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CHRIST THE WARRIOR KING: A BIBLICAL, HISTORICAL,  
AND THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DIVINE  
WARRIOR THEME IN CHRISTOLOGY

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by  
Phillip Ross Bethancourt  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

CHRIST THE WARRIOR KING: A BIBLICAL, HISTORICAL,  
AND THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DIVINE  
WARRIOR THEME IN CHRISTOLOGY

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To Cami,  
my love.

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## PREFACE

This dissertation process has been a refining fire, both academically and spiritually. When God called me to ministry in 2002, I never could have imagined the journey he had for me. At every step of the way, he has exceeded my expectations and shown me more grace than I deserve. My family's unwavering support of my call to ministry in general and this dissertation process in particular is one of his greatest encouragements in my life. My father, John, is a role model to me, who has challenged me in this project to persevere and to keep it short (at least I succeeded on one of those fronts). Everything I have learned about productivity, efficiency, and dedication began with my mother, Debbie, who has encouraged me in those areas throughout this writing. My siblings, Justin, Kyle, and Christina, Granny and Papaw, and too many friends to mention have made me think, made me laugh, and made me stay balanced in ways that have only helped this project.

I am most thankful for my wife, Cami, whose unwavering support, encouragement, and sacrifice enabled me to persevere to the end. I am also grateful that I completed this project while my sons Nathan, Lawson, and Weston are too young to even say the word "dissertation" correctly. Cami's parents Lynn and Delores were so kind to open their home in Texas to our family for concentrated writing times, where I wrote over half of this dissertation (inspiration abounds in the Lone Star state!).

I appreciate the opportunities that God has provided for me at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, under the incomparable leadership of Albert Mohler. Words cannot express my gratitude to Russell Moore who has invested his life in me as a teacher, pastor, mentor, friend, and now as a colleague on the faculty and administration. I am thankful for Southern Seminary's world-class faculty, including Thomas Schreiner and Chad Brand who served admirably on this dissertation committee. I also appreciate the careful critique of colleague Gregory Wills and external reader Gregory Boyd. The feedback of these fine scholars certainly sharpened my thinking.

Most of the time spent on this dissertation happened in a closet in the corner of my house, tucked away from the distractions of the world. I pray that, by God's grace, he will take this project and use it to impact evangelical scholarship and, more importantly, the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. May he use it to make us better "soldiers of Christ in truth arrayed?"

Phillip R. Bethancourt

Louisville, Kentucky

December 2011



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: CHRIST THE WARRIOR KING AND CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY

Warfare permeates the pages of the Bible. The blood of conflict and conquest soaks the parchment penned by the apostles and prophets. Yet, what is the purpose of the warfare theme that saturates Scripture? From the earliest stages of historical theology, theologians have recognized the prevalence of warfare as a biblical theme.<sup>1</sup> In contemporary theology, some scholars have focused on the difficult issues of warfare in the Bible such as God's command of Canaanite genocide in the Old Testament.<sup>2</sup> Others have centered their attention on the implications of the warfare motif in Scripture on issues such as military ethics.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, a resurgence of interest in spiritual warfare has grown in contemporary literature.<sup>4</sup> Each of these areas is certainly addressed

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<sup>1</sup>It is outside of the scope of this introduction to address historical treatments of the divine warrior theme in Christology. This analysis will occur in chap. 4. Instead, the purpose of this introduction is to show the contemporary significance of the issue to set the stage for the biblical, historical, and theological analysis that follows.

<sup>2</sup>For more on Canaanite genocide, see Stanley N. Gundry, ed., *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003); Philip D. Stern, *The Biblical Herem: A Window on Israel's Religious Experience*, Brown Judaic Studies 211 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1991).

<sup>3</sup>For examples of attempts to apply the warfare theme to men's ministry, see Stu Weber, *Tender Warrior: Every Man's Purpose, Every Woman's Dream, Every Child's Hope* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 2006); John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010).

<sup>4</sup>Peter T. O'Brien, "Principalities and Powers: Opponents of the Church," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 16, no. 4 (1992): 356; Clinton E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul's Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 170. In this dissertation, when multiple sources are cited consecutively, it indicates that the successive references are closely related to the subject matter addressed in the first one.

by the implications of Scripture’s “warfare worldview.”<sup>5</sup> But does the cosmic conflict seen in the storyline of Scripture address only these theological and ethical implications? Or is it oriented towards something more Christ-centered and Kingdom-focused?

In *The Kingdom of Christ*, Baptist theologian Russell Moore traces the new evangelical consensus on the nature of the kingdom of God. Throughout the book, Moore examines the convergence between dispensationalists and covenant theologians on the nature of the kingdom and explores its implications for eschatology, soteriology and ecclesiology.<sup>6</sup> Moore discusses the seminal influence of the work on the kingdom by scholars like George Eldon Ladd and its implications for evangelical cultural and socio-political engagement as seen in Carl F. H. Henry.<sup>7</sup> During his chapter on soteriology, Moore makes a provocative comment about Gregory Boyd’s articulation of the warfare worldview of Scripture:

If this appropriation of the Kingdom warfare imagery present in Scripture and the Patristic tradition were magnified across the evangelical spectrum, the implications for the worship, evangelism, spirituality, cultural engagement, and internal structures of the churches could be monumental—and perhaps more significant than Henry and his generation’s call for an evangelical renaissance in university education, philosophy, the sciences, and so forth.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Gregory Boyd coined the term warfare worldview and defines it as “that perspective on reality which centers on the conviction that the good and evil, fortunate or unfortunate, aspects of life are to be interpreted largely as the result of good and evil, friendly or hostile, spirits warring against each other and against us.” Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 13. This dissertation offers a slightly modified definition of the phrase; a warfare worldview is a framework for interpreting all of life that is rooted in a recognition of the cosmic conflict that rages between the sovereign divine warrior and his rivals.

<sup>6</sup>For an example of the move toward consensus on the kingdom among dispensationalists, see Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993). For an example of the move toward consensus on the kingdom among covenantalists, see Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002).

<sup>7</sup>Ladd’s influential work on the kingdom is seen in George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974); idem, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959).

<sup>8</sup>Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 107.

Could this concept actually be more significant than Henry's contribution? Henry's ideas shaped twentieth-century evangelical biblical interpretation and socio-political engagement in important ways.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, if Moore's suggestion about the potential significance of additional reflection on kingdom warfare is correct, then it certainly warrants further study. This dissertation seeks to explore the Christ-centered kingdom warfare imagery in biblical and historical theology and reflect on its implications for systematic theology. Thus, it positions itself as an extension of Moore's original project as it seeks to examine this area of further study he identified.

A biblical theology of warfare is most valuable if it is considered in light of Scripture's central theme, the Kingdom, and Scripture's central character, the Christ.<sup>10</sup> Though efforts to identify a unifying theme in Scripture are contested, there is significant theological support for understanding its central motif as the kingdom of God.<sup>11</sup> From the

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<sup>9</sup>Henry's theological contribution to twentieth-century thought is most clearly seen in his *God, Revelation, and Authority* series. Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 6 vols. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999). His most influential work on twentieth-century socio-political engagement is Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947).

<sup>10</sup>This dissertation uses Ladd's definition of the kingdom: "The Kingdom of God is God's redemptive reign. It is God's conquest through the person of Christ over His enemies: sin, Satan and death." Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 95. In other words, the kingdom is the redemptive reign of the divine warrior manifested as God's people in God's place under God's rule, which culminates in the rulership of Christ as warrior king. Graeme Goldsworthy notes, "The entire biblical story, despite its great diversity of forms and foci, is consistent in its emphasis on the reign of God over his people in the environment he creates for them." Graeme Goldsworthy, "Kingdom of God," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. Brian S. Rosner et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 620. Though Frame resists the notion that there is a central motif in Scripture, he adds helpful thoughts about how central themes perspectively relate to Christ in such a way that they enlighten rather than exclude other concepts. John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God, A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1987), 192–94.

<sup>11</sup>As Vaughan Roberts adds, "Any unifying theme that is used to help us to see how the Bible fits together must arise out of Scripture itself, rather than being imposed upon it; and it must be broad enough to allow each part to make its own distinct contribution. The theme of the kingdom of God satisfies both requirements." Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Story-Line of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 20–21. It is outside the scope of this dissertation to make a defense of the kingdom as the central theme of biblical theology. Instead, the impact on a kingdom-oriented understanding of the divine warrior theme will be its focus. For treatments of redemptive history that

moment of Satan’s fall to the inception of the new heavens and the new earth, the kingdom of darkness operates in opposition to this kingdom of light. Therefore, throughout the storyline of Scripture, kingdom implies warfare.<sup>12</sup> The kingdom of Christ is advanced through conflict. Consequently, the kingdom cannot be understood apart from warfare, and warfare cannot be understood apart from the kingdom.

Though there is an emerging evangelical consensus on the nature of the kingdom, the next step is to pursue agreement on the Christocentric nature of kingdom warfare. It is not enough for evangelicals to agree on the prominence and nature of the kingdom. If that is where the consensus concludes, then the term “kingdom” can be infused with a variety of theological meanings. It can be co-opted as an umbrella slogan to describe anything from denominational campaigns to missional strategies to social justice advocacy.<sup>13</sup> Since kingdom implies warfare, developing a consensus on the “Christobellian” nature of kingdom warfare will sharpen contemporary evangelical discussions of the kingdom.<sup>14</sup>

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demonstrate the centrality of the kingdom in biblical theology, see Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*; Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002); Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003); Michael W. Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).

<sup>12</sup>Ladd recognizes this necessary connection between kingdom and warfare in his definition of the kingdom: “The Kingdom of God is the redemptive rule of God in Christ, destroying his enemies and by implication bringing to his people the blessing of his reign.” George Eldon Ladd, *The Last Things: An Eschatology for Laymen* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 107.

<sup>13</sup>Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 67; Russell D. Moore, “Theology Bleeds: Why Theological Vision Matters for the Great Commission, and Vice-Versa,” in *The Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God’s Mandate in Our Time*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Adam Greenway (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 104.

<sup>14</sup>I am originating the term Christobellian based on the Greek word for Christ (Χριστός) and the Latin word for warfare (*bellum*) to emphasize the Christ-oriented nature of warfare throughout the storyline of Scripture.

Yet, examining the relationship between the themes of kingdom warfare and Christology raises a host of challenging questions. What is the nature of this warfare as described in Scripture? How can Christ be both a warrior king and a prince of peace? How can the violent warfare of the Old Testament be reconciled with the non-violent strands of the New Testament? Is the divine warrior theme reflected in the Christology of the church throughout the centuries? What implications does a divine warrior Christology carry for the practice of systematic theology? This dissertation seeks to address these complicated issues and more as it examines the connection between the divine warrior theme and Christology in Scripture, history and theology.

### **Thesis**

This dissertation argues that the divine warrior theme is a central Christological feature in both biblical and historical theology, which carries significant implications for contemporary issues in systematic theology. To explain this thesis, this section will give a brief description of each aspect of it: (1) the divine warrior theme, (2) Christology, (3) biblical theology, (4) historical theology, and (5) systematic theology.

First, the view of God as warrior king is central to the warfare imagery of Scripture. Tremper Longman and Daniel Reid explain, “One important and pervasive metaphor of relationship is the picture of God as a warrior, commonly referred to in secondary literature as the divine-warrior theme.”<sup>15</sup> Scripture simply displays the pattern of God as divine warrior, in his holiness and justice, battling with his enemies in order to establish his kingdom for his glory. Surrounding nations in the Ancient Near East (ANE)

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<sup>15</sup>Tremper Longman and Daniel G. Reid, *God Is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 16.

often depicted warfare in ways that are similar to the divine warrior theme described in Scripture.<sup>16</sup> Yet, what is fundamentally unique about Scripture is its portrayal of Christ himself as divine warrior, which this dissertation will seek to demonstrate.

Second, this project focuses its attention on the divine warrior theme in Christology.<sup>17</sup> It suggests that the pervasive divine warrior motif seen in Scripture and tradition confirms that a central component of Christology is the portrayal of Christ as warrior king. Specifically, it seeks to show how Scripture demonstrates Christ as a warrior king through its Old Testament messianic expectation as well as his (1) incarnational ministry, (2) victorious substitutionary death and resurrection, and (3) eschatological conquest. In particular, it primarily focuses on that component of Christology commonly referred to as the work of Christ. By considering the divine warrior theme a central component of Christology, this dissertation asserts that it is featured throughout Scripture and tradition and sheds light on current issues in both the person and work of Christ.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Boyd claims, “For though the biblical authors were divinely inspired, they were nevertheless children of their own culture. We cannot, therefore, adequately understand their views until we have set them against their background or milieu.” Boyd, *God at War*, 74.

<sup>17</sup>For contemporary treatments on the person and work of Christ, see Donald MacLeod, *The Person of Christ*, *Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998); Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ*, *Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993); Millard J. Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996); Robert L. Reymond, *Jesus Divine Messiah: The New and Old Testament Witness* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2003).

<sup>18</sup>By regarding the divine warrior theme as central to Christology, this dissertation does not suggest that it is the only central dimension. Instead, it is perspectively related to other key aspects so that it does not exclude them but allows for fresh insights from a particular viewpoint. As Frame states, “Christianity has one center (Christ) that can be expounded in many ways.” Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 193.

Third, biblical theology has blossomed into a hot topic in contemporary theology.<sup>19</sup> A growing number of scholars contend that it is most consistent with the structure of redemptive history to see the kingdom as the central theme of biblical theology.<sup>20</sup> Throughout the storyline of Scripture, the kingdom is advanced through conflict. From Genesis to Revelation, Scripture resounds with the echoes of warfare. Because kingdom warfare is such a pervasive motif, a biblical theology approach is essential to understand it adequately. A biblical theology of warfare must understand spiritual conflict in the textual, epochal, and canonical horizons of redemptive history.<sup>21</sup> Throughout the storyline of Scripture, both continuity and discontinuity are evident in this theme.<sup>22</sup> The conflict-oriented nature of Scripture is the direct result of a warfare worldview that is not only consistently held by the human authors of the Bible but also decisively maintained by its divine author—the divine warrior himself. As a result, a biblical theology of warfare adequately accounts for the conflict-oriented nature of both

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<sup>19</sup>Carson succinctly defines biblical theology as “the theology of the whole Bible, descriptively and historically considered.” D. A. Carson, “Current Issues in Biblical Theology: A New Testament Perspective,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 5 (1995): 20. Rosner offers a more extended definition: “Biblical theology may be defined as theological interpretation of Scripture in and for the church. It proceeds with historical and literary sensitivity and seeks to analyse and synthesize the Bible’s teaching about God and his relations to the world on its own terms, maintaining sight of the Bible’s overarching narrative and Christocentric focus.” Brian S. Rosner, “Biblical Theology,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. Brian S. Rosner et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 10.

<sup>20</sup>For treatments that show the centrality of the kingdom in Scripture, see n. 10 of this chapter.

<sup>21</sup>These terms come from Richard Lints, who reframes the work of Edmund Clowney on the three interpretive horizons of the biblical text: “the immediate context of the book (or passage), the context of the period of revelation in which the book (or passage) falls, and the context of the entirety of revelation. I will be referring to these as the textual horizon, the epochal horizon, and the canonical horizon, respectively.” Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 293. See also Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 16.

<sup>22</sup>Longman and Reid comment that the results of a biblical theology of warfare “are an illuminating study in the continuity and discontinuity between the different epochs of divine revelation, most notably between the Old and New Testaments.” Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 16–17.

the content of the biblical data and the perspective of the biblical authors. A biblical theology of warfare displays the warfare worldview of the Bible not only as it relates to the Kingdom of Christ but also as it integrates with the storyline of Scripture.

Fourth, historical theology offers a window into how theologians throughout church history have discussed how the divine warrior theme connects with Christology. Since the publication of Gustaf Aulén's *Christus Victor*, scholars have taken an interest in articulations of the divine warrior theme in church history, especially as it relates to the atonement.<sup>23</sup> Historical theology sheds light on two aspects of the current project. First, it assesses whether theologians have actually recognized a relationship between the divine warrior theme and Christology. Second, it discusses how theologians have understood this relationship. Establishing the presence, prominence and purpose of the divine warrior theme in historical Christologies illumines both the biblical data on the topic and the systematic implications of the subject.

Fifth, this dissertation defines systematic theology as applying the storyline of Scripture to the storyline of life in light of the storyline of history.<sup>24</sup> Embracing a biblical theology of warfare carries profound consequences for evangelical theology today. Why? It enables theological reflections to be grounded in the Christ-centered, kingdom-oriented development of redemptive history. Therefore, the evaluation of the divine warrior theme in biblical and historical theology can yield new insights on contemporary issues in

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<sup>23</sup>Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement*, trans. A. G. Hebert (New York: Macmillan, 1931).

<sup>24</sup>For more on systematic theology as application, see Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 81–85.



systematic theology.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, it reveals that the practice of systematic theology itself is an act of kingdom warfare.

## **Background**

To understand the relevance of this dissertation, it is essential to consider contemporary approaches to warfare in Scripture. By providing the context of current discussion, it will confirm that a Christ-centered, Kingdom-oriented approach to the Bible's warfare worldview is a helpful contribution to the literature on the subject. Contemporary approaches to warfare in general and the divine warrior theme in particular coalesce into five categories.

First, historical-critical Old Testament scholars initiated the resurgence of interest in the biblical theme of warfare with an emphasis on the religious and cultic components of "holy war" for the nation of Israel. These theologians based their approach to OT warfare upon the critical methodology developed by Julius Wellhausen.<sup>26</sup> Chief among these adherents was Gerhard Von Rad, who explains their understanding of OT warfare in this way: "Thus, we can indeed consider holy war as an eminently cultic understanding—that is, prescribed and sanctioned by fixed, traditional, sacred rites and observances."<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, the treatment of warfare in the OT can only be rightly understood through a thorough consideration of the theological agenda of later redactors.

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<sup>25</sup>For more on how biblical theology relates to systematic theology, see D. A. Carson, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. Brian S. Rosner et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 89–104; Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 207–14.

<sup>26</sup>Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1994).

<sup>27</sup>Gerhard Von Rad, *Holy War in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 51.

Because of the historical-critical methodology, a Christocentric approach to kingdom warfare is virtually absent from this approach.

Second, Old Testament theologians rooted in the Harvard University tradition continued the study of Israelite warfare through a history of religions approach that centered on comparisons with the divine military practices of other nations in the Ancient Near East (ANE). This movement was birthed by F. M. Cross and continued by his students.<sup>28</sup> Both the actual events of OT warfare and their subsequent recording in Scripture bear evidence of influence from surrounding nations. These OT theologians reduce their treatment of warfare merely to a comparison of parallel realities in the military practices of other ANE cultures. As a result, the history of religions approach circumvents the Christ-centered conflict that characterizes the canon.

Third, Christian ethicists have discussed the biblical theme of warfare to develop their views on military ethics. In contemporary literature, this interest exploded in light of the world wars during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>29</sup> On the one hand, just war advocates contend that the Bible provides the proper protocol for limited military engagement.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, pacifists propound that the scope of Scripture tempers the violence of the OT in such a way that bloodshed in general and military conflict in

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<sup>28</sup>Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973); Patrick D. Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

<sup>29</sup>For instance, H. G. Enelow defended the Bible's restricted approval of military conflict in light of the Great War. See H. G. Enelow, *The War and the Bible* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919).

