

Old Testament Quotes in Hebrews

Many argue against the Pauline authorship of Hebrews because of the way the author introduced his quotes from the Old Testament. It is argued that the Pauline method is to use “It is written,” whereas the author of Hebrews uses “He/God/the Holy Spirit says.” Go [here](#) for an example of this line of argument. In this video George Guthrie says, “The author [of Hebrews] does seem to use the Old Testament a bit differently than Paul. Specifically he introduces his quotations differently than Paul. What’s the most common way that Paul introduces a quotation? ‘It is written’ – *gegraptai*. But the author of Hebrews uses forms of *legein* – ‘to speak or to say.’ ‘God says ...,’ ‘the Holy Spirit says ...’ And this is a common introduction that was used in sermons in the Greek-Jewish synagogue sermons. So the author of Hebrews uses “He says” rather than “It is written” as his most common way of introducing a passage.”

The evidence from Paul belies this assertion. Note these examples taken from the *SBL Greek New Testament* and the *NASB*.

- **1 Cor. 6:16**

ἢ οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ὁ κολλώμενος τῇ πόρνῃ ἐν σῶμα ἐστίν; ἔσονται γάρ ῥησιν οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν·

Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body *with her*? For **He says**, “THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.”

- **1 Cor. 15:27**

πάντα γὰρ ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ· ὅταν δὲ εἶπη ὅτι πάντα ὑποτέτακται, δῆλον ὅτι ἐκτὸς τοῦ ὑποτάξαντος αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα·

For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when **He says**, “All things are put in subjection,” it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him.

- **2 Cor. 6:2**

λέγει γάρ· καιρῷ δεκτῷ ἐπήκουσά σου καὶ ἐν ἡμέρα σωτηρίας ἐβοήθησά σοι· ἰδοὺ νῦν καιρὸς εὐπρόσδεκτος, ἰδοὺ νῦν ἡμέρα σωτηρίας·

for **He says**,

“AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU,
AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU.”

Behold, now is “THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,” behold, now is “THE DAY OF SALVATION” —

- **Gal. 3:16**

τῷ δὲ Ἀβραὰμ ἐρρέθησαν αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ. οὐ λέγει· καὶ τοῖς σπέρμασιν ὡς ἐπὶ πολλῶν ἀλλ’ ὡς ἐφ’ ἑνός· καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου ὃς ἐστὶν χριστός.

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. **He does not say**, “And to seeds,” as *referring* to many, but *rather* to one, “And to your seed,” that is, Christ.

- **Eph. 4:8**

διὸ λέγει· ἀναβὰς εἰς ὕψος ἠχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν, [a]ἔδωκεν δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.

Therefore **it says**,

“WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH,
HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES,
AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.”

a. [Ephesians 4:8](#) Or **He**

- **Eph. 5:14**

πᾶν γὰρ τὸ φανερούμενον φῶς ἐστίν· διὸ **λέγει**· ἐγείρε ὁ καθεύδων καὶ ἀνάστα ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, καὶ ἐπιφάσει σοι ὁ χριστός.

For this reason **it says**,

“Awake, sleeper,
And arise from the dead,
And Christ will shine on you.”

a. [Ephesians 5:14](#) Or **He**

In my book *The Authorship of Hebrews: The Case for Paul*, I listed every one of these examples and suggested they reflect “the preferred rabbinic formula indicating speech rather than writing. Judging from these parallel formulas in Paul, a *nihil obstat* may still apply with regard to the traditional assumption of Pauline authorship” (p. 5).

Finally, in a footnote on the same page, I quote the Greek grammarian Nigel Turner, who says, “This impersonal use of ‘he says’ is quite rabbinical and also Pauline....” (*A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 4). I then concluded that footnote with these words: “That in Hebrews Paul should have more frequently than elsewhere employed *legei*, *eipen*, etc. in introducing OT quotations is altogether consonant with what we may suppose him to have done when addressing Hebrew Christians.”