model Jesus fits.

4.0. JESUS AND PROPHETIC ACTIONS

Now that we have sorted out the information about "prophetic actions," we can inquire of the Jesus traditions about the prophetic actions of Jesus to see if we might delineate more carefully his precise social identity. I shall begin with general observations that show parallels between Jesus and the prophets of his Jewish world before suggesting a new approach to the prophetic actions of Jesus. Which actions of the ancient prophets did Jesus perform?

77. Hooker, *Signs of a Prophet*, 3. On pp. 5-6 Hooker also delineates a third kind of action: an action that authenticates the prophet. Jesus disavows authenticating signs, and so they are not examined extensively here; cf. *ibid.*, 17-34.

4.1. *Jesus*

Selecting the actions of Jesus that qualify as "prophetic actions" could be a separate study. To avoid the entanglements of this debate, I shall use the list provided by M. D. Hooker, knowing full well that other scholars would shorten the list. Her list has the single merit, not found in any other study of Jesus' prophetic actions, of a complete awareness of Jewish prophetic actions and, in light of the definition that emerges from that evidence, explicates the actions of Jesus.

	<i>Text</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Point</i>
72.	Q 11:20	Exorcisms. ⁷⁸	Action and explanation.	Embodies the kingdom's arrival in power.
73.	Q 7:18-23	Various healings; ⁷⁹ evangelizing poor.	Action and explanation.	Embodies the kingdom's arrival; cf. Isa 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 61:1.
74.	Mark 3:13-19; Q 22:28-30	Twelve chosen and given positions of "judging."	Action; no explanation.	Embodies restoration of twelve tribes and the new Israel.
75.	Mark 3:16; Matt 16:17-19	Names Cephas "Peter."	Action; self-explanatory.	Embodies leadership for new Israel.
76.	Mark 2:13-17 pars.	Table fellowship with the unlikely.	Action and explanation.	Embodies a vision for a new Israel; acceptance and covenant participation. ⁸⁰
77.	Mark 2:18-22 pars.	Jesus, disciples do not fast. ⁸¹	Action and explanation.	Embodies joy of the arrival of God's kingdom.
78.	Mark 2:23-28	Jesus, disciples infringe on	Action and explanation.	Embodies freedom of the arrival of the sabbatical rules of the kingdom.

78. Moses, according to the magicians of Egypt, did his work "by the finger of God" (Exod 8:15[19]), and "finger" of God is the expression in the Q text; Matt 12:28 has "Spirit," a secondary interpretation. On this, cf. T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus: Studies of Its Form and Content* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939) 82-83.

79. For actions of a miraculous nature, actions that lead to epiphany-like responses, I cite here only the action and explanation texts from Q that deal with the exorcisms and healing miracles of Jesus. See here J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 2: *Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994) 509-645.

80. See my *New Vision for Israel*, 41-49; M. Douglass, "Deciphering a Meal," *Daedalus* 101 (1972) 61-81; J. D. G. Dunn, "Jesus, Table-Fellowship, and Qumran," in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1992) 254-72; B. Chilton, *Jesus' Prayer and Jesus' Eucharist: His Personal Practice of Spirituality* (Harrisburg: Trinity, 1997) 52-75.

81. That others may be involved in a prophetic action is amply attested in the evidence about prophetic actions (cf. #22, 25, 27, 28, 30, 64, 65, 66).

	<i>Text</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Point</i>
79.	Mark 7:1-23 par.	Jesus, disciples infringe on handwashing ritual.	Action and explanation.	Embodies suspension of purity rules regarding hands and meals.
80.	Luke 5:1-11	Peter to sail out into the lake and fish.	Action and explanation.	Embodies future minis- try of Peter (and others).
81.	Mark 6:11 pars.	Disciples shake dust off feet against place.	Action; self-explan- atory.	Embodies judgment on those who reject their mission.
82.	Mark 11:1-10	Entry into Jerusalem.	Action; self-explan- atory.	Embodies the arrival of Israel's messianic king; ⁸² cf. 1 Kgs 1:32- 40; Zech 9:9.
83.	Mark 11:11-19	"Cleansing" Temple.	Action and explanation.	Embodies destruction of Jerusalem and/or critique of ritual. ⁸³
84.	Mark 11:15-17, 20-25 par.	Curses barren fig tree.	Action and explanation.	Embodies destruction of Jerusalem.
85.	Mark 14:22-25 pars.	Last Supper.	Action and explanation.	Embodies Jesus as sacrifice and establishment of a community in new Israel. ⁸⁴
86.	Mark 6:30-44 pars.	Feeds multitude. ⁸⁵	Action; self-explana- tory	Embodies God's provisions in the desert for his people; reenacts Moses' manna. ⁸⁶
87.	Mark 1:1-13 pars.; Q 3:21-22	Baptism in Jordan. ⁸⁷	Action.	Embodies purification to enter the Land; establishes a new Israel (remnant).

82. See Meyer, *Aims*, 168-70, 199.

83. Much dispute has been generated by Sanders (*Jesus and Judaism*, 61-76), who sees the action as a prophecy of the coming destruction of the Temple and not a protest against corruption in the Temple cult. He has been criticized by Hooker, *Signs of a Prophet*, 44- 48; C. A. Evans, "Jesus' Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?" *CBQ* 51 (1989) 237-70; "Opposition to the Temple: Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1992) 235-53; "Jesus and the 'Cave of Robbers': Toward a Jewish Context for the Temple Action," *BBR* 3 (1993) 93-110.

84. See Hooker, *Signs of a Prophet*, 48-54; Bowker, "Prophetic Action," 135-37.

85. See E. Bammel, "The Feeding of the Multitude," in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (ed. E. Bammel and C. E. D. Moule; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 211-40.

86. See *Mekilta Vayassa* 5.63-65 (on Exod 16:16-27); 6.65-85 (on Exod 16:28-36).

87. Few have paused to consider the baptism of Jesus by John as a prophetic action; but cf. Cullmann, *Christology*, 15. It is clearly intentionally designed by John (and Jesus) to take place in the Jordan (cf. 2 Kgs 2:8, 14; 5:11-14), it utilizes the conventional act of water lustrations/baptisms and raises it to a new level, and it is designed in this case to embody puri-

4.2. *Jesus' Actions and Jewish Prophetic Actions*

In comparing Jesus to the prophets of the Hebrew Bible, I shall focus first on the specific actions that show substantial parallels and then turn to general observations that might aid in our clarification of the kind of prophet that Jesus was.

4.2.1. *Specific Actions.* While Jesus clearly invests his chosen followers with a calling to extend his own work (cf. #74; Mark 6:6-13, 30 pars.; Q 10:2-12, 16, 18-20; Matt 9:35-11:1) and the Q tradition on sending out "seventy" is reminiscent of the elders invested by YHWH to extend Moses (#65; Q 10:(1)2-12), Jesus' form of investiture varies significantly from Elijah's (#4) and, while Jesus also enjoins his followers to abandon everything (cf. Mark 1:16-20 pars.; Luke 9:57-62 pars.), none of his slaughter oxen and destroy yokes (#5). The action of "naming" finds significant social parallels in ancient Israel (Gen 25:25), but the use of names to embody one's mission and message (#11, 13, 14, 15) finds a significant parallel with Jesus' naming Cephas "Peter" as an embodiment of his role in the new Israel (#75). Since embodying messages in naming someone prevailed in ancient Israel, it is hard to know if Jesus' naming of Peter emerges more from a typical Jewish custom or from the actions of Hosea and Isaiah; I am inclined to think assigning this to a prophetic action is plausible. We are on firmer ground in connecting Jeremiah's distinctive asocial behavior (#19, 20, 21) to Jesus' similar kinds of actions: Jesus also did not marry (cf. Matt 19:10-12), did not have children, and prohibited a mourning-type fasting (cf. #77). Unlike Jeremiah, however, Jesus did feast and was known for his provocative, celebratory meals (Q 7:31-35). Along the same line, as Ezekiel was prohibited from mourning his wife as an embodiment of the irresistible and inevitable death (#45), so Jesus calls one of his followers not to mourn his father's death (Q 9:59)—perhaps as an

fication prior to return to the Land for a new Israel. We have no evidence about whether the same people were baptized again and again as the act was reenacted in different locations or whether new "converts" were baptized when the act was reenacted, but it is likely that this instance was not the only time for this action to occur. In general, see J. E. Taylor, *The Immerser: John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); Webb, *John the Baptizer*; B. D. Chilton, *Jesus' Baptism and Jesus' Healing: His Personal Practice of Spirituality* (Harrisburg: Trinity, 1998). It is also likely, in my view, that Jesus' own program of purity developed out of this event with John, a program in which purity became a contagion through contact with Jesus; see S. McKnight, "A Parting within the Way: Jesus and James on Israel and Purity," in *James the Just and Christian Origins* (NovTSup 98; ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans; Leiden: Brill, 1999) 83-129, here pp. 90-98; Chilton, *Jesus' Baptism*, 58-97.

embodiment of the irresistible passing of the familial order.⁸⁸ These minimal results reveal that Jesus was no imitator of ancient Jewish prophets. Indeed, we can argue further that Jesus is not "this kind" of prophet if we take his actions to be indicative of his prophetic self-consciousness. His actions do not line him up consistently with the preclassical or classical prophets of Israel and Judah. Accordingly, when scholars repeatedly assign certain actions of Jesus, say his "table fellowship with sinners" or his "entry into the Temple," to the category of "prophetic actions" it is hard to know what is being said about Jesus or about prophetic actions. Surely the analogies are so slim that one is forced to conclude that Jesus' actions are not ancient Jewish prophetic actions at all. But perhaps it could be countered that all that scholars mean is, as the ancient Jewish prophets embodied their messages and missions in "actions" (that is, did things "symbolically"), so also Jesus embodied his message and mission in actions that were symbolic carriers of meaning. If so, one is still pressed to ask which actions of Jesus are prophetic and which kind of prophets one has in mind.

Accordingly, we must pursue the question further and thus turn to a closer parallel to Jesus: the Jewish leadership prophets of Josephus. First, as with Theudas's action in the Jordan (#50), so also Jesus (at the hand of John) embodied his message and mission in an action at the Jordan River and from this point entered into the Land to restore Israel (cf. #87; Mark 1:1-11; Q 3:2-4, 7-9, 16-17, 21-22).⁸⁹ However, it needs to be observed that Jesus' and John's actions here were not intended to "part" the Jordan again, as was the action of Theudas. A second substantive parallel between the sign prophets and Jesus revolves around actions performed in the "desert." As the unnamed leader garnered followers in the desert to manifest eschatological signs and wonders (#51) and as another unnamed "impostor" urged followers to accompany him to the desert to find "liberation" (#53), so some of Jesus' mission is connected with the desert (cf. Mark 1:12-13; Q 4:1-13). Regardless of the interesting nature of prophets and the desert, Jesus' temptation is difficult to connect with a "prophetic action," since it is so concerned with Jesus alone, and the baptism is more concerned with water than "desert." Jesus withdraws with his followers into the "desert" not to reveal miracles of liberation but to rest (e.g., Mark 1:35, 45; 6:31 pars.). However, given the fact that Jesus' "feeding miracle" takes place in

88. Cf. M. Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* (trans. J. C. G. Greig; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981 [= 1968]) 11-12. Hengel's concern, however, is christology (showing a substantive parallel between Jesus and YHWH) rather than the nature of Jesus' prophetic actions and the message they embody.

89. See C. Brown, "What Was John the Baptist Doing?" *BBR* 7 (1997) 37-49.

the desert and that the feeding incident is clearly an embodiment of divine provision, as under Moses (Exodus 16; Numbers 11), we are on safe ground in seeing here a substantial parallel to the Jewish sign prophets (cf. #86; esp. Mark 6:31, 32, 35; cf. John 6:3). It is, however, very unlikely that this "desert" of Mark is the "desert" of the sign prophets, and it is almost certain that it is not the Judean Desert, which is the desert that embodied eschatological hopes in Judaism (Isa 35:1-2; 40:3-5; Hos 2:14-23; Ezek 20:33-44; 1QS 8:12-16). And, it might be noted, just what occurred in the desert feeding is not entirely clear. We may dismiss the rationalistic explanation that the little boy shamed the selfish crowds into sharing. It seems likely that Jesus and his followers shared a meal in the desert and that something extraordinary in the way of provision occurred. In summary, the actions of Jesus have parallels, some not significant, with the actions of the Jewish sign prophets in regard to one particular incident, the feeding in the desert, substantial enough to evoke direct comparison.

What of Moses' actions and Jesus? Motives and specific actions apart, the ten signs of Moses and Aaron (Exod 5:1-12:51; #55) and the miraculous acts of Jesus can be plausibly argued to be substantially similar as acts that embody the legitimation of their missions from God (cf. esp. Matt 8:1-9:34).⁹⁰ To be sure, Moses' actions are acts of doom and judgment, so typical of the prophetic actions of the prophets of Israel, while Jesus' actions are uniformly merciful. Furthermore, Moses' actions are a "challenge," not unlike that of Elijah (#3), while Jesus' are not carried out under such pressure and proof. But that both begin their missions with "acts" that embody the power resident in their deliverances bears consideration. A second act of Moses, the Red Sea deliverance, embodies the redemption of YHWH through water (#56); a case can be made for a significant parallel here with the baptismal practice of John at the Jordan, in which Jesus participates significantly, as an act of national redemption (Mark 1:9-11 pars.). However, the action of John and Jesus is more plausibly connected with the crossing of the Jordan than with the Red Sea deliverance. Undoubtedly, the provision by YHWH through Moses of manna and quail (#58) finds an act on the part of Jesus that embodies fundamentally the same message: YHWH provides (Mark 6:30-44 pars.; 8:1-10 par.). Along the line of "divine provision," Moses' act of

90. Obviously, Matthew has collected material that is demonstrably from differing chronological settings. For the definitive analysis, see D. C. Allison, Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 207-13, who doubts a conscious parallel with Moses. My concern is less with Matthew's intention (which is the concern of Allison) than with a substantive parallel of Jesus and Moses over the issue of legitimating signs.

providing water at Rephidim as he strikes the rock (#59) may be compared to the reputed "water-into-wine" event of Jesus at Cana (John 2:1-11), even if the circumstances giving rise to the acts as well as the difference between water and wine vary significantly. Participation in Passover and establishing it as a memorial (#55), especially when combined with the institution of a sacred covenant ritual (#62), forms the substantive basis for Jesus' own institution of a new sacred covenant ritual (#85).⁹¹ As Moses was concerned to transfer his "spirit" to others in order to spread his gifts and to invest others (#65, 69, 71), so also Jesus "laid his hands" on some of his selected followers to enable them to extend his mission throughout Israel (cf. #74; Mark 6:7-13, 30 pars.; Q 10:2-12; Luke 10:1). As Elijah invested Elisha with a cloak, Moses does so with seventy elders at the command of YHWH but with no recorded "rite" (Num 11:16-30) while he "leans" hands on Joshua (Num 27:12-23; v. 18); Jesus' action, while it may be presumed to have taken place by the laying on of hands, is as unspecified as the transfer under Moses with seventy. It may be that Jesus' form of investing is not by "leaning" hands on the twelve/seventy because such an act carries too great of a transfer.⁹²

Summary. Seven acts by other prophets show significant parallels to actions by Jesus: Jeremiah's asocial actions (#19, 20, 21), Ezekiel's asocial behavior (#45), the ministering to Israel of acts of liberation in the wilderness (#53), especially when combined with the Mosaic parallel (Exodus 16; Num 11:1-15), the emergence of Moses on the scene with ten acts of power (#55), feeding Israel supernaturally in the desert (#58), Passover and creating sacred covenant rituals (#55, 62), and investing of the elders/Joshua (#65, 69, 71). If there is any pattern here, it is that Jesus' actions are more like the Prophet par excellence, Moses, than any other sort of prophet. The asocial actions of Jesus are not significant enough to make Jesus a prophet like Jeremiah or Ezekiel, and the actions of Jesus in the wilderness show similarity to the Jewish sign prophets more in their location (wilderness) than in their content and intent. Externally, then, Jesus is a prophet like Moses. To further this line of inquiry, however, it is also necessary to make general observations about the prophets and Jesus in order to focus more narrowly on the intent and function of their prophetic actions.

91. See esp. D. W. Stacey, "The Lord's Supper as Prophetic Drama," *Epworth Review* 21 (1994) 65-74; reprinted in Hooker, *The Signs of a Prophet*, 80-95. See also Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 553-563; Chilton, *Jesus' Prayer and Jesus' Eucharist*, 52-75.

92. See D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, n.d. [=1956]) 224-46, esp. 236-37.

4.2.2. *General Observations.* Perhaps a decisive observation is that Jesus differs dramatically from the deuteronomic histories, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and a few of the actions by Moses, in their concentration of their actions as embodiments of a message of *judgment*. Clearly, Jesus could at times embody a theme of judgment in word (cf. Q 11:49-51; 13:34-35; Luke 19:41-44; 23:28-30) and action: he urges the twelve to shake dust off their feet as an act of judgment on hostile communities (#81), he creates a disturbance in the Temple as an act of judgment on that place (#82, 83), and he curses the fig tree (#89). However, it must be said that Jesus' characteristic prophetic actions overwhelmingly do not embody the message of judgment. *At the level of theme, Jesus is immediately dissociated from the preclassical and classical prophets of Israel in the matter of prophetic actions and is instead closer to the actions of the Jewish sign prophets and Moses' major actions.*

Second, by narrative depiction or direct claim, most of the prophetic actions of preclassical and classical prophecy were done at the initiation of YHWH; there is no action of Jesus in which he acts because God has called him to this action. One might infer this, for instance, when Jesus calls and sends out twelve of his disciples, since he had prayed to God for workers (according to the Q tradition; Q 10:2). One might even infer it on general grounds, since Jesus was a man of prayer and was in constant contact with his Father. Everything he did was at the initiative of his Father (e.g., Q 10:21-22; e.g., John 5:19, 36; 6:38; 7:16, 28; 8:28, 38; 10:30, etc.). I am inclined not to make much of this point since, first, the issue is more one of "form" than of reality in the world of occurrence; and, second, I am convinced that Jesus' communion with God led to his distinctive actions.⁹³ The authority for Jesus' actions is apparently not derivative.⁹⁴

Third, Jesus' actions are less bizarre than those of Jeremiah and especially Ezekiel. Jesus does not do anything like wearing, burying, and then excavating a waistcloth (#18); making and wearing a yoke (#25); asking someone to write out his words on a scroll, read it to a king who will burn it, and then have them all rewritten (#28); bury stones in mortar (#29); throw written words into a river (#30); nor did Jesus eat a scroll (#31), even at the imaginary level; he was not forced to be a mute (#32); he did not construct a model of Jerusalem (#33)

93. Some have argued from the absence of the "messenger formula" toward a heightened christological awareness on the part of Jesus; cf., e.g., Schnider, *Jesus der Prophet*, 84-85.

94. See J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 76-84.

and lie on his side for extraordinary durations (#34); he did not shave his head and burn his hair, strike it, or toss it into the wind (#36); he did not act out an "exile" trip (#38) or shake in dramatized fear while he ate and drank (#39), or anything like most of what Ezekiel did. Jesus did perform some provocative actions: eating with sinners, violating traditions on the Sabbath, and tipping over tables in the Temple were all intended to provoke, much like some of Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's behaviors, but his actions simply do not match up to theirs in this regard. Nor did Jesus go out on a limb to the same degree that the Jewish sign prophet did, who risked being every part a fool, knave, and impostor when they promised magnificent, eschatologically-redemptive signs (#49, 50, 51, 52, 54). In this regard, Jesus' actions are more conservatively conventional, much more like those of Moses, as seen in his acts of investiture or covenant-making (#61, 62, 65, 67, 69, 71).

Fourth, like one act of Hosea (#12), perhaps one of Isaiah (#13), one of Jeremiah (#26), Ezekiel (#46), and Zechariah (#47), *Jesus' actions are overwhelmingly restorative, redemptive, and liberationist*. But, because redemptive acts are so uncommon for these prophets, the actions of Jesus are again dissociated from these prophets, and this ushers Jesus once again into the mold of the Jewish sign prophets and Moses. The actions of the Jewish sign prophets are consistently redemptive-acts that embody a message of imminent redemption and liberation from Rome at the hand of God. At their hands, Israel is about to be restored to its rightful place in the world as the center of God's plans and redemptive intentions. Furthermore, the actions of Jesus show dramatic parallels at times to the Jewish sign prophets on the level of theme and function, especially when those Jewish leadership prophets are seen as embodying the re-actions of Moses and Joshua in delivering Israel by associating their actions with the Exodus, wilderness epiphanies, and entry into the Land (#50, 51, 52, 53, 54). Accordingly, Jesus' actions, like calling the twelve (#74), offering forgiveness and fellowship to sinners (e.g., #76), releasing his followers from fasting and encouraging celebratory feasts (#77), suspending Jewish traditions on Sabbath work (#78) and ritual handwashing (#79), feeding the multitudes in the desert (#86), entering Jerusalem with the possible motive of releasing the Temple from crookery and exclusiveness (#82, 83, 84), and establishing an alternative sacred covenant ritual (#85) show striking similarities to the typical actions of Moses, whose actions were also fundamentally redemptive and liberationist (#55, 56, 58, 60, 61, 62, 70).

Fifth, when it comes to the theme of *eschatology*, which dominated the mission and ministry of Jesus, Jesus is very much like the Jewish sign prophets, whose actions were embodiments of God's

imminent, eschatological deliverance of Israel to create its liberation from Rome (#49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54). While Jesus does not perform the same actions that the Jewish sign prophets were to perform, Jesus' actions are every bit as eschatological: the twelve are an embodiment of the restoration of the twelve tribes; table fellowship is a present embodiment of a future reality (cf. Q 13:28-30); the suspensions of fasting, sabbath work, and ritual handwashing are each to be understood as present embodiments of eschatological conditions; and the whole succession of entry, Temple incident, and sacred covenant ritual establishment is one consummate eschatological act.⁹⁵ But it needs to be observed here that, while it is true that Jesus' prophetic actions are much like those of the Jewish leadership prophets, it is the *Mosaic and Joshuaic elements of those actions that come to the fore*. If one connects the baptism of Jesus (#87), as one ought to, to the Jordan entry into the Land under Joshua, and one notes that the eschatological, redemptive acts of Jesus are fundamentally the restoration of the Mosaic promises, then Jesus' prophetism may be externally and functionally much like those of the Jewish leadership prophets in their Mosaic and Joshuaic dimensions.

CONCLUSION

The prophetic actions of the preclassical and classical prophets, when combined with similar actions by Moses and the Jewish leadership prophets, create new ways of looking at the actions of Jesus. In general, we can argue persuasively that Jesus' actions are more like the Jewish leadership prophets, particularly in their redemptive-liberation orientations, especially as they pick up themes connected with Moses and Joshua. They are even more like the actions of Moses. Jesus was indeed a prophet, but his prophetism is more like the Mosaic ideal than any one prophet of the preclassical and classical periods of Israel's prophets.

What to make of a prophet christology that is decidedly Mosaic in orientation? While neither Oscar Cullmann nor Franz Schnider thought the prophet christology of the New Testament was central, with Cullmann contending that prophet christology was "too narrow to do justice to the early Christian faith in Jesus Christ"⁹⁶ and Schnider that it was simply a *Kommunikationsrelation*,⁹⁷ my own research into this expression of faith in Jesus, or christology, is not

95. See esp. Meyer, *Aims of Jesus*, 168-70, 199; B. D. Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus: His Sacrificial Program within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).

96. Cullmann, *Christology*, 49; see pp. 43-50.

97. Schnider, *Jesus der Prophet*, 234-40.

yet complete enough to adjudicate such a theological debate. I am reasonably convinced, however, that a variety of christologies ruled the day and that a grand synthesis was not yet achieved by the time of the final "freezing" of the Jesus traditions into the shape of our canonical Gospels; thus, I leave open the possibility that a prophet christology was the center for some Jewish Christians.

If, however, we begin on another basis, the expectation of an eschatological prophet, more light can be shed on early Jewish christologies. While some today would contend that 1 Macc 4:46 and 14:41 point decisively toward an expectation of a (Mosaic) eschatological prophet on the basis of Deut 18:15-18 and Mal 4:5, others contest this point of view.⁹⁸ Other evidence is not as easy to dismiss—in particular, texts such as 4QTestimonia; 4Q158 frag. 6, 6-9; 11QTemple;⁹⁹ *T. Benj.* 9:2-3, in its use of "unique prophet"; the exegesis of Philo with respect to an eschatological prophet (*Spec. Leg.* 1.64-65); the early Christian evidence that reflects Jewish expectations (e.g., Mark 6:15; 8:28; John 6:14); as well as the Jewish leadership prophets examined above. And it is these that lead me to agree with Dale Allison's recent conclusion:

The outcome of this discussion is that the expectation of an eschatological prophet like Moses, founded upon Deut 18:15 and 18, was not little known, or just the esoteric property of Qumran conventile and Jewish-Christian churches. It was instead very much in the air in first-century Palestine and helped to instigate several short-lived revolutionary movements.¹⁰⁰

While this essay does not attempt to prove a Mosaic expectation, it does demonstrate reasonably that Jesus embodied, in his actions, an ideology that generated convictions that he was indeed the Eschatological Prophet, and the connection made to the Prophet like Moses emerges from the same evidence.

98. E.g., Horsley, "Two Types," 438-39. Horsley atomizes the evidence somewhat and surely minimizes what is there. However, I would not want to argue that expectation of an eschatological prophet or a Mosaic prophet pervaded Jewish expectations.

99. M. O. Wise, *A Critical Study of the Temple Scroll from Qumran Cave 11* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1990).

100. Allison, *New Moses*, 83.