<sup>30</sup>A recent, thorough treatment of just war theory can be found in J. Daryl Charles and Timothy J. Demy, *War, Peace, and Christianity: Questions and Answers from a Just-War Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010). For a compilation of historical approaches to military ethics, see Arthur F. Holmes, *War and Christian Ethics: Classic and Contemporary Readings on the Morality of War*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

particular are not viable options for Christians.<sup>31</sup> The irony of these ethicists is that the same biblical data on OT warfare can be harnessed to reach diametrically opposed conclusions on military protocol. Particularly in the case of pacifists, a variation of a Christ-centered approach is taken as they leverage the ethics and teaching of Jesus to substantiate their appeal to non-violence.<sup>32</sup>

Fourth, spiritual warfare advocates focus on the call to spiritual conflict found throughout the New Testament.<sup>33</sup> Contemporary writings on spiritual warfare break down into three categories.<sup>34</sup> First, liberal Protestants such as Walter Wink have identified the principalities and powers as impersonal, structural forces in society that must be overcome through spiritual and political activism.<sup>35</sup> Second, strategic-level spiritual warfare practitioners such as C. Peter Wagner correctly consider the principalities and powers to be personal, spiritual forces of evil but wrongly embrace a powers-centered

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<sup>31</sup>The pacifist approach is most staunchly defended by Mennonites such as Millard Lind and John Howard Yoder. See Millard C. Lind, *Yahweh Is a Warrior: The Theology of Warfare in Ancient Israel* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1980); John Howard Yoder, *The War of the Lamb: The Ethics of Nonviolence and Peacemaking* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009).

<sup>32</sup>This Christ-oriented pacifism was clearly seen in Iraq War protests asking, “Who would Jesus bomb?”

<sup>33</sup>Blocher suggests, “The emphasis in recent years on spiritual warfare would appear to add fresh relevance to the interpretation of the atonement in terms of struggle, conquest, and triumph.” Henri Blocher, “Agnus Victor: The Atonement as Victory and Vicarious Punishment,” in *What Does It Mean to Be Saved? Broadening Evangelical Horizons of Salvation*, ed. John G. Stackhouse (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 68.

<sup>34</sup>This taxonomy of spiritual warfare approaches is based on Landon Coleman’s dissertation on spiritual warfare and its implications for North American missions strategy. Landon Coleman, “Principalities and Powers: A Historical and Biblical Study with Strategic Application in North American Churches” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010).

<sup>35</sup>Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); idem, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); idem, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986). For a critique of Wink’s mythologization, see Boyd, *God at War*, 274–75. For a precursor to the approach that Wink later popularized, see G. B. Caird, *Principalities and Powers: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956).

response focused on defeating territorial spirits.<sup>36</sup> Third, conservative evangelicals such as Clinton Arnold also describe the principalities and powers as personal, spiritual forces of evil, but in contrast to Wagner, focus their project on eschatological victory to maintain a Christ-centered response.<sup>37</sup> Beyond these approaches among American treatments of spiritual warfare, many theologians from the global south would fit into the group of scholars whose interest in warfare centers on spiritual conflict.<sup>38</sup> Though Christ plays a role in each one of these approaches to spiritual warfare, it varies from position to position.<sup>39</sup>

Fifth, an evangelical approach to the study of the divine warrior motif in Scripture recently began a limited engagement with warfare issues based on biblical theology in light of the redemptive storyline of the Bible. After exploring issues related to kingdom warfare individually in previous projects, Tremper Longman and Daniel Reid combined to write *God is a Warrior*. In this work, they explore the “important and pervasive metaphor” in Scripture that pictures “God as a warrior, commonly referred to

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<sup>36</sup>C. Peter Wagner, ed., *Territorial Spirits: Insights into Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare* (Chichester: Sovereign Word, 1992); C. Peter Wagner, *Confronting the Powers: How the New Testament Church Experienced the Power of Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1996).

<sup>37</sup>Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians, Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians in Light of Its Historical Setting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*. While Arnold’s examination of the powers within the first century context of Ephesians is helpful, he seems to over-emphasize issues related to magic and astrology occurring in Ephesus, especially because he fails to account for the circular nature of Ephesians. For example, see Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 149. Despite this weakness, Arnold is the most helpful resource on the powers in Ephesians in particular and the New Testament in general.

<sup>38</sup>For more on Christianity and spiritual warfare in the global south, see Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 98–127; Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>39</sup>Boyd points out that “the spiritual warfare movement itself has offered little on the topic by way of either a comprehensive biblical treatment or a systematic theological/philosophical treatment.” Boyd, *God at War*, 66.

in secondary literature as the divine-warrior theme.”<sup>40</sup> Though Boyd’s open theism places him on the fringe of evangelicalism, his work on the warfare worldview of Scripture broadly fits into this fifth category.<sup>41</sup> As will be discussed throughout the dissertation, both Longman and Reid as well as Boyd’s writings root themselves in biblical theology, but often fall short of a holistic, Christ-centered, kingdom-focused approach to the warfare worldview of Scripture.

This dissertation seeks to advance the discussion by injecting a Christobellic approach to kingdom warfare grounded in biblical theology into the contemporary debate. Therefore, the approach of this dissertation fits into the fifth category described above.<sup>42</sup> Compared to the other contemporary approaches to the subject, there are several distinctive features that differentiate this treatment. First, this dissertation offers an evangelical biblical theology of the divine warrior theme in Christology that considers implications for systematic theology. While there are biblical theologies of warfare and discussions of the role of the kingdom in theological formulation, there is not a comprehensive resource available that fuses the two based on a divine warrior Christology.<sup>43</sup> Considering the prominence of the divine warrior theme in the Christ-centered warfare worldview of Scripture, this void needs to be filled.

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<sup>40</sup>Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 16.

<sup>41</sup>However, Boyd’s emphasis on spiritual warfare also aligns his work with the fourth category.

<sup>42</sup>Furthermore, when it comes to the subject of spiritual warfare, this dissertation, with some caveats, most closely aligns with the approach of Clinton Arnold described in the fourth category above. See Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*.

<sup>43</sup>The closest thing to it is Boyd’s *God at War*. He is working on a new book tentatively titled *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God* that will be related to this dissertation. However, the primary task of Boyd’s new book is to offer a Christocentric approach to the divine warrior theme to clarify the continuity and discontinuity of warfare in the canon. Specifically, how can Canaanite genocide be reconciled with the non-violence of the New Testament?

Second, the divine warrior Christology that this dissertation describes will contribute to contemporary discussions on the nature of spiritual warfare. Much of the current fiction and non-fiction literature on spiritual warfare focuses on the individual's present battle with the principalities and powers. This approach distracts from the Christocentric kingdom warfare that unfolds in redemptive history. Instead, a Christobellian approach to spiritual warfare recognizes that it is Christ-centered, eschatologically-oriented, and community-rooted. It is an encouraging sign that the post-Enlightenment western church has rekindled its interest in spiritual warfare. But the Christ-centered kingdom warfare incorporated into this dissertation can provide a helpful corrective to some of its misguided focus.

Third, this dissertation offers an initial foray into the application of a Christobellian kingdom theology to contemporary issues in systematic theology. There are several examples of kingdom theology grounding treatments of different areas of systematic theology.<sup>44</sup> However, it is reasonable to expect that more efforts should emerge if a consensus on the nature of the kingdom has truly developed among evangelicals. Therefore, this dissertation seeks to make a contribution toward that end. Instead of extensively interacting with implications for any one area of systematic theology, it interacts with multiple loci where a Christobellian kingdom theology can specifically illuminate current issues in theological discussions. Overall, this dissertation is warranted because of both the contemporary interest in the biblical themes of kingdom

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<sup>44</sup>Russell D. Moore, "Natural Revelation," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 71-117; Russell D. Moore, "Personal and Cosmic Eschatology," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 858-926.

and warfare as well as the helpful implications this dissertation can yield for systematic theology.

### **Methodology**

The following dissertation is a biblical, historical, and theological analysis of the divine warrior theme in Christology. The methodology of its argument is similar to the structure used in the recent systematic theology edited by Daniel Akin, *A Theology for the Church*.<sup>45</sup> Each chapter in that work follows a three-fold schema. First, it addresses what the Bible teaches about a given topic. Second, it discusses what the church has believed about the issue. Third, it develops theological implications based on how it all fits together. After this brief introduction in chapter one, this dissertation follows a similar structure. It addresses historical theology in chapter two, biblical theology in chapters three and four, and systematic theology in chapter five.

Since this dissertation seeks to take a holistic approach to the subject matter, a wide variety of resources are used to develop its argument. It begins with Scripture in both the original languages and English because the Bible is the authoritative, inspired and inerrant revelation of the divine warrior. It benefits from and regularly interacts with monographs written on the divine warrior theme. It also interacts with contributions made to the field in journal articles, including review articles of the aforementioned works on the divine warrior theme. Throughout its treatment of the biblical material, it incorporates insights from commentaries. The historical theology section researches the presence of the divine warrior theme in Christology through both primary and secondary sources. The

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<sup>45</sup>Daniel L. Akin, ed., "Preface," in *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), vii–ix.

systematic theology portion interacts with a wide range of theology texts related to the topic and its implications, especially because it deals with multiple areas of systematic theology. Because the dissertation addresses a wide variety of topics, it requires a plethora of resources.

Though this dissertation seeks to be comprehensive in scope, several limitations restrict what it will address.<sup>46</sup> First, the discussion on historical theology cannot fully evaluate the views on a divine warrior Christology among all theologians, but instead focuses on major theologians at key points in the development of Christian theology.<sup>47</sup> Second, the section on biblical theology is unable to address all relevant texts at a rigorous, exegetical level because its purpose is to develop a survey of Christology and the divine warrior theme throughout redemptive history.<sup>48</sup> Third, the treatment of systematic theology does not evaluate the implications of a divine warrior Christology on every dimension of systematic theology, but instead centers on major doctrines for which it can make significant contributions. Recognizing the limitations of this project confirms that much research is still to be done in this area of study.

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<sup>46</sup>These limitations are primarily the result of space restrictions. The fact that they are not treated in this dissertation does not mean that they are irrelevant to the subject. Instead, these limitations reveal areas where further research can be done on the topic.

<sup>47</sup>Though it will not be able to provide a comprehensive treatment of theological views from the global south, this section will also integrate insights from theologians in those regions when relevant.

<sup>48</sup>To cover the relevant material throughout the canon of Scripture, this dissertation takes a synthetic approach to the biblical data. When it is relevant to the argument, it will incorporate an exegetical analysis. For a similar synthetic approach to the biblical material on the divine warrior theme, see Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 17–18. Furthermore, though this dissertation will offer some interaction with intertestamental literature, it cannot offer a full-scale interaction because of its primary focus on the biblical material.



## Outline

The purpose of this dissertation is to offer a constructive proposal on the connection between Christology and the divine warrior theme. Therefore, it is polemical only secondarily as the constructive proposal enables it to show its advantages to alternative views both biblically and theologically. The proposed method of research and argument will enable this dissertation to defend its thesis adequately. More specifically, it will seek to show the relationship between the divine warrior theme and Christology by assessing its role in biblical, historical, and systematic theology.

Chapter 1 introduces the subject of Christology and the divine warrior theme by positioning it in its contemporary context. It details how this dissertation emerges from the evangelical consensus on the nature of the kingdom. Why? It is essential to understand the Christ-centered nature of kingdom warfare to comprehend the nature of the kingdom properly. It offers the thesis of the dissertation, which contends that a biblical, historical and theological evaluation of the divine warrior theme in Christology reveals that Christ the warrior king is a central component of Christology. Next, it positions the approach used in this dissertation among the various treatments of warfare in Scripture offered in the contemporary literature. It discusses the biblical, historical and theological methodology used in the dissertation. Finally, it concludes with a chapter-by-chapter summary of material covered in the dissertation.

Chapter 2 documents the treatment of Christology and the divine warrior theme in historical theology. Prominent theologians have handled this motif throughout the various epochs of church history. Specifically, it traces the theme through the patristic, medieval, Reformation, post-Reformation, and contemporary time periods. It

not only documents the topic when it is present but also assesses variations among the different approaches to the subject throughout historical theology. It culminates with a reflection on common themes or trajectories that emerge from an evaluation of the historical data.

Chapter 3 surveys the divine warrior theme in the messianic expectation of the Old Testament by tracing the theme of Christ as warrior king. In the Garden of Eden, the expectation of a messianic warrior is set as God promises to raise up a seed of the woman who will crush the serpent. Throughout the patriarchs, God narrows his covenantal focus on the lineage from which the messiah would come. In the nation of Israel, God preserves the messianic seed by fighting for Israel in its faithful obedience and fighting against Israel in its sinful rebellion. Particularly significant to the expectation of the messiah as warrior king are the twin themes of the Exodus and the Davidic monarchy. The prophets repeatedly emphasize that the coming messiah will be a divine warrior who will usher in the kingdom of God. After tracing the biblical data through the Old Testament, this chapter will then synthesize it into several prominent themes that embody the anticipation of a warrior king in the messianic expectation of the Old Testament.

Chapter 4 discusses the way the New Testament demonstrates how the messianic expectation of the Old Testament is realized in the person, work and eschatological fulfillment of Christ the warrior king. To begin with, it examines the continuity and discontinuity of the messiah as warrior king in the two testaments. The Gospel accounts document the inauguration of the kingdom in the warfare of Christ through his deeds, discourse, and death. The epistles portray Christ as a warrior king particularly focusing on both the warfare nature of the atonement and the church's union

with the divine warrior in salvation. The Revelation reveals the culmination of kingdom warfare in the eschatological victory of Christ over all his enemies as he ushers in a new creation kingdom. The chapter concludes with a summary of NT themes related to Christology and the divine warrior motif.

Chapter 5 contends that the divine warrior theme in Christology carries significant implications for systematic theology. In discussions of the atonement, it clarifies the relationship between the penal substitution and *Christus Victor* models. Seeing Christ as warrior king impacts the Christ-centered and kingdom-oriented nature of soteriology in its cosmic and personal dimensions. Recognizing Christ as warrior king provides insights into discussion of eschatology, both in its inaugurated and consummated dimensions. Finally, it also clarifies the nature of God's providence as Christocentric and Christotelic as God brings about his ultimate purposes through kingdom warfare. While this chapter cannot address the implications of a divine warrior Christology for every area of systematic theology, it demonstrates how this crucial component of Christology provides helpful implications for contentious areas of contemporary theology.

Chapter 6 offers a conclusion to the dissertation that summarizes the arguments established in the preceding chapters. It demonstrates that a biblical, historical and theological evaluation of Christ as warrior king confirms that it is a central component of Christology yielding beneficial insights to contemporary theological issues. It also suggests areas for further study related to the topic of a divine warrior Christology.

The overall argument of this dissertation is that both the storyline of Scripture and the storyline of history present Christ as a warrior king. Furthermore, it contends that

this portrayal entails significant implications for systematic theology. Now that discussions on the divine warrior theme in Christology have been situated in their contemporary context, it is helpful to survey treatments of it in historical theology. Has the divine warrior theme been understood as a Christological feature throughout church history? Have important theologians recognized this motif? How can the varying understandings of the divine warrior theme throughout historical theology shed light on what the Bible teaches about Christ the warrior king? While this chapter has situated the purpose of this dissertation in its contemporary context, the following chapter will examine the presence and prominence of this messianic divine warrior theme in historical theology.

## CHAPTER 2

### CHRIST THE WARRIOR KING AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

From Irenaeus to Augustine, from Luther to Calvin, from the Reformed dogmatics to the Puritans, many major theologians throughout church history have recognized that the biblical narrative presents Jesus as a messianic warrior king. This theme returned to prominence in contemporary theology with the publication of Gustaf Aulén's *Christus Victor* in 1931.<sup>1</sup> In his work of historical theology, Aulén contends that the *Christus Victor* (or "classic") model of the atonement is the most prominent view of the cross throughout church history.<sup>2</sup> In addition, it isolates the classic view from satisfaction theories such as penal substitution.<sup>3</sup> The reason this chapter centers on a historical analysis of Christ as warrior king in general and the *Christus Victor* theme in

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<sup>1</sup>Timothy George explains, "The publication of *Christus Victor* in 1931 elicited an enormous literature of response. It still remains the single most influential book about the atonement since Ritschl's *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* in the nineteenth century." Timothy George, "The Atonement in Martin Luther's Theology," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological & Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 268.

<sup>2</sup>Aulén states, "The classic idea has in reality held a place in the history of Christian doctrine whose importance it would not be easy to exaggerate." Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement*, trans. A. G. Hebert (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 6.

<sup>3</sup>Aulén claims that the classic idea "of the Atonement has a clear and distinct character of its own, quite different from the other two types." *Ibid.*, 20. This dissertation instead will later argue that penal substitution and *Christus Victor* are closely connected in the plan and purpose of the atonement.

particular, then, is not only because of its centrality to the warfare worldview of Scripture but also because of its rise to prominence in contemporary theology.<sup>4</sup>

Why is it important to include a chapter on historical theology in a dissertation that focuses on developing a Christocentric biblical theology of warfare and its implications for systematic theology?<sup>5</sup> If, as this dissertation will argue, a central theme in the biblical narrative is its presentation of Christ as warrior king, then this theme should be recognized and developed by major theologians throughout church history. This chapter tests that hypothesis. Furthermore, because Aulén's book that brought this subject back to contemporary prominence is a work of historical theology, any comprehensive treatment of Christ the warrior king needs to address the historical dimension of the theological issue.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter argues that a historical analysis of the divine warrior theme in Christology reveals that prominent theologians throughout church history have recognized Christ as warrior king, particularly through their understanding of the atonement as victory. To accomplish this task, this historical evaluation will examine the Christ-centered, warfare-oriented comments of major theologians or streams of thought

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<sup>4</sup>Haykin contends that *Christus Victor* "has received little attention in post-Reformation Christianity." He adds that a proper understanding of its theological importance "can be determined only by a fresh examination of the sources, both New Testament and Patristic." Michael A. G. Haykin, *Rediscovering the Church Fathers: Who They Were and How They Shaped the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 17.

<sup>5</sup>Packer posits that tradition "is the fruit of the Spirit's teaching activity from the ages as God's people have sought understanding of Scripture. It is not infallible, but neither is it negligible, and we impoverish ourselves if we disregard it." J. I. Packer, "Upholding the Unity of Scripture Today," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25, no. 4 (1982): 414.

<sup>6</sup>Aulén claims that his "aim in this book has been throughout an historical, not an apologetic aim." Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 158. Patterson summarizes this historical argument: "Aulén argued that the cross was the ultimate expression of the cosmic conflict in which Christ conquered the forces of sin and Satan forever." Paige Patterson, "The Work of Christ," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 576.

in the patristic, medieval, Reformation, post-Reformation, and contemporary periods. In particular, it will examine the contours of how they present Christ as warrior king in any of the following areas: (1) the messianic expectation of the Old Testament, (2) the messianic fulfillment of the New Testament, (3) the messianic achievement of the cross and resurrection, and (4) the messianic mission of the church.<sup>7</sup> The chapter will conclude with a summary of themes that emerge from this historical analysis of the divine warrior motif in Christology.

Before examining the historical material, several comments about the scope and limitations of this analysis must be made. First, it is limited in breadth and, therefore, centers on key theologians in each period.<sup>8</sup> Second, it is objective in treatment and, therefore, reveals both continuity and discontinuity in how (and how much) each theologian addressed the subject.<sup>9</sup> Third, it is specific in its focus on the theme of Christ as warrior king in general and the cross as divine victory in particular. To clarify, this historical section is not seeking to elevate the historical significance of *Christus Victor* above penal substitutionary atonement.<sup>10</sup> Instead, it seeks to complement other excellent

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<sup>7</sup>Because of space limitations, it is not possible to add an important fifth category to this analysis—namely, the messianic culmination of the eschaton. It is certainly an area for further research to evaluate how leading theologians in church history understood messianic eschatological culmination through a warfare worldview.

<sup>8</sup>As stated in the opening chapter, this dissertation in general and this historical theology chapter in particular mirror the approach outlined in Daniel L. Akin, ed., “Preface,” in *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), vii–ix.

<sup>9</sup>Explaining a proper approach to historical theology, Trueman contends that “while there is no such thing as neutrality in the telling of history, there is such a thing as objectivity, and that varied interpretations of historical evidence are yet susceptible to generally agreed upon procedures of verification that allow us to challenge each others’ readings of the evidence.” Carl R. Trueman, *Histories and Fallacies: Problems Faced in the Writing of History* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 21. For more on how to study historical theology, see Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 23–36.

<sup>10</sup>Aulén says that theologians have treated the subject “in a variety of forms.” Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 6. Gaffin surveys the landscape of historical theology on this subject: “As a fair generalization,

historical discussions of penal substitution.<sup>11</sup> Noting that many of the major figures in church history recognized the importance of both the *Christus Victor* model (as this chapter demonstrates) and the penal substitutionary model (as other research has shown) seems to give historical credence to the theological argument made later in the dissertation—namely, these two models function in tandem to form the foundation of a proper understanding of the atonement.

### **Christ the Warrior King and Patristic Theology**

In the opening chapter of this dissertation, it highlighted Russell Moore's comments on the prominence of the "Kingdom warfare imagery present in Scripture and the Patristic tradition."<sup>12</sup> But what did the early fathers believe about the Christobellic storyline of Scripture? Patristic theology set the trajectory for the church's understanding of Christ the warrior king. Interpreting the warfare worldview of the New Testament, the early church fathers depicted Jesus as a messianic king who defeated the enemies of God.<sup>13</sup> The theological reflection on this topic that occurred during this time period is

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historic Christianity, including Protestant orthodoxy, is weak in not recognizing adequately Paul's teaching that the cross destroys sin in the sinner as a corrupting and enslaving power, but modern historical-critical scholarship is defective for not dealing adequately with his teaching that the cross removes the guilt and punishment for sin." Richard Gaffin, "Atonement in the Pauline Corpus," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological & Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 141.

<sup>11</sup>Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 161–204.

<sup>12</sup>Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 107.

<sup>13</sup>Weaver contends that the use of warfare imagery among the patristics increased when the church confronted the Roman Empire but receded after the Constantinian synthesis of the church with the empire. J. Denny Weaver, *Keeping Salvation Ethical: Mennonite and Amish Atonement Theology in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1997), 39–49. Is it possible, however, that the early fathers were simply appropriating a biblical concept in their various contexts in such a way that caused its form and prominence to vary?



significant for several reasons. First, the proximity of these theologians to the biblical text and its authors indicates a familiarity with the cultural milieu that shaped their warfare worldview. Second, the perspective of these theologians on the primacy of this topic demonstrates a wide-spread embrace of Scripture's warfare emphasis. Third, the impact of these theologians on future biblical reflections shapes the interpretation of the Bible's Christobellie warfare for generations. The patristic perspective of Christ the warrior king can be seen through an analysis of (1) Justin Martyr, (2) Irenaeus, (3) the ransom theory, (4) the Eastern Orthodox fathers, and (5) Augustine.

First, as an early Christian apologist of the second century, Justin Martyr contended that Jesus fulfilled the messianic expectation of the Old Testament through his victorious death and resurrection.<sup>14</sup> In his treatment of the Old Testament, especially in *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin demonstrates that the Hebrew Bible points ahead to a coming warrior king who would establish his kingdom.<sup>15</sup> Justin noted that Christ is “the eternal king”<sup>16</sup> who resisted the wilderness warfare of the devil during his messianic ministry.<sup>17</sup> He saw Christ's death and resurrection as the defeat of the principalities and powers and the condemnation of death by which the warrior king foreshadowed his

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<sup>14</sup>According to historians like Jonathan Hill, Justin was the “first, and most important” of the early Christian apologists. Jonathan Hill, *Christianity: How a Despised Sect from a Minority Religion Came to Dominate the Roman Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 131.

<sup>15</sup>Justin claims, “For Christ is King, and Priest, and God, and Lord, and angel, and man, and captain, and stone, and a Son born, and first made subject to suffering, then returning to heaven, and again coming with glory, and He is preached as having the everlasting kingdom: so I prove from all the Scriptures.” Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, trans. Thomas B. Falls, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 52.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>17</sup>“For, after he became man, as I have already said, he was approached by the Devil (that is, that power which is also called the Serpent and Satan), who tempted him and tried to overcome by demanding that he worship him. But he was utterly crushed and overcome by Christ,” states Justin. *Ibid.*, 188.

future final victory.<sup>18</sup> As a result of Christ's victory over his enemies, the church is now able to rule over them through his authority.<sup>19</sup>

Second, as a major figure in the development of Christian theology during the second century, Irenaeus presented Christ as a victorious warrior king who defeated the enemies of God by recapitulating the lives of Adam and Israel.<sup>20</sup> Christ "commenced afresh the long line of human beings" that shaped the messianic expectation of the Old Testament so that what was lost in Adam we could "recover in Christ Jesus."<sup>21</sup> The incarnation was crucial in Irenaeus's recapitulation theology. He asked, "How shall man pass into God, unless God has [first] passed into man?"<sup>22</sup> In his messianic ministry, Jesus "conquered Satan by obeying the Father's commandment" in the wilderness and beat back the devil through his words and works.<sup>23</sup> For Irenaeus, the atonement was a conquest of Satan.<sup>24</sup> He stated that the purpose of Christ's coming was so that "He might

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<sup>18</sup>Justin points out that Christ "deigned to become Incarnate, and be born of this virgin of the family of David, in order that by this dispensation he might conquer the serpent, that first sinner, and the angels who followed his example, and that he might thwart death and bring it to an end, so that, at the second coming of Christ, it would no longer have any power over those who believe in him and live according to his principles." Ibid., 69.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 131.

<sup>20</sup>Aulén contends that "the Divine victory accomplished in Christ stands in the centre of Irenaeus' thought" and functions as the "central element" in his recapitulation theory. Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 21–22. Boersma adds, "Few theologians have been as successful as Irenaeus in presenting us with a cautious, yet useful, presentation of the *Christus Victor* theme." Hans Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 200.

<sup>21</sup>Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.18.1 in Alexander Roberts, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, vol. 1 (New York: Cosimo, 2007), 446.

<sup>22</sup>Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.33.4. Ibid., 1:507.

<sup>23</sup>He continues, "Where Adam had been overcome through food, Christ overcame Satan by hunger in the wilderness. Whereas Adam disobeyed the command of God, Christ did not transgress." Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.21.2. Ibid., 1:549.

<sup>24</sup>Christ "redeeming us by His own blood in a manner consonant to reason, gave Himself as a redemption for those who had been led into captivity." Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.1.1. Ibid., 1:527. See

kill sin, deprive death of its power, and vivify man.”<sup>25</sup> In the resurrection, Christ abolished the reign of death.<sup>26</sup> According to Irenaeus, the long expected messianic king recapitulated the lives of failed warriors like Adam and Israel to defeat the enemies of God and usher in his eschatological kingdom.<sup>27</sup>

Third, many patristic theologians commonly described the cross as a ransom paid to Satan by which Christ the warrior king conquered his enemy through the blood payment made on the cross. In this view, the atonement is directed toward Satan who controls the kingdoms of this world as the prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:2).<sup>28</sup> Perhaps the most prominent proponent of this theory was Origen.<sup>29</sup> He explains the ransom theory in this way:

Let us consider more closely what is meant by the ransom that is in Christ Jesus. What is called a ransom is that which is given to enemies for those whom they hold in captivity, so that they may restore them to their original freedom. The human race, then, was being held in captivity by sin, as though vanquished in war. Then came the Son of God, who was made for us, not only wisdom from God and

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also Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ*, Contours of Christian Theology (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 160.

<sup>25</sup>Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.18.7 in Roberts, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:448.

<sup>26</sup>Irenaeus says, “So, if He was not born, neither did He die; and if He did not die, neither was He raised from the dead; and if He was not raised from the dead, He has not conquered death, nor is its reign abolished; and if death is not conquered, how are we to mount on high into life, being subject from the beginning to death?” Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. Joseph P. Smith (New York: Paulist, 1978), 72. See also N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 517.

<sup>27</sup>Cullmann contends that, for Irenaeus, “This historical work of Jesus Christ as Redeemer forms the mid-point of a line which leads from the Old Testament to the return of Christ.” Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, trans. Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1950), 56–57.

<sup>28</sup>Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2.13, in Mark J. Edwards, ed., *We Believe in the Crucified and Risen Lord*, Ancient Christian Doctrine (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 123.

<sup>29</sup>Summarizing Origen’s view of the atonement, Letham notes, “Christ’s death had as its aim to destroy Satan, who had the power of death. Christ gave his soul as a ransom to Satan. His resurrection spelled Satan’s destruction.” Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 161. For example, see Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 4.11, in Edwards, *Crucified and Risen Lord*, 124.

righteousness and sanctification, but also a ransom. He gave himself as the ransom—that is, he gave himself up to the enemies, pouring out his own blood to slake their thirst.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to Origen, church fathers who were more orthodox in their theology also articulated some form of the ransom theory.<sup>31</sup> Several variations of the ransom theory emerged over time.<sup>32</sup> First, some theologians claimed that Jesus' body nailed to the cross was bait by which he deceptively hooked Satan, bringing him to defeat.<sup>33</sup> Second, others contended that the ransom was not paid to Satan but instead to God who is the rightful recipient of Christ's atoning purchase.<sup>34</sup> Third, some from this second stream even went so far as to link the ransom model with penal substitution in such a way that the ransom paid by Christ the warrior king to God satisfied his wrath, thus defeating Satan, sin, and death.<sup>35</sup> At its root, the ransom theory recognizes that a central component

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<sup>30</sup>Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 3.7 in *Ibid.*, 124–25.

<sup>31</sup>For example, see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.1.1 in Roberts, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:127.

<sup>32</sup>Sinclair B. Ferguson, "Christus Victor et Propitiator: The Death of Christ, Substitute and Conqueror," in *For the Fame of God's Name: Essays in Honor of John Piper*, ed. Sam Storms and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 175.

<sup>33</sup>In the incarnation, "the divine power of the Son of God [was] like a hook wrapped in a covering of human flesh," states Rufinus, "to lure on the Prince of the World to a conflict, and while Christ offered him His human flesh as a bait, the Deity concealed within was to hold him fast with a hook, as a result of the shedding of his immaculate blood." Rufinus, *A Commentary on the Apostles' Creed*, trans. J. N. D. Kelly (New York: Paulist, 1978), 50–51. For other examples of this imagery, see Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 261. Horton claims that this bait metaphor "reflects a profound insight." Michael S. Horton, *Lord and Servant: A Covenant Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 257.

<sup>34</sup>For example, see Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, trans. Archibald Robertson (London: Nutt, 1885), 52–53.

<sup>35</sup>The Epistle to Diognetus connects the ransom and penal substitutionary theories: "O the exceeding benevolence and love of God! He did not abhor us, nor did he spurn us, nor did he bear a grudge, but he was longsuffering in forbearance, and in his pity he himself took on him our sins; he himself gave his own son as a ransom for us, the holy for the lawless, the unoffending for the offender, the righteous for the unrighteous, the incorruptible for the corruptible, the immortal for the mortal. For what else was able to cover our sins but his righteousness? In whom was it possible for us lawless and impious ones to be justified but in the Son of God alone. O for the sweet exchange, the imponderable working, the unforeseen bounties, that the lawlessness of many should be hidden in the one righteous man and the righteousness of

of the atonement is its defeat of the devil.<sup>36</sup> However, the variations on this theme in patristic thought reveal a recurring problem that has plagued theologians for centuries: the relationship between the *Christus Victor* and penal substitutionary models of the atonement, which will receive further exploration later in the dissertation.

Fourth, the early Eastern fathers “concentrated on Christ’s victory over evil” including emphases on “ransom, freedom, victory and life. The orientation on Christ as victor is apostolic and stimulating.”<sup>37</sup> They recognized an organic relationship between the testaments in which the kingdom of Israel pointed ahead to a coming messianic new Israel who would bring about a new Exodus.<sup>38</sup> The incarnation of the warrior king launched a rescue mission in which he resisted temptation in order to “thwart its attack, putting to death the very power that expected to seduce him just as it had Adam in the beginning.”<sup>39</sup> Through Christ’s atonement, “clearly he won the victory” and “in his

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one should justify many who were lawless!” Lewis Bostock Radford, ed., *The Epistle to Diognetus* (New York: Gorham, 1908), 76.

<sup>36</sup>Aulén’s historical work recognizes the prominence of the classic view of the atonement, and its seminal expression in the patristics (the ransom theory), as Bloesch points out, “Aulén has done the Christian world a signal service by recapturing the vision of the church fathers in describing the atonement as God’s act of deliverance in Jesus Christ.” Donald G. Bloesch, *Jesus Christ: Savior & Lord* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 157.

<sup>37</sup>James R. Payton, *Light from the Christian East: An Introduction to the Orthodox Tradition* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 129. Pelikan adds that when the Eastern fathers “came to speak in more detail about the cross, it was the imagery of battle and victory that seemed to serve them best.” Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)*, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1977), 138.

<sup>38</sup>Pelikan observes that in Eastern thought, “It was appropriate to refer to Jesus Christ as ‘the second Israel’ and to contrast the exodus of Israel from Egypt and its victory over Pharaoh with the exodus achieved by Christ and his victory over the devil.” *Ibid.*, 208. Pelikan also cites several examples supporting the Eastern concept of Jesus as the new Israel leading a new Exodus.

<sup>39</sup>Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St. Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s, 2003), 111. On the incarnation and warfare in Eastern thought, Payton writes, “The incarnation itself contributes to our salvation from sin, death, and the devil.” Payton, *Light from the Christian East*, 124.

goodness, inaugurated a complete restoration.”<sup>40</sup> Many in Eastern thought recognize this victory on the cross came through a ransom.<sup>41</sup> Combined with his crucifixion, the resurrection of Christ is the essential path to victory by which he brings defeat to death and joy to the cosmos.<sup>42</sup> All those who are united to Christ by faith receive this victory as they are freed from slavery to sin.<sup>43</sup> The victory of Christ also provided a foundation for the use of icons, which were seen by John of Damascus as “a triumph, a manifestation, and a monument in commemoration of a victory.”<sup>44</sup> This recognition of Christ as warrior king that emerged in the early Eastern fathers has continued to characterize Eastern thought through the centuries.

Fifth, at the theological culmination of the patristic period, Augustine recognized Christ as a warrior king who ushers the kingdom into history through his victorious death and resurrection.<sup>45</sup> The messianic deliverance required by the fall of

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<sup>40</sup>Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 111. Payton says that “in Eastern Christian thought, Christ is the victor; he defeats those enemies and frees humanity from their bondage.” Payton, *Light from the Christian East*, 122; Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin, 1993), 227–28.

<sup>41</sup>Payton, *Light from the Christian East*, 127. For an instance of Eastern fathers who advocated the ransom theory in some form, see John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 45. Other examples can be found in Payton, *Light from the Christian East*, 127.

<sup>42</sup>Theodoret says, “Christ has arisen from the dead, and the whole cosmos has cause for rejoicing. By his life-giving death he has killed death, and all those who were in the bonds of Hades have been set free.” As cited in Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 2:138. Payton adds, “Christ’s resurrection is a necessity to break the bonds of death. Only in this way, from an Eastern Christian perspective, can eternal life be granted and Christ be victor over our enemies.” Payton, *Light from the Christian East*, 129.

<sup>43</sup>John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Washington, DC: Corpus, 1969), 88; Payton, *Light from the Christian East*, 123.

<sup>44</sup>As cited in Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 2:119.

<sup>45</sup>Commenting on the importance of the kingdom of God in Augustine’s theology, Bloesch notes that “Augustine offered a systematic exposition of the role of the kingdom of God in history in his much acclaimed *City of God*.” Bloesch, *Jesus Christ*, 213.

Adam and anticipated throughout the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in Jesus.<sup>46</sup> Though Augustine and Pelagius differed on the nature of sin, they agreed that Christ conquered Satan at the cross.<sup>47</sup> According to Augustine, both the resurrection and (more surprisingly) the death of Christ achieved victory over the devil.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, Augustine recognized that Christ the warrior king's victory was only possible through the substitutionary satisfaction of God's wrath.<sup>49</sup> Based on this vicarious victory, Christ rescues sinners into his kingdom. As believers experience this new life of kingdom renewal, they must also continue to wage war against the wily schemes of the powers.<sup>50</sup> Augustine's theology culminated the patristic emphasis on the warfare theme in general

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<sup>46</sup>Augustine explains, "From the first transgression of the first man, the whole human race, being born in the shackles of sin, was the property of the devil who had conquered it." He continues by noting that Jesus "came to redeem the captives, having in himself not a trace of the captivity, that is to say, of iniquity, but bringing the price for us in his mortal flesh." As cited in Stanley P. Rosenberg, "Interpreting Atonement in Augustine's Preaching," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological & Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 234.

<sup>47</sup>Pelagius contends that "Christ, who did not sin, conquered death. For we were all condemned to death, to which he handed himself over, though it was not his due, so that he might redeem us with his blood." Pelagius, *Pelagius's Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Theodore De Bruyn, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), 82.

<sup>48</sup>Augustine observes, "It is not then difficult to see that the devil was conquered, when he who was slain by Him rose again. It is something more, and more profound of comprehension, to see that the devil was conquered when he thought himself to have conquered, that is, when Christ was slain." Augustine, *On the Trinity in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series: On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral Treatises*, ed. Alexander Roberts et al. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub, 1994), 177.

<sup>49</sup>Augustine states, "For the devil cannot conquer or subdue any but those who are in league with sin; and therefore he is conquered in the name of Him who assumed humanity, and that without sin, that Himself being both Priest and Sacrifice, He might bring about the remission of sins, that is to say, might bring it about through the Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, by whom we are reconciled to God, the cleansing from sin being accomplished." Augustine, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series: The City of God, Christian Doctrine*, ed. Alexander Roberts et al., vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 281.

<sup>50</sup>"For we have terrible and crafty foes—the evil spirits—and against them we wrestle," states Augustine. He adds that "it is pressing and necessary for us only to know their wiles against ourselves." Augustine, *Life of Anthony in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series: The Anti-Manichaean Writings, The Anti-Donatist Writings*, ed. Alexander Roberts et al., vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 421. See also Frank A. James III, "The Atonement in Church History," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological & Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 216.

and the divine warrior feature in Christology in particular. His treatment set the stage for further developments on the divine warrior theme in Christology during the Middle Ages.

### **Christ the Warrior King and Medieval Theology**

The medieval period did not see an entire shift away from advocating a warfare orientation for Christology. It did, however, mark a transition to prioritizing the work of Christ as an act of satisfaction to God.<sup>51</sup> The Middle Ages included a decline in the ransom theory.<sup>52</sup> Yet, there was not a wholesale abandonment by medieval theologians of seeing the atonement as conquest.<sup>53</sup> Instead, the following historical analysis of the medieval period will show that evidence of a Christobellian warfare perspective is evident in: (1) Anselm, (2) Thomas Aquinas, and (3) other medieval theologians.

First, Anselm's Christology included an emphasis on liberation from Satan's dominion even as it centered on the atonement of Jesus as a satisfaction of God. Deme contends, "Actual references to the model of liberation in Anselm's theology are relatively frequent."<sup>54</sup> In his quest to answer the question *Cur Deus Homo?*, Anselm's

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<sup>51</sup>Pelikan notes that "the Middle Ages may be seen as the period when the primary focus of Christian thought about Christ shifted from what he was to what he did, from the person of Christ to the work of Christ." Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300)*, The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1980), 3; Gwenfair M. Walters, "The Atonement in Medieval Theology," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological & Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 240.

<sup>52</sup>Walters explains, "Both Anselm and Abelard rejected the ransom theory." Walters, "The Atonement in Medieval Theology," 242. Some have suggested the decline in the ransom theory was, at least in part, because the Constantinian synthesis of church and state rendered the motif less significant. Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament & Contemporary Contexts* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000), 125.

<sup>53</sup>"The ransom theory did not vanish completely, for it played an important role for some of the medieval theologians," Walters contends. Walters, "The Atonement in Medieval Theology," 240.

<sup>54</sup>Daniel Deme, *The Christology of Anselm of Canterbury* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 238. For example, see Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, trans. Sidney N. Deane (Chicago: Open Court, 1903), 18–25.



writings explained the purpose of the incarnation, in part, with warfare language, noting that “he who was to assume humanity was to come to do battle against the devil.”<sup>55</sup> In Anselm’s atonement theology, it is God, not the devil, who is satisfied by the ransom of Christ’s blood.<sup>56</sup> However, Anselm still recognized that this satisfaction of God resulted in the defeat of the devil.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, Deme contends, “In Anselm’s thought and devotional framework the biblical theme of liberation by God leaves some very distinct tracks. It is presented in a unity with another model, that of vicarious satisfaction.”<sup>58</sup> The resurrection solidifies the messianic mission and vicarious victory of Christ.<sup>59</sup> As believers conform to the image of Christ, it is a conformity to the victory of his death.<sup>60</sup>

Second, as one of the most influential theologians during the medieval period, Thomas Aquinas highlighted Christ’s role as warrior king in his discussion of Christology. Thomas recognized that Christ’s intentional invasion of Satan’s domain fulfilled the messianic hope that Adam’s first sin necessitated.<sup>61</sup> Thomas noted Christ’s

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<sup>55</sup>As cited in Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 135.

<sup>56</sup>Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, 135–37. Walters adds, “Anselm did not eliminate the devil from the atonement story; however, he did redefine his role and the focus of the atonement. The atonement was no longer a transaction between God and the devil; rather, it was a restoration of honor due to God.” Walters, “The Atonement in Medieval Theology,” 242.

<sup>57</sup>Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 164.

<sup>58</sup>He adds, “Vicarious satisfaction is primary to our liberation as its condition, but liberation precedes satisfaction as its aim. They are ultimately identical and simultaneous in their temporality, their source, and in the one event of the Cross. The combination of the two models creates the distinct character of Anselm’s soteriology.” Deme, *The Christology of Anselm of Canterbury*, 237.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>61</sup>Thomas contends that “because it redounded to man's greater dignity, that as man was overcome and deceived by the devil, so also it should be a man that should overthrow the devil; and as man deserved death, so a man by dying should vanquish death.” Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, vol. 2 (New York: Benzinger, 1947), 2267.

dominion and authority over the created kingdom.<sup>62</sup> Though he rejected the patristic ransom theory, Thomas did, however, identify the “the devil as the executioner” in the atonement.<sup>63</sup> Recognizing the connection between justice and victory on the cross, Thomas asserts that “it was fitting that through justice man should be delivered from the devil’s bondage by Christ making satisfaction on his behalf in the Passion.”<sup>64</sup> Through the passion of the cross, Christ the warrior king delivers his people by defeating his enemies.<sup>65</sup>

Third, in addition to these major medieval theologians, other thinkers during the Middle Ages characterized Christ as a messianic warrior. “When our Redeemer entered the battlefield of this world to do battle,” notes Peter Damian, “he equipped himself with a new kind of weapon, namely, that he brandished what was weak and concealed what was strong.”<sup>66</sup> Some of these theologians, including Abelard, rejected the patristic ransom theory.<sup>67</sup> However, others continued to use the metaphor of Jesus’ humanity as bait that lured Satan to defeat.<sup>68</sup> Odo of Cluny speaks for many in the Middle

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<sup>62</sup>Thomas states, “The Father has not only subjected all of creation to Christ as he is God, to whom everything is subject from eternity, but also to his humanity.” Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians*, trans. Matthew L. Lamb (Albany, NY: Magi, 1966), 80.

<sup>63</sup>He claims that “the price was not to be paid to the demon, but to God.” He later adds that “Christ is said to have paid the price of our redemption—His own precious blood—not to the devil, but to God.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2:2285–86.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:2267.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:2266–67.

<sup>66</sup>As cited in Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 135.

<sup>67</sup>Walters, “The Atonement in Medieval Theology,” 242.

<sup>68</sup>Peter Damian presented Christ as bait “in whom the passible flesh could be seen and the impassible divinity could not be seen.” As cited in Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 134.

Ages when he notes that “the One who died killed death and attacked hell.”<sup>69</sup> Though the *Christus Victor* model was no longer the most prominent view in the Middle Ages, its influence remained through medieval art and hymnody.<sup>70</sup> However else Christology was viewed in medieval theology, Jesus was certainly seen as Christ the warrior king who achieved victory over his enemies.<sup>71</sup> As the Reformation eclipsed the Middle Ages, theologians continued to understand Christ as a divine warrior in a variety of ways.

### **Christ the Warrior King and Reformation Theology**

If the patristic period primarily featured the *Christus Victor* model while the Middle Ages mostly focused on the satisfaction theory, the Reformation reflected on the relationship between the two. Though Reformation theology moved away from some of the soteriological and ecclesiological perspectives of the Roman Catholic church, it did not lose sight of the warfare theme that permeated theological reflections throughout church history. A historical analysis of Luther and Calvin reveals that, regardless of how systematically intentional this effort was, they reflected on the relationship between *Christus Victor* and penal substitutionary atonement in a way that presented Christ as the warrior king whose victory comes through vicarious satisfaction.

Luther is perhaps the key historical figure of interest in contemporary theological discussion on the divine warrior theme in Christology because of Aulén’s controversial focus on him.<sup>72</sup> Despite the influence of medieval theology upon Luther, he

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 135.

<sup>70</sup>Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 98.

<sup>71</sup>Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 135.

<sup>72</sup>Pelikan asserts, “The interpretation of Luther’s view of the Atonement in these pages has, if anything, received more critical attention than the patristic and medieval sections combined.” Jaroslav

“broke decisively with his teachers in favor of a Christ-centered biblical theology.”<sup>73</sup>

Luther understood that the entire history of the world, from the garden of Eden to the return of Christ, was a conflict between rival kingdoms.<sup>74</sup> Luther also recognized the warfare-oriented nature of the messianic kingdom.<sup>75</sup> Luther claimed that Christ the warrior king’s entire messianic ministry was a conflict with the powers, not just his decisive victory on the cross.<sup>76</sup>

For Luther, the cross of Christ conquered all the enemies opposed to his kingdom. Aulén was incensed at prior interpretations of Luther’s atonement theology.<sup>77</sup> Instead, Aulén argued that Luther advocated the *Christus Victor* model “with greater power than any before him.”<sup>78</sup> What did Luther believe about the cross as victory? Luther claimed that, on the cross, Christ “performed his mightiest work and vanquished sin,

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Pelikan, “Foreword,” in *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), xvi.

<sup>73</sup>George, “The Atonement in Martin Luther’s Theology,” 270.

<sup>74</sup>Bloesch, *Jesus Christ*, 216.

<sup>75</sup>Luther states, “Now, what is the kingdom of God? The answer is: Simply what we learned in the Creed—that God sent his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, into the world to redeem and deliver us from the devil’s power and to bring us to himself and reign over us a king of righteousness, of life and salvation, defending us from sin, death and an evil conscience.” Martin Luther, *Luther’s Large Catechism*, trans. John N. Lenker (Minneapolis: Luther, 1908), 141.

<sup>76</sup>Letham notes, “Certainly Luther regarded Christ as battling with and triumphing over the demonic powers (LW [Luther’s Works] 26, 281, 373; 53, 257). He saw these powers, however, as the agents of God’s wrath.” Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 162.

<sup>77</sup>Aulén laments, “It may be roundly stated that no side of Luther’s theology has been more summarily treated or more grossly misinterpreted than his teaching on the Atonement. The fundamental mistake has been the assumption that his teaching on this subject belongs to the Anselmian type.” Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 101. Aulén’s argument will receive further evaluation in the upcoming systematic theology chapter.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 121. If Aulén is correct, and if Luther’s classic idea of the cross is united to a penal substitutionary view (as will later be argued), then this connection suggests the interrelationship of these two atonement doctrines.

death, world, hell, devil, and all evil.”<sup>79</sup> In places, Luther even included the patristic variation on the ransom theory that Jesus’ humanity was the bait that hooked Satan into defeat.<sup>80</sup> Though Satan sought to thwart Christ’s kingdom through Jesus’ execution, the messianic warrior actually swallowed up the power of death through his own death.<sup>81</sup>

Luther also recognized the intimate relationship between the *Christus Victor* and penal substitutionary models of the atonement. His nexus of these two views “may well be Luther’s major contribution to atonement theology.”<sup>82</sup> He recognized that the cross not only propitiated the wrath of God<sup>83</sup> but also defeated the enemies of God.<sup>84</sup> But how are these two atonement theories united?<sup>85</sup> For Luther, the wrath of God and the

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<sup>79</sup>Martin Luther, *Works of Martin Luther*, trans. A. T. W. Steinhäuser (Philadelphia: Holman, 1930), 3:178.

<sup>80</sup>Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 103.

<sup>81</sup>Luther states, “God promotes and completes His work by means of an alien deed and by His wonderful wisdom He compels the devil to work through death nothing else than life, so that in this way, while he acts most of all against the work of God, he acts for the work of God and against his own work with his own deed. For thus he worked death in Christ, but Christ completely swallowed up death in Himself through the immortality of His divinity and rose again in glory.” Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter A. Hansen, trans. George V. Schick (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress, 1958), 29:135.

<sup>82</sup>George continues by noting that “just as he brought together the ideas of satisfaction and punishment in the doctrine of penal substitution, so too he saw that the cross of Christ was at once the scene of Satan’s definitive defeat and the objective basis of justification by faith alone.” George, “The Atonement in Martin Luther’s Theology,” 275.

<sup>83</sup>Luther contends that Christ “suffered, died, and was buried, and made satisfaction for me, paying my debt, not with silver or gold, but with his own precious blood. And all this that he might become my Lord; for he had no need to do this for himself.” He continues by connecting this substitutionary death to Christ’s victorious resurrection: “Afterward he rose again, conquering and swallowing up death, and finally ascended into heaven and assumed dominion at the right hand of the Father that he might make satisfaction for me and pay for what I owed, not with silver and gold, but with his own precious blood.” Luther, *Luther’s large catechism*, 119. Pannenberg affirms that for Luther, Jesus’ death was “vicarious penal suffering.” Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus: God and Man*, trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 279.

<sup>84</sup>Referring to Christ, Luther claimed, “If you look to this Person, therefore, you see sin, death, the wrath of God, hell, the devil, and all evils conquered and put to death.” Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 26:282.

<sup>85</sup>Patterson, “The Work of Christ,” 577.

condemnation of the law are two of the enemies defeated by Christ the warrior king's substitutionary victory.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, it is only by satisfying God's wrath and rolling back the curse that Christ conquers Satan, sin, and death.<sup>87</sup>

Luther's theology of the cross also recognized both the role of the resurrection in Christ's victory and the implications of this conquest for the lives of Christians. Luther contends that, in the resurrection, Christ rose again "to make us righteous, and in so doing He hath overcome the Law, sin, death, hell, and all evils."<sup>88</sup> Therefore, as George observes, the resurrection is one of the "crucial moments in Christ's triumph over sin and the devil."<sup>89</sup> Christ the warrior king's victory is applied to believers in salvation based on the work of Christ, not the works of man.<sup>90</sup> As a result of Christ's salvific rescue of believers, the messianic warrior (1) satisfies God's wrath toward them,<sup>91</sup> (2) breaks Satan's powers over them,<sup>92</sup> (3) applies Christ's benefits to them,<sup>93</sup> and (4) sets a

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<sup>86</sup>Commenting on Luther's understanding of the atonement as victory over God's wrath, Aulén states that "the victory over the Curse and the Wrath is in the fullest sense God's victory. It is God's act of victory, when Christ goes in under the Divine wrath, and bears the burden of the punishment which on account of that wrath impends upon men." Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 115. Bloesch explains, "According to Luther, who revived the classic theory, satisfaction is given not only to God but also by God. Luther added the law of God and the wrath of God to the powers that Christ overcomes." Bloesch, *Jesus Christ*, 148.

<sup>87</sup>Letham observes that Luther "saw freedom from the power of the devil as a fruit of deliverance from God's wrath." Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 162. For example, see Luther, *Luther's Works*, 27:4.

<sup>88</sup>Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, ed. John Prince Fallows, trans. Erasmus Middleton (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1987), 4.

<sup>89</sup>George, "The Atonement in Martin Luther's Theology," 276.

<sup>90</sup>Luther says, "Through the Gospel we are told who Christ is, in order that we may learn to know that He is our Savior, that He delivers us from sin and death, helps us out of all our misfortune, reconciles us to the Father, and makes us pious and saves us without our works." Luther, *Luther's Works*, 30:29–30.

<sup>91</sup>Luther recounts, "He not only made satisfaction for sin but also redeemed us from the power of death, the Devil and hell," states Luther. Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Hermann Bohlau, 1833), 21:264.

<sup>92</sup>Luther writes that Christ "has delivered me from all sins, from death and the power of Satan;

kingdom of grace before them.<sup>94</sup> Even still, those for whom Jesus is master and king must continue to wage war against the enemies of God until Christ's return.<sup>95</sup>

As the Reformation progressed, Calvin provided some of the most extensive theological reflection of the period on the theme of Christ as warrior king. "A frequent theme in Calvin's writings and sermons is the victorious advance of Christ's kingdom in the world," states Haykin.<sup>96</sup> Calvin realized that the advance of this kingdom was God's work as the victorious gospel of Christ went forth into the world on a rescue mission.<sup>97</sup> From his study of the storyline of Scripture, Calvin knew that the divine warrior is hostile and "his hand is armed for our destruction" for all those who are outside of Christ.<sup>98</sup> However, in the incarnation, Christ the warrior king "invaded this world held in captivity by Satan."<sup>99</sup> This rescue mission culminates on the cross.<sup>100</sup>

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not with gold and silver, but with his holy and precious blood, and by his innocent sufferings and death, that I might be wholly his and might live under him in his kingdom." Martin Luther, *The Shorter Catechism*, ed. John Christian Wachsels, trans. Gustavus Anthony Wachsels (London, 1800), 17.

<sup>93</sup>In his commentary on Gal 3:13, Luther surmises, "In so far therefore as Christ by His grace rules in the hearts of the faithful, there is found no more sin, death, and curse; but where Christ is not known they still remain. Thus they that believe do not lack this benefit and this victory." As cited in Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 106.

<sup>94</sup>Luther points out that Christ "establishes an eternal kingdom of grace and a daily forgiveness even of the remainder of sin that is in us." Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 21:264.

<sup>95</sup>Luther explains, "He who will have, for his master and king, Jesus Christ, the son of the Virgin, who took upon himself our flesh and our blood, will have the devil for his enemy." Martin Luther, *The Table Talk of Martin Luther*, trans. William Hazlitt (London: Bell & Daldy, 1872), 254.

<sup>96</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin, "Calvin and the Missionary Endeavor of the Church," in *Calvin for Today*, ed. Joel R. Beeke (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2009), 171.

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>98</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 1:505.

<sup>99</sup>Bloesch, *Jesus Christ*, 151.

<sup>100</sup>Calvin explains that, in the incarnation, "clothed with our flesh he vanquished death and sin

A major focus of Calvin's atonement theology is the tenet that Christ the warrior king defeats his enemies through substitutionary victory.<sup>101</sup> "One of Calvin's favorite themes of the atonement is Christ as victor, who conquers the foes of his people," Peterson asserts.<sup>102</sup> Though he did not indulge in the extravagancies of the patristics or Luther in how he described the cross as Christ's ransom, Calvin did recognize this biblical theme as the means of cross-centered conquest.<sup>103</sup> This victory is applied to believers so that the devil no longer holds sway over those who have become partakers of the death of Christ.<sup>104</sup> As Christ delivers us from the "tyranny of death" through his sacrifice, there is now no longer condemnation for those who are found in him (Rom 8:1).<sup>105</sup> Therefore, the distinction between those who are found in Christ and those that are not is stunning, precisely because of the difference in their standing in relation to the victory Christ accomplishes on the cross by satisfying God's wrath.<sup>106</sup>

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together that the victory and triumph might be ours." Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:466.

<sup>101</sup>Calvin notes that Paul "magnificently proclaims the triumph that Christ obtained for himself on the cross, as if the cross, which was full of shame, had been changed into a triumphal chariot." *Ibid.*, 1:511.

<sup>102</sup>Robert Peterson, *Calvin and the Atonement: What the Renowned Pastor and Teacher Said About the Cross of Christ* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 1999), 69.

<sup>103</sup>Calvin asks, why did Jesus "endure so bitter and shameful a death if not because it was necessary that we be delivered by such a ransom?" John Calvin, *Sermons on the Deity of Christ* (Willow Street, PA: Old Paths, 1997), 135.

<sup>104</sup>Calvin notes that "the devil holds no right nor property over us, when we are made partakers of the death and passion of the Son of God." As cited in Henri Blocher, "The Atonement in John Calvin's Theology," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological & Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 290.

<sup>105</sup>Calvin understands that Christ "delivered us from the tyranny of death," he notes, "for by the satisfaction of that sacrifice which he offered, our guiltiness was taken away." John Calvin, *Commentary upon the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans*, trans. Christopher Rosdell (Edinburgh: Calvin, 1844), 86.

<sup>106</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:504–05.



In Calvin's view, how does his atonement theology of Christ as victor relate to his emphasis on Christ as propitiator? Put simply, the cross satisfies the wrath of God, which defeats the devil because he no longer holds the power of sin and death over those who are found in Christ.<sup>107</sup> Calvin describes how victorious success comes through vicarious suffering, noting that Jesus has "conquered death, and triumphed over it; that He might deliver us from the tyranny thereof; which otherwise would entirely overwhelm us."<sup>108</sup> Calvin's treatments of two primary texts relating *Christus Victor* and penal substitution, Colossians 2:14-15<sup>109</sup> and Hebrews 2:14-17,<sup>110</sup> show that he recognizes a close interconnection between the two atonement models while preserving the primacy of penal substitution. Therefore, the cross is both an act of satisfying wrath and spiritual warfare.<sup>111</sup> Because the atonement reverses the imputation of sin, which is man's primary problem, it frees believers from the accusation of sin, which is Satan's primary weapon.<sup>112</sup> In their treatment of Christ as warrior king, reformers such as Luther and

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<sup>107</sup>Blocher explains Calvin's view: "If the devil's weapon is essentially accusation, his ruin follows from the satisfaction of justice." Blocher, "The Atonement in John Calvin's Theology," 291. See also James III, "The Atonement in Church History," 217.

<sup>108</sup>Calvin, *Sermons on the Deity of Christ*, 165.

<sup>109</sup>On Col 2:15, Calvin points out that Paul "means the devils, whom Scripture represents as acting the part of accusing us before God. Paul says, however, that they are disarmed, so that they cannot bring forward anything against us, the attestation of our guilt being itself destroyed." John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, trans. John Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin, 1851), 190.

<sup>110</sup>Addressing Hebrews 2:15, Calvin writes that Christ defeated the fear of death "by undergoing our curse, and thus taking away what was dreadful in death." John Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St. Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 31.

<sup>111</sup>Hall observes, "The central answer lies in the fact that there man's sin has been dealt with, atoned for, washed away, forgiven; and thus, to put the whole in terms of the spiritual warfare, