OLD TESTAMENT ALLUSIONS IN THE GOSPEL OF PETER

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to survey the allusions to the Old Testament in the Gospel of Peter in order to better understand how the author uses the Old Testament as well as the relationship between Gospel of Peter and the canonical gospels. We will begin with a discussion of methodological concerns, after which we will survey the twenty or so possible Old Testament allusions in Gos. Pet.

Methodological Concerns

A number of problems present themselves when we attempt to determine the way Gos. Pet. uses the OT. One problem is identifying when an OT text has influenced the text of Gos. Pet. For example, when the author of Gos. Pet. speaks of Jesus being silent on the cross, is he alluding to Isa 53:7: “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearsers is silent, so he opened not his mouth”? G. K. Beale argues that for a supposed allusion to be legitimate, it should demonstrate substantial lexical, structural, or conceptual contact with the source text.2

Richard Hays gives seven criteria for identifying an allusion: (1) Availability. Was the source available to the author? (2) Volume. To what degree are words or syntactical patterns repeated? (3) Recurrence. How often does the author elsewhere cite or allude to this passage? (4) Thematic Coherence. “How well does the alleged echo fit

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1 All Bible quotations, unless otherwise noted, are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

into the line of argument that [the author] is developing?” (5) Historical Plausibility. Could the author have intended this and the audience understood this allusion or does it arise more in our different theological context? (6) History of Interpretation. Due to the very limited number of interpretations of Gos. Pet. available to us today, this criterion will be less helpful to us, but we will interact at length with John Dominic Crossan’s supposed allusions.3 (7) Satisfaction. “Does the proposed reading make sense? Does it illuminate the surrounding discourse?”

While Hays tends not to distinguish between allusions and echoes, the approach of this paper will be to distinguish the two. Stanley Porter argues that allusions have more specificity to them, striving “to bring an external person, place, or literary work into the contemporary text,” while echoes are “thematically related to a more general notion or concept.”5 In this paper we are seeking to discover when the author of Gos. Pet. is seeking to draw to the reader’s mind a specific OT text, so echoes will not be considered in this study though some of them will receive brief comment. This paper will frequently interact with Crossan’s The Cross that Spoke, but as will be seen, Crossan’s tendency is to find connections to Old Testament texts when there does not seem to be enough literary, thematic, or contextual links to suggest intentionality. Occasionally, however, there are clear allusions that illuminate the purpose of Gos. Pet. and its relationship to the canonical gospels.

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A second problem involves the redaction history of Gos. Pet. When we speak of “the author of Gos. Pet.,” are we referring to the author of the source material? the final redactor? editors along the way? Knowing almost nothing about the textual history of Gos. Pet., this can be a very difficult issue. It is perhaps wise, then, to focus on the final form of the text. At the same time, if the goal is to establish how the author of Gos. Pet. is using the Old Testament, it is important to know if the author is intending to use the Old Testament or is merely passing on a tradition that is linked to an Old Testament text while the author may not intend to allude to the text himself or might not even be aware of the allusion. This will be discussed throughout the text. It is at this point that the relationship between Gos. Pet. and the canonical gospels will be most thoroughly dealt with as we investigate the evidence in the use of the OT to determine which works have priority, which will then inform us of what the later works are doing with the earlier works’ use of the Old Testament.

We will also consider Crossan’s theory that the Gos. Pet. went through three stages of development: an original Cross Gospel (1:1-2; 2:5b-6:22; 7:25; 8:28-10:42; 11:45-49), intracanonical developments (6:23-24; 12:50-13:57; 14:60), and later redaction (2:3-5a; 7:26-27; 11:43-44; 14:58-59). We will only be considering the Akhmîm fragment as the other possible fragments we have are too short and cannot be linked to this work with certainty.

“...but of the Jews none washed the hands, nor Herod, nor any of his judges. And, since they did not want to wash, Pilate stood,” Gos. Pet. 1:1

The Akhmîm fragment of the Gospel of Peter begins with the claim that “none of the Jews washed their hands.” It is assumed that this follows a reference to Pilate having washed his hands, which among the canonicals only occurs in Matthew 27:24-25. The
presence of this account suggests one of the following options: 1) Matthew had access to an earlier form of Gos. Pet., such as Crossan’s hypothetical Cross Gospel; 2) Gos. Pet. had access to Matthew’s work; 3) both Matthew and Gos. Pet. are dependent on a shared source or tradition. The first option has some problems, most notably that if Matthew had access to the Cross Gospel, which is what Crossan suggests, one wonders why Matthew so rarely follows the Cross Gospel against Mark.\(^6\) This is one of very few points of agreement between Matt and Gos. Pet. that are not shared with John and the other synoptics.

Second, in this particular instance the direction of influence seems more likely to go from Matthew to Gos. Pet. It is more likely for a later author to add a statement judging the Jews, Herod, and their judges to the account of Pilate washing his hands than for Matthew to have removed such a statement. If Matthew was getting his information about Pilate washing his hand from Gos. Pet. he likely would have included the statement about other leaders not washing their hands.

That being said we can look at the possible OT allusions here. Crossan sees an allusion to Deut 21:1-9,\(^7\) where instructions are given for the situation of a slain man being found in open country without anyone knowing who killed him. According to Deuteronomy, the elders of the nearest city should break a heifer’s neck in the valley, and the priests and Levites should come forward, and the elders of the city should

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\text{wash their hands over the heifer ... and ... testify, ‘Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it shed. Accept atonement, O LORD for your people Israel, whom you redeemed, and do not set the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of your people Israel, so that their blood guilt be}
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\(^7\) Crossan, 96-101.
atoned for. So you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood from your midst.

Because the beginning of the account in Gos. Pet. is missing, it is difficult to compare Matt’s and Gos. Pet.’s texts and to look for hints of an allusion to the Deut text. The similar context involving the blood of an innocent man certainly suggests links.

Semantic links are as follows: χεῖρα (Deut 21:6, 7; Gos. Pet. 1:1; Matt 27:24); νίπτω (Deut 21:6; Gos. Pet. 1:1; cf. ἀπονίπτω in Matt 27:24); αἷμα (Deut 21:7, 8 [2x], 9; Matt 27:24, 25); λαός (Deut 21:8 [2x]; Matt 27:25); κριταὶ (Deut 21:2; Gos. Pet. 1:1). Crossan notes the presence of “judges” (κριταὶ) in both Deut 21 and Gos. Pet. but not in the canonical gospels. At the same time it should be noticed that Deut 21 focuses more on the responsibility of the “elders” (γερουσία; 21:2, 3, 4, 6) and, to a lesser extent, the “priests” (ἱερεῖς; 21:5) than it does on the judges, to whom reference is made only alongside the elders in verse 2. It is the elders who wash their hands. If the author of Gos. Pet. were intending to allude to Deut 21, wouldn’t we expect him to say, “None of the elders washed their hands”? The inclusion of the word κριταὶ does not make an intended allusion any more likely. At the same time, one could not argue against an intended allusion based on the absence of other words, such as αἷμα (cf. Matt 27:24-25), since the beginning of the account in Gos. Pet. is missing. Also, because λαός is such a common word in Matthew (14 occurrences), it is difficult to tell whether Matt chooses this word by coincidence or intentionally uses this word to allude to Deut 21:8 where the elders ask God for there to not be “guilt of innocent blood in the midst of [God’s] people [λαός] Israel,” though the strong contrast between Matt 27:25 and Deut 21:8 suggests intentionality.

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8 Crossan, 98.
Crossan argues that Deut 21 is not the only OT text that sets the backdrop for Gos. Pet. 1:1. According to Crossan, the link between hand-washing and innocence is further cemented by Psalm 25:6 LXX (“I wash my hands in innocence [ἐν ἀθῷοις, cf. ἀθῷος εἰμι in Matt 27:24]”) and Psalm 72:13 LXX (“I ... washed my hands in innocence [ἐν ἀθῷοις]”). In the latter case the context is not such that one would call this an allusion, but in Psalm 25 there are significant parallels to the trial. In Psalm 25:4-5 LXX, the psalmist says he does not sit with men of falsehood or consort with hypocrites and he hates the assembly (συνέδριον, cf. Matt 26:59) of evildoers and will not sit with the wicked. Perhaps the fact that Pilate stands up in Gos. Pet. 1:1 is intended as an allusion to this.

One further text that may be in the background of the handwashing scene is Susanna 46, where Susanna is about to be killed because of the false testimony of two elders, and a young boy named Daniel says, “I am innocent of the blood of this woman (Καθαρὸς ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος ταύτης).” This phrase is echoed in Matt 27:46 (ἀθῷός εἰμι ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος τούτου), but it is impossible to tell if these words were also in Gos. Pet., since that portion of Gos. Pet. is not available to us today.

What, then, can be concluded from this first catena of OT passages that may be at the background of Gos. Pet. 1:1? Conceptually, handwashing is rooted in the OT. As D. A. Carson notes, it does not seem to have been a Roman custom, but “after living several years among the Jews he detested, Pilate picked up one of their own customs (Deut 21:6; cf. Ps 26:6) and contemptuously used it against them.” If this account goes back to a

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9 In Psalm 72:13 LXX the psalmist describes his temptation to despair when the wicked were prospering while he was keeping his “heart clean and wash[ing] his hands in innocence.” Unless the preceding verses (now lost) of Gos. Pet. are claiming that Pilate is suffering because of his handwashing, his situation is not parallel to the Psalmist’s.

historical event (i.e., Pilate really did wash his hands at Jesus’ trial), then the links between the handwashing account and the OT passages may reflect a pattern in history or divine irony rather than authorial intention. But even if that is not the case, one could argue that the tradition is related to the OT texts without Matthew or the author of Gos. Pet. being aware of the OT connections. We can, however, glean some clues toward the use of the OT in Gos. Pet. by looking for evidence of a connection with the OT texts at a literary level. We noticed that the direction of influence seems to be from Matthew to Gos. Pet. and that there is only one connection with Deut 21:1-9 that is not present in Matt (the reference to κριταὶ). We argued that that connection is more likely coincidental than intentional. The possibility of an allusion to Psalm 25:6 LXX is strengthened by the mention of Pilate standing up, but there is little ground to postulate an intentional allusion with much confidence here.

“It is written in the law that the sun is not to set upon one who has been executed,” Gos. Pet. 2:5b

This phrase that occurs in Gos. Pet. 2:5 is repeated almost verbatim in 5:15,11 and Crossan argues that it is one of the seams of the book, with 2:3-2:5b having been added by a later redactor who wanted to explain the seemingly contradictory statements of Gos. Pet. 5:15, “that Jesus was buried by his enemies out of obedience to Deuteronomy 21:22-23,” and Gos. Pet. 6:23-24, “that Jesus [was] buried by his friends ... under Pilate.”12 In 2:3-2:5, Joseph asks Pilate for the body of Jesus, and Pilate asks Herod, who says he would have buried Christ before sunset anyway since “it is written in the law that the sun

11 The only difference between the text here and the one in 5:15 is in the introductory formula. Whereas 2:5 has γεγραπται γαρ εν τω νομω, 5:15 has γεγραπται αυτοις.
12 Crossan, 102-103.
is not to set upon one who has been executed.” Accordingly, Gos. Pet. 2:5 and 5:15 are the only verses of Gos. Pet. that use a citation formula in referring to the OT. The quote itself is not a direct quotation of Deut 21:22-23 but a paraphrase. It is noteworthy that this comes from the same chapter as the possible allusion in Gos. Pet. 1. In this text the person who is put to death is different from the person found dead in Deut 21:1-9, but one would expect that what applies to the one situation applies to the other (though it is unlikely that handwashing would be just as effective when you are the executioner as it would be when you merely find a person who died in an unknown manner).

The only close parallel to this use of the Deut 21:22-23 in the canonical gospels is in John 19:31, which reads: “so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath.” We see here that while both texts may allude to Deut 21:22-23, they seem to do so independently of each other. In John, the Sabbath is mentioned, which is not an element of Deut 21:23 or of later applications of that law in the OT (Josh 8:29; 10:26f). In Gos. Pet., however, it is sunset in general that is the concern. This comes closer to the concern of Deut 21:23, which says, “his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God.” While we see here more syntactical parallels between John 19:31 (μείνῃ ἐπὶ τοῦ σταυροῦ τὰ σώματα) and Deut 21:23 (οὐκ ἐπικοιμηθήσεται τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τοῦ ξύλου), there is more intentionality in referencing Deut 21:23 in Gos. Pet. 2:5 (hence the citation formula) and a slightly more direct connection with the original application of the Deuteronomic law.

There are some other texts that are important for the discussion here. The Deuteronomic law is put into practice in Josh 8:29 and 10:26f, where wicked kings are hung on trees but are taken down when the sun is setting (ἐπιδύνοντος τοῦ ἥλιου),
apparently in obedience to Deut 21:22-23. The language here of the sun setting is similar enough to the language in Gos. Pet. to make the allusion highly likely, though it is difficult to see anything in the context of the Joshua story that would further illuminate Gos. Pet. 2:5 or 5:15. Perhaps the linguistic connections are made merely to cite the law and give the reason for Jesus’ body being buried that day.\footnote{See Crossan, 104. These are my own literal translations of the LXX text of Isa 53.}

“And he delivered him to the people before day one of unleavened bread, their feast,”  
Gos. Pet. 2:5c

Perrin argues that the word παραδίδωμι (“to deliver, hand over”), which also occurs in the canonical parallels (Matt 27:26; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:25; John 19:16), is “a technical term in connection with the passion” and “might have become an established phrase in Jewish literature dealing with the fate of the prophets.”\footnote{Norman Perrin, “The Use of (παρα)διδόναι in Connection with the Passion of Jesus in the New Testament,” pages 204-212 in Der Ruf Jesu und die Antwort der Gemeinde, Festschrift für Joachim Jeremias, ed. by Eduard Lohse, with Christoph Burchard and Berndt Schaller (Göttingen, Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1970), 208-209, also cited in Crossan, 104.} This word occurs three times in Isa 53 LXX. In 53:6 it says, “The Lord delivered him for our sins,” and in Isa 53:12 the passive form is used twice: “His soul was delivered to death,” and, “He was delivered for their sins.”\footnote{Another semantic connection we could point out is in Josh 10:28, 30, 32, Joshua “strikes” (φονεύω) further kings. Gos. Pet. 2:5; 5:15 refer to the executed person as πεφονευμένω. The kings killed in Josh 8:29 and 10:26-27 are not said to be “struck,” but the parallel is clear.}

Clearly there is an allusion here but it is difficult to determine if this is in the mind of the author of Gos. Pet. or if the author is merely using terminology that was common in referring to Christ’s being handed over. Likely the word goes back to an earlier stage than the authorship of Gos. Pet. and the use of it here is a reflection on the frequency of use of that term in this context rather than a desire to specifically allude to Isa 53.
There is great significance to the fact that Jesus was crucified at the time of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The author of Gos. Pet. takes care to mention that it is “before day one of unleavened bread” that Jesus is handed over. How much the author wanted to draw the reader’s attention to Exod 12 and the historical background of the feast is uncertain. All of the canonical gospels agree that Jesus died at this time and the fact is significant to all of them. John notes that the fact that none of Jesus’ bones were broken is a fulfillment of that requirement of the Passover lamb (John 19:36). He also calls Jesus “the Lamb of God” (1:29). Paul explicitly calls Jesus “our Passover lamb” (1 Cor 5:7). The mention of the feast in Gos. Pet. 2:5 does not bring any theological import into the crucifixion story other than what is already commonly held in the early church, but the mention does place Gos. Pet. in that same tradition.

In addition to the reference to Feast of Unleavened Bread, Crossan points out that “the phrase ‘their feast’ may already be an allusion to Amos 8:9-10 and its threat ‘I will turn your feasts into mourning.’” He sees links to Amos 8 throughout Gos. Pet. (cf. 5:15a, 18; 6:22; 7:25; 8:28). We will return to that discussion when we come to Gos. Pet. 5:15.

“And having taken the Lord they pushed him, running.” Gos. Pet. 3:6

Crossan says there is a possible allusion in Gos. Pet. 3:6 to Psalm 117:13 LXX: “I was pushed hard, so that I was falling (ὁσθεὶς ἀνετράπην τοῦ πεσεῖν).” The only semantic connection with Gos. Pet. 3:6 is the word ὠθέω. At the same time, the fact that Psalm 118 was regarded as a prophecy of Christ by the early church (see, e.g., Matt 21:9, 42; 23:39; Mark 11:9; 12:10f; Luke 13:35; 19:38; 20:17; Acts 4:11; Eph 2:20; Heb 13:6; 16 Crossan, 104-105.
1 Pet 2:4-6) increases the likelihood that an allusion is intended here. On the other hand, nowhere else in the extant portion of Gos. Pet. are there allusions to this psalm, which makes it difficult to assert an intended allusion too confidently.\footnote{Crossan, without noting the proliferation of interest in this psalm in the early church, says of the possibility of this allusion: “Maybe so, but barely maybe” (144).}

**Son of God, King of Israel, Gos. Pet. 3:6-7**

We could speak of the language that is used to refer to Jesus. Specifically, referring to him as “Son of God” and as “King of Israel” may be an allusion to Psalm 2. In Gos. Pet. 3:6-7, Jesus is “set” on the throne. In Psalm 2, God has set his king in Zion. In Psalm 2 the messiah/king is referred to as God’s Son and is plotted against by those who no longer want to be subject to his authority (though the word “authority” is not used). Once again, however, these words were in common usage in the early church and likely did not originate with Gos. Pet. no matter what dating of the work is assumed, so this may be more of a historical pattern than an intended allusion by the author of Gos. Pet.

**‘Judge justly, king of Israel.’” Gos. Pet. 3:7**

Crossan sees a possible allusion to Isa 58:2 here.\footnote{Crossan, 144-145.} In that passage, Isaiah confronts the hypocrisy of God’s people who ask God for just judgments (αἰτοῦσίν με νῦν κρίσιν δικαίαν) while in reality they are sinful and do not care about righteousness. Strengthening the case for an allusion is the “early Christian interest in Isaiah 58.” Later verses of the chapter are cited in Barn. 3:1-6 and Justin, Dialogue 15:2-6, and verse 2 itself is cited in Justin, 1 Apology 35.4, 6. This last reference is of particular interest. There Justin says, “the same prophet Isaiah, being inspired by the prophetic Spirit, said,
‘. . . They now ask of me judgment, and dare to draw near to God.’ . . . And [just] as the prophet spoke, they dragged [διασόροντες] Him, and set [ἐκάθισαν] Him on the judgment-seat [ἐπὶ βήματος], and said, Judge us [κρῖνον ἡμῖν].’

Crossan notes the similarities between this text and Gos. Pet. 3:6-7: “And having taken the Lord they pushed him and said, ‘Let us drag [σύρομεν] the Son of God, since we have taken hold of his authority [ἐξουσία]. And they put a purple garment on him and seated [ἐκάθισαν] him upon a seat of judgment [ἐπὶ καθέδραν κρίσεως] saying: Judge justly [Δικαίως κρίνε] king of Israel.” Crossan also sees a link here with John 19:11, 13, which speaks of, with Gos. Pet. 3:6, ἐξουσία, and, with Justin, sitting on the judgment seat (ἐκάθισεν ἐπὶ βήματος). In John it is unclear whether Pilate sits on the judgment seat or sets Jesus on the judgment seat. Carson argues that when καθίζω could be understood either transitively or intransitively in a given context, it is more likely to have the intransitive meaning. Furthermore it is unlikely that Pilate would seat Jesus on the judgment seat after the people tell Pilate, “If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.” The more natural way of reading John 19:13 is that Pilate sits down on the judgment seat. At the same time, Pilate’s declaration, “Here is your king” (John 19:14) could suggest that it was Jesus who was sitting on the judgment seat. Which meaning John intended is not important for our purposes, however. Either meaning could be read in the text, and it is likely that Justin read it as referring to Jesus sitting on the judgment seat. He then made clear that he saw this as a fulfillment of Isa 58:2.

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That Justin was dependent on John is certain. He follows John’s ἐκάθισεν ἐπὶ βήμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ verbatim except for making the verb plural since he is speaking of what the Jews and Romans together did to Jesus. Justin also makes the link to Isa 58 (which may not have been in the mind of John) explicit. But what can be said of the reference in Gos. Pet.? It is noteworthy that whereas John and Justin use the word βῆμα, Gos. Pet. uses the words καθέδραν κρίσεως. Also, whereas Justin uses the word διασύρω, Gos. Pet. uses the word σύρω. It is unclear why these differences would be here no matter what direction of influence one assumes. Possibly, Gos. Pet. uses the words καθέδραν κρίσεως because he is able to include the word κρίσις, thereby avoiding an ambiguity that would be present in the word βῆμα, but this is mere speculation. It is also noteworthy that whereas in Justin, the people merely say κρῖνον ἡμῖν, in Gos. Pet. the wording is closer to Isa 58:2: Δικαίως κρίνε, making an allusion to Isa 58:2 here very likely.

“And others standing there spit in his face, and others slapped his cheeks, others pierced him with a reed and some scourged him saying: With such honor let us honor the son of God.” Gos. Pet. 3:9

In Isa 50:6 the suffering servant gave his back to scourges (μάστιγας) and his cheeks (σιαγόνας) to strikes (ῥαπίσματα), and he does not turn his face from disgrace of spittings (ἐμπτυσμάτων). In Gos. Pet. 3:9, people spat (ἐνέπτυον) on Jesus’ face, struck (ἐράπισαν) his cheeks (σιαγόνας) and scourged (ἐμαστίζον) him. Neither of the canonical gospels have this many links with Isa 50. Matt 27:30; Mark 15:19; and Luke 18:32 refer to “spitting,” but not to the other elements. Matt 26:67 and Mark 14:65 speak of the chief priests “spitting” and “striking” Jesus before he is brought to Pilate, but even there the words “cheeks” and “scourging” are not present, so an allusion to Isa 50:6 is not obvious. In Matt 20:19 and Luke 18:33, the word “scourging” occurs as Jesus predicts
his sufferings, but in that account in Matt the other words do not occur and in that account in Luke, “spitting” occurs, but not “striking” or “cheeks.” John 18:22 and 19:3 speak of “striking” and 19:1 speaks of “scourging,” but nowhere in John is Jesus “spit” on. Therefore if Gos. Pet. is dependent on the canonical gospels at this point it adds an OT allusion here that is not evident in the canonical gospels.

In addition, the Gospel of Peter says people “pierced him with a reed.” According to Crossan this is an allusion to Zech 12:10, but this is unlikely since in Zech 12:10 there is no reference to a reed. The word “pierce” (νύσσω) does not occur in the LXX (the OG has κατορχέομαι [“mock”] where the MT has ṣāḵā [“pierce”] and Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotian, and Lucian all have a different word that could be translated “pierce” [ἐκκεντέω]). It is difficult to find any other text this could allude to. The word νύσσω only occurs four times in the LXX (3 Macc 5:14; PsSol 16:4; Sir 22:19 [2x]) and once in the NT (John 19:34). Neither of the LXX passages give any reason for the author to allude to them, and the passage in John speaks of Jesus’ side being pierced by a spear after he has died. Similarly, there are no allusions to the LXX in the word “reed” (κάλαμος). References to a reed occur in Matt 27:29f and Mark 15:19, however. In Mark 15:19 the people were “striking [Jesus’] head with a reed and spitting on him.” The same thing happens in Matt 27:30, but in the preceding verse it says, “weaving a crown out of thorns, they placed [it] upon his head and a reed in his hand” (Matt 27:29, author’s translation). Perhaps the author of Gos. Pet. read this as if the reed pierced Jesus’ hand, but this is mere conjecture. Alternatively Crossan argues based on Barnabas 7:8-9 and Sibylline Oracles 1:373f; 8:296 that there was a tradition of prodding on the scapegoat by poking it with a reed that is being alluded to here.21 His argument here is built on a lot of

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21 Crossan, 151-159.
speculation, though, and there is not enough evidence to propose another allusion in this expression.

“And they brought two evilworkers and crucified the Lord in their midst,” Gos. Pet. 4:10

Isaiah 53:12 says the Suffering Servant “was numbered with the transgressors” (ἐν τοῖς ἀνόμοις ἐλογίσθη). In Luke 22:37, Jesus predicts that this will be fulfilled. Mark 15:28 explicitly says it was fulfilled in Jesus’ being crucified with two robbers, though this is clearly a later addition to Mark as it is not in the earliest manuscripts and Mark nowhere else uses a citation formula such as the one in this verse.22 Tertullian says “two malefactors are crucified around Him, in order that He might be reckoned amongst the transgressors” (Tertullian, Against Marcion 4.42).23 Clearly the early church saw fulfillment of Isa 53:12 in this fact. At the same time, there is no literary reason to suggest that Gos. Pet. is intentionally alluding to Isa 53:12. Whereas Isa 53:12 uses the word ἄνομος, Matthew and Mark use the word λῃστής (Matt 27:38, 44; Mark 15:27), Luke and Gos. Pet. use the word κακοῦργος (Luke 23:33; Gos. Pet. 4:10), and John merely uses the word ἄλλος (John 19:18). As Crossan says, the link to Isa 53:12 “has receded far into the background. No doubt it would still be heard as an echo by those who knew passion prophecy, but the emphasis now shifts to how the thief’s confession of Jesus as ‘saviour of men’ leads to him dying in torment.”24 This link with Isa 53:12, then, is better seen as an echo than an allusion. Gos. Pet. is merely carrying on the tradition of


24 Crossan, 166.
Jesus being crucified with evildoers, without necessarily attempting to draw the reader’s
attention to Isa 53:12. It should be noted that the only other possible allusions to Isa 53
in Gos. Pet. are unlikely to be allusions (see on 2:5 above and the next section on Jesus’
silence).

Something should be said at this point in response to Crossan’s argument that this
is “the first place where . . . the direction of influence is clearly from Cross Gospel to
intercanonical Gospels and not vice versa.” As Crossan observes, Luke’s narrative is
much closer to Gos. Pet. here than the other canonical gospels. We have already seen
evidence that Matthew and Gos. Pet. contain shared material that is not included in the
other gospels as do John and Gos. Pet. Here we have Luke and Gos. Pet. containing
shared material that is not in the other gospels. Which is more likely, that all four
canonical gospels had access to the Cross Gospel but left out many of these details
together or that the author of Gos. Pet. had access to all four canonical gospels and made
use of them and altered them as he saw fit?

“He himself was silent as if having no pain.” Gos. Pet. 4:10

Isaiah 53, which the early church clearly saw as a prediction of Jesus’ death (see,
e.g. Acts 8:32-33 and 1 Pet 2:22-23), says in verse 7, “He was oppressed, and he was
afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a
sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.” There was clearly a
tradition of Jesus being silent as he went to the slaughter, but in the canonical gospels this
theme is taken up more in his trials (Matt 26:63; Mark 14:61; John 19:9) than in his
crucifixion. Neither of the canonicals explicitly comments on Jesus being silent during

25 Crossan 173.
his crucifixion, though in Matt and Mark no words are recorded despite the taunts of the onlookers. In Luke and John, Jesus speaks from the cross but not to his tormentors. In a sense this could be said to be an allusion to Isa 53:7 within the canonical gospels. But Gos. Pet. 4:10 is not speaking about silence in being led to the slaughter, which would indicate lack of protest against ones “shearers.” Gos. Pet. 4:10 is speaking about silence due to no pain. This is not seen in the canonicals (at least not in Matt and Mark, and likely not in Luke), where Jesus twice “crie[s] out with a loud voice” (Matt 27:46, 50 and Mark 15:34, 37; cf. Luke 23:46). Because Isa 53:7 is not suggesting that a sheep before slaughter does not cry out in pain, Gos. Pet. 4:10 should not be seen as an allusion to Isa 53. Rather it is a claim that Jesus either had no pain or was so strong he could act as if he had no pain (either is a valid understanding of ὡς μηδένα πόνον ἔχων).

Here Crossan errs, because he argues that the canonical gospels’ placement of the silence motif in the interrogation moves the silence of the suffering servant farther from the passion and thereby misses the thrust of the Cross Gospel in alluding to Isa 53:7. The fact that Gos. Pet. uses suffering in a different context from Isa 53:7, whereas the canonical gospels use it in the same context suggest the opposite, namely that Gos. Pet. has misapplied the allusion that is present in the canonical gospels.

Casting lots for clothing (Gos. Pet. 4:12)

Here we have another tradition that is shared between the canonical gospels and Gos. Pet. that clearly alludes to Psalm 22:18, which says, “They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.” Crossan notes that Gos. Pet. 4:12 uses

26 Schnabel argues that even the silence of Jesus in the trial should not be seen as an allusion to Isa 53:7 since the allusion is not made explicit (Eckhard J. Schnabel, “The Silence of Jesus: The Galilean Rabbi Who Was More Than a Prophet,” pages 203-57 in Authenticating the Words of Jesus, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans [NTTS 28/1; Leiden: Brill, 1999], 241-245).
a different word for “lot” (λαχμός) than Psalm 22 and the synoptics (κλῆρος). In John it says, “They said to one another, ‘Let us not tear it, but cast lots (λάχωμεν) for it to see whose it shall be.’ This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, ‘They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots (ἔβαλον κλῆρον).’” According to Crossan, it is easy to see why one would change the λαχμός word group to the κλῆρος word group to bring the passion narrative closer into closer agreement with Psalm 22 and therefore the rendering in the *Cross Gospel* is more likely original. But a few observations should be made here. First, if the passion narrative flows out of interpretation of Old Testament prophesies rather than out of historical fact, as Crossan so often argues, why wouldn’t the earliest traditions have used the word that is in the LXX? Furthermore, there is no evidence that John bases the words of the soldiers on *Gos. Pet.* In *Gos. Pet.* 4:12 the soldiers do not speak, and what is said in *Gos. Pet.* 4:12 does not use the verb λαχχάνω as John 19:23 does, but the noun λαχμός, which is appears nowhere in the NT and the LXX. More likely, *Gos. Pet.* uses a noun that was more popular in the second century, whereas John uses a verb that is closely linked with the noun κλῆρος (see, e.g., Acts 1:17). Finally, notice that *Gos. Pet.* 4:12 only has two words in common with Psalm 21:19 LXX: διαιμερίζω (“divide”) and βάλλω (“cast”), whereas John 19:24 copies Psalm 21:19 LXX verbatim and all three synoptics use all four key terms from Psalm 21:19 LXX (διαιμερίζω, ιμάτιον, βάλλω, and κλῆρος). In light of this it can be said that the canonical gospels all intended to make reference to Psalm 22:18, whereas the author of *Gos. Pet.* seems to be echoing this tradition without himself desiring to draw attention to the OT passage.
“Having become indignant with him, they commanded that he not be leg-broken, so that he might die tormented.” Gos. Pet. 4:14

It is important to note here that it is the evilworker rather than Jesus whose legs are not broken (contra John 19:31-33, 36). Crossan argues that John changes the tradition in the Cross Gospel to develop an allusion to Exod 12:10 and Psalm 34:19-20.²⁷ It is unlikely, however, if John had access to a tradition that said that one of the thieves had his legs left unbroken for the purpose of torment that John would have capitalized on that to make a theological point. Crossan is arguing that John would see a historical description given (legs unbroken) for a specific purpose (torment) regarding one particular person (the thief), thought of the Passover lamb not having its legs broken (Exod 12:10), and decided to keep the historical description but change the purpose and the referent because of his own purpose (Passover motif). More likely, John would have made the connection with Exod 12:10 without the help of a tradition that is rather different. Therefore dependence of John upon the so-called Cross Gospel here is unlikely.

Nevertheless, the important question to ask for the purposes of our paper is: Did the author of Gos. Pet. have an allusion in mind when he spoke of the unbrokenness of the legs? According to Crossan, “The best one could answer is a very, very slight maybe.”²⁸ Perhaps, however, we could give a more confident “no.” Obviously there is no allusion to the Passover motif in Gos. Pet., at least not regarding the thief. That is a Johannine allusion and clearly could only relate to Jesus. Psalm 34:19-20 speaks of the Lord delivering the righteous out of his troubles and not letting one bone be broken. The purpose of the legs being left unbroken is not to show God’s deliverance but to increase

²⁷ Crossan, 168.

²⁸ Crossan, 169.
torment. Clearly this is a comment related more closely to the methods of tormenting a crucified individual than to the theme of God’s deliverance in Psalm 34.

“And it was midday, and darkness held all Judea fast.” Gos. Pet. 5:15

The synoptic Gospels (Matt 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44f) and Gos. Pet. agree that there was darkness at noon when Jesus was crucified. As Crossan notes, there are several places where “the motif of the sun’s darkness is associated with cataclysmic or eschatological events.” He specifically refers to Exod 10:22; Isa 13:9-10; Isa 50:3; Joel 2:1-2, 10; and Amos 8:9; but of these texts Amos 8:9 is the most important because “in both Amos 8:9 and Gospel of Peter 5:15 it is a case not just of darkness in daylight but precisely darkness at noon.” Crossan notes that both Irenaeus and Tertullian refer to Amos 8:9-10a as a prophecy of the darkness at noon at Jesus’ crucifixion. If this is an intended allusion, it is interesting to note that Gos. Pet. 5:15 has more semantic links with Amos 8:9 than any of the canonical gospels do. The semantic links are only in the words μεσημβρία (“noon”; the synoptics instead have ἐκτην σκότος [“the sixth hour”]) and συσκοτάζω (“to darken,” Amos 8:9) / σκότος (“darkness,” Gos. Pet. 5:15; Matt 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44). The synoptics also include the phrase ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν γῆν (Matt 27:45) or ἑρ’ ὀλῖν τὴν γῆν (Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44), which is an additional link to Amos 8:9 (συσκοτάσσαι ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ φῶς) as well as to Exod 10:22 (ἐγένετο σκότος γνώφος θύελλα ἐπὶ πᾶσαν γῆν Αἰγύπτου τρεῖς ἡμέρας). Assuming some interdependence between the synoptics and Gos. Pet. (or earlier versions of these works, such as the supposed Cross Gospel), the possibilities are as follows: 1) the Cross Gospel intended an allusion to Amos 8:9, but when the synoptics used Gos. Pet. 5:15 they saw an

29 Crossan, 198.
30 Crossan, 198.
allusion to Exod 10:22 and strengthened it by the addition of the phrase ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, but for some unknown reason they changed μεσημβρία to ἕκτη σκότος; 2) the synoptics intended an allusion to Exod 10:22 and/or Amos 8:9, and Gos. Pet. sought to strengthen the link to Amos 8:9 by changing ἕκτη σκότος to μεσημβρία, but did not see the expression ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς as being important; 3) both are dependent on the same tradition and Gos. Pet. strengthened links to Amos 8:9. It is difficult to make a decision based on this allusion alone, but based on what we have seen elsewhere, option #2 is most likely the case, which makes an intentional allusion to Amos 8:9 here very likely, especially considering that it is alluded to elsewhere in Gos. Pet. (see comments on 7:25 and the brief discussion in the comments on 2:5).  

“And one of them said: Give him gall and vinegar to drink. And having mixed it they gave it to drink.” Gos. Pet. 5:16

Here we have a clear allusion to Psalm 69:21, and this allusion is clearer than in the canonical Gospels. Psalm 69:21 says, “They gave [ἐδωκαν in Ps 68:22 LXX] me poison [χολὴν] for food, and for my thirst [δίψαν] they gave me sour wine [ὄξος] to drink [ἐπότισάν].” Χολὴν only occurs once in the canonical passion narratives, in Matt 27:34: “They offered [ἐδωκαν] him wine to drink, mixed with gall [χολὴν], but when he tasted it, he would not drink it.” Fourteen verses later Matthew introduces sour wine (ὄξος) into the picture and also uses the word ποτίζω. Mark contains the equivalent of both accounts, but in 15:23 it uses the word οἶνος instead of ὄξος. This leads Crossan to suggest that Mark followed the Cross Gospel but possibly did not recognize the allusion to Psalm 69 by “break[ing] it into two separate drinks and us[ing] them to frame the entire crucifixion process” and by using a different word for wine. Matthew then brings

31 The other allusion in Gos. Pet. 5:15 is dealt with under 2:5b, which is almost identical.
this closer to Psalm 69 in his adaptation of Mark but is still not as close as the *Cross Gospel* (as has been noted he has four semantic links between two verses that are fourteen verses apart from one another; *Gos. Pet.* has five semantic links all in the same verse). Luke only mentions the ὀξός. John has Jesus saying, “I thirst [διψῶ],” after which he is offered ὀξός. Whatever one postulates for the direction of influence between the canonical gospels and *Gos. Pet.*, it is clear that the author of *Gos. Pet.* intended an allusion here to Psalm 69. Either he was influenced by the canonical gospels and made the allusion more clear or he (or his source) initiated the allusion and the canonical gospels in their rewording weakened the allusion (which would be remarkable because Matt strengthens it in comparison to Mark, but why not go as far as the *Cross Gospel* if he has access to such a work?). A third option is that there is no dependence either direction. It is noteworthy that John has repeatedly quoted Psalm 69 in the chapters leading up to the passion (Ps 69:9 in John 2:17; Ps 69:4 in John 15:25; see also the allusion to Ps 69:8 in John 1:11); Luke quotes Ps 69:25 in Acts 1; and Paul also quotes this Psalm twice (Ps 69:22 in Rom 11:9f and Ps 69:9 in Rom 15:3). The fact that this Psalm was so heavily utilized by the early church suggests that it is unlikely that a reference as clear as the one in *Gos. Pet. 5:15* would be missed by those using that text as a source. The evidence seems point in the direction opposite of the one Crossan argues for. Instead of the so-called *Cross Gospel* making this allusion clear and the synoptics muddying it, it is more likely that *Gos. Pet.* has built from the canonical traditions, seen how closely Ps 69:21 is lived out by Jesus in the crucifixion account, and brought his text to more closely match that of Psalm 68:22 LXX.
“And they fell.” Gos. Pet. 5:18b

Crossan sees here an allusion to Isa 59:10. Gos. Pet. 5 has already spoken of the darkness (σκότος) at noon (μεσημβρία). Here the author speaks of falling (πίπτω). All three elements are present in Isa 59:10. In Isa 59, the people defile their hands with blood (59:3), and they deceive in order to commit sin. The result of this is darkness at noon and stumbling (59:9-10). When the Lord saw that “there was no one to intercede[,] then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him” (59:16). God then promises to repay his adversaries “according to their deeds” (59:18), but to those who turn from transgression “a Redeemer will come to Zion” (59:20; cf. Rom 11:26-27), and God will put his words in their mouth and so light rather than darkness will come upon these people (60:1-3). There is certainly sufficient reason for Gos. Pet. to allude to this text, and the presence of an allusion to Isa 58 in Gos. Pet. 3:7 makes this a probable allusion.

“My power, power, you have forsaken me!” Gos. Pet. 5:19a

Jesus’ last words in Gos. Pet. 5:19 clearly parallel his last words in Matt 27:46 and Mark 15:34, where there is a clear allusion to Psalm 22:1. Psalm 21:2 LXX reads: Ὁ θεὸς ὁ θεός μου, πρόσχες μοι. Neither Matt, Mark, nor Gos. Pet. has the word προσέχω. This would suggest that they were not seeking to match the LXX text. Both Matt and Mark give an Aramaic original. One possibility is that Mark gives the Aramaic of what Jesus actually said (which would have matched an Aramaic version of Psalm 22:1) and then offers his own (or his source’s) translation of it rather than a direct citation of Psalm 21:2 LXX. Gos. Pet., however, does not offer an Aramaic original. Matt and Luke use the verb ἐγκαταλείπω. Gos. Pet. uses the verb καταλείπω. Most likely Gos. Pet. is

32 Crossan, 220.
dependent on the canonical tradition and changes the word “God” to “power” either as a
euphemism or to make a theological point, but in doing so, the author moves the text
farther from the wording of Psalm 22. It should also be noted that Gos. Pet. forms this as
a statement rather than a question. There are two possibilities: 1) Gos. Pet. has priority
and Mark chose to change Jesus’ words to bring them in line with Psalm 22, but in doing
so he supplied an Aramaic equivalent and a (his own?) translation of that expression into
Greek; or 2) Mark has priority and Gos. Pet. altered the question to a statement about
Jesus’ power leaving him (perhaps to introduce Docetism?), thereby losing the
connection to Psalm 22. The latter seems more likely to be the case, which would mean
there is no OT allusion in Gos. Pet. here.

“He was taken up.” Gos. Pet. 5:19b

The word ἀναλαμβάνω (“take up,” Gos. Pet. 5:19) does not occur in the canonical
passion narratives, but it occurs in Mark 16:19; Acts 1:2, 11, 22; and 1 Tim 3:16 in
reference to Jesus’ ascension. In some of these cases there may be an allusion to or echo
of 2 Kings 2:10-11, where Elijah is taken up into heaven (esp. in Acts 1), however in
Gos. Pet. there are no other links to the 2 Kings passage to suggest that an allusion is
intended here.

“And then they pulled out the nails from the hands of the Lord.” Gos. Pet. 6:21

Crossan asks at this point why only the hands of the Lord are mentioned as having
been nailed to the cross. His suggestion is that later Christian interpolation linked the

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33 So J. Rendel Harris, A Popular Account of the Newly Recovered Gospel of St Peter
(London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1893), 35; cf. J. Armitage Robinson and Montague Rhodes James, The
Gospel According to Peter and the Revelation of Peter: Two Lectures on the Newly Recovered Fragments,
but that the original *Cross Gospel* had only his hands being nailed as an allusion to Exod 17:11-12 and Isa 65:2. The fact, however, that the stretching out of Jesus’ hands is not mentioned in *Gos. Pet.* is strong evidence against an allusion here. Furthermore, unlike Psalm 22, Exod 17 and Isa 65 do not have contextual links to the passion of the messiah. When the NT alludes to OT passages, it often does so with passages that have significant import for the NT message (e.g., the Suffering Servant passages in Isaiah, the royal Psalms, the new covenant passages in Jeremiah, etc.). Psalm 22 speaks of the suffering and vindication of God’s anointed king, which Jesus is reenacting to a greater extent in the passion. There really is no reason to allude to Exod 17 and Isa 65 within the passion narrative, and there is not a semantic warrant for it.

Furthermore, Crossan’s suggestion that the effort to link the passion with Psalm 22 was a later interpolation is highly unlikely, given the many quotations of and allusions to Psalm 22 in the NT (Ps 22:1 in Matt 27:46 and Mark 15:34; Ps 22:7 in Matt 27:39-43 and Mark 15:29-32 and Luke 23:35f; Ps 22:15 in John 19:28; Ps 22:18 in Matt 27:35; and Luke 23:34 and John 19:24; Ps 22:21 in 2 Tim 4:17; Ps 22:22 in Heb 2:12; and Ps 22:29 in Php 2:10). Therefore, if Crossan is correct to suggest that the passion narrative grew out of the OT Scriptures, one would expect that the piercing of the hands and feet in such an important Davidic Psalm of suffering and vindication would have been discovered rather early. More likely still is that the piercing of hands and feet is a historical reality that matches exactly what David has described in Ps 22:16. Either way it is clear that there is no intended allusion in *Gos. Pet. 6:21.*
“Then the sun shone and it was found to be the ninth hour.” Gos. Pet. 6:22

Crossan sees in Gos. Pet. 6:22 a possible allusion to Zech 14:7, where Zechariah speaks of a final war where Jerusalem is defeated and the women raped and the people flee, and then God comes and all his holy ones with him, and “there shall be no light, cold or frost. And there shall be a unique day, which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but at evening time there shall be light [and] living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem. . . . And the LORD will be king over all the earth.” Clearly Zechariah is speaking of something that the author of Gos. Pet. would not have seen as fulfilled in the crucifixion. Furthermore none of the words in Zech 14:7 are used in Gos. Pet. 6:22, and the ninth hour is hardly “evening.” Therefore an allusion to Zech 14:7 here is very highly unlikely.

The Mourning of Gos. Pet. 7:25

After Jesus dies, Gos. Pet. 7:25 tells us, “Then the Jews and the elders and the priests, knowing what kind of evil they had done to themselves, began to mourn and say: Woe for our sins! The judgment and the end of Jerusalem are at hand!” Crossan sees a number of allusions here:

the general motif of darkness and mourning comes from Amos 8:9-10, the specifics of “great evil they had done to themselves” and “Woe” come from Isaiah 3:9b, the “mourning,” with κόπτω, comes from Zechariah 12:10-12, and “the judgment and the end of Jerusalem is drawn nigh (ἡγγίσεν ἡ κρίσις καὶ τὸ τέλος Ἱεροσολύμων)” comes from Ezekiel 9:1 (ἡγγικεν ἡ ἐκδίκησις τῆς πόλεως) and especially from Isaiah 41:21 (ἐγγίζει ἡ κρίσις υμῶν).34

While Crossan is correct to see another element of the Amos 8:9-10 allusions brought in (mourning), and possibly also the reference to Zech 12, the other allusions are

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34 Crossan, 257.
less likely. Zech 12 clearly has theological import for this case, and it is cited in John 19:37, though the part of the verse with the word κόπτω is not cited there. Therefore we could consider this a likely allusion, though this is not a new allusion drawn by Gos. Pet. John more clearly draws on the text at an earlier date (assuming the priority of John has been demonstrated in the other passages we have dealt with). Isaiah 3:9 may contain the word οὐαί, like Gos. Pet. 7:25, but in Isa 3:9 the people are “proclaim[ing] their sin like Sodom [and] not hid[ing] it,” whereas in Gos. Pet. 7:25 the people are feeling remorse over their sin. Furthermore, alluding to Gos. Pet. 7:25 does not really serve a purpose here. It is more likely an echo of a general theme of woes being spoken over those who justly deserve them. Similarly, the idea of judgment drawing near for Jerusalem is more likely an echo of a common theme than an allusion to a particular text.

Other Possible Allusions

After Gos. Pet. 7:25, it is difficult to find allusions in this text. One could speak of the reference in 8:30 to three days and the possible OT allusions in a three-day period between Jesus’ death and resurrection (Hos 6:2? Jonah 1:17?), but this is a tradition that most certainly predates Gos. Pet. (cf. 1 Cor 15:3), and Gos. Pet. does not seem to place special significance upon this. One could speak of the heavens opening in 9:36, but this is almost certainly a mere echo of OT language (e.g., Ps 78:23; Isa 24:18; Ezek 1:1) without any allusion to a particular text intended (cf. Matt 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:21; John 1:51; Acts 7:56; 10:11; Rev 4:1; 19:11). One could speak of the two men coming down from heaven in 9:36 as an allusion to Moses and Elijah (cf. Matt 17:3; Mark 9:4; Luke 9:30) or to a text where angels come from heaven (Gen 28:12; etc.), but again there seem to be no indications that the author intended to make an allusion here. More likely,
the author of Gos. Pet. has taken Matthew’s reference to an angel descending from heaven (Matt 28:2) and John’s reference to “two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain” (John 20:12), and spoken of “two men coming down from [heaven] having much light.” The heads of these men reaching to heaven is apocalyptic imagery (cf. Rev 10:2), but probably does not allude to any particular text. The reference in Gos. Pet. 10:41 to Christ “preach[ing] to those who are sleeping” is interesting. There are clear links to 1 Pet 3:19, though in 1 Pet Christ preaches “to the spirits in prison.” The 1 Peter passage has generated much debate, but it is best understood in light of 1 Enoch 12-16, where the “spirits” who lusted after women in the days of Noah are “imprisoned all the days of eternity” (1 Enoch 14:4).35 Perhaps Gos. Pet. 10:41 takes up the language of 1 Pet 3:19 and places the event in the passion narrative. This would serve the purpose of explaining something in 1 Peter within the life of Jesus while also tying the author of Gos. Pet. to the Petrine tradition. Either way, there does not seem to be an OT allusion here so much as an explanation of a text in 1 Peter. The final place we could discuss a possible OT allusion is in Gos. Pet. 11:48, where the people would rather fall into the hands of God than be stoned by men. One might argue that this is an allusion to 2 Sam 24:14, where David is judged for taking a census and says, “Let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into the hand of man” (cf. 1 Chr 21:13). David’s reason for wanting to fall into the hands of God here is very different from that of the elders, though, and it does not seem like the author of Gos. Pet. would have any reason to allude to this passage.

35 Karen H. Jobes, 1 Peter (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 242-245.
Conclusion

Our study has revealed a number of likely OT allusions in the Gospel of Peter. There is certainly an echo of Deut 21:1-9 and Ps 26:6 at Gos. Pet. 1:1, but it is unclear if the allusion is intentional. Whether or not it is, the purpose is clearly to absolve Pilate of all guilt in Jesus’ death and further condemn the Jewish religious leadership. There is a more clear allusion to Deut 21:22-23; Josh 8:29; 10:26-27 in 2:5 (=5:9). Perhaps the purpose of this allusion is to show that the people were quick to obey the law (and even stressed in 5:9 over the thought that maybe they had been disobedient to it) but it still did not lead them to see the messiah or do what is right regarding him. There are also a number of allusions to Amos 8:9-10 (Gos. Pet. 2:5; 5:15; 7:25). These are all related to the darkness that came upon the land as a sign that “the end has come upon my people Israel” (Amos 8:2). Isa 59:10 is likely alluded to in Gos. Pet. 5:18 in the same sense. Two other Isaiah allusions (Isa 58:2 in Gos. Pet. 3:7 and Isa 50:6 in Gos. Pet. 3:9) are made based on the details of Jesus being tormented before his crucifixion, identifying him more with Isaiah prophecies that are not referenced in the canonical gospels. Zech 12:10 may be alluded to, which would, with John, identify Jesus with Yahweh and speak to the general dismay of those who have rejected the messiah. And the allusion to Psalm 69 that is present in the canonical gospels is made clearer to present Jesus as the royal sufferer of the psalms. We see from this that the author of Gos. Pet. used the Old Testament to highlight Jesus as the fulfillment of Scripture (the one prophesied in Isaiah and the new David) and to highlight the culpability of the Jewish people (Amos 8:9-10) despite their strong concern for not breaking the law (Deut 21:22-23). Gos. Pet. never quotes the OT verbatim but clearly alludes to these texts that serve its purpose.
Another thing to observe in closing is where in *Gos. Pet.* the OT allusions occur. We have allusions at 1:1; 2:5; 3:7, 9; 5:15, 16, 18; 7:25. All the allusions occur in relation to the trial and the crucifixion of Christ. It is remarkable that where *Gos. Pet.* differs in content from the canonical gospels it does not add OT allusions, though many could certainly be made when speaking of Christ’s resurrection and subsequent glory. It is difficult to say with confidence why this is the case but one possibility is that the author has inherited traditions that speak of allusions to Deut 21; Ps 69; Isa 50; 58; 59 and Zech 12, but where he has strayed from these traditions and been most creative (e.g., in his discussion of the resurrection) he does not add his own allusions. In other words, the OT allusions we find in *Gos. Pet.* are the ones that have been handed down from generation to generation within Christian communities, but the material that is lacking in OT allusions is the newer material that does not come from an earlier source. This suggestion is tentative, but it may be the best way to currently handle the data we have available to us.
Bibliography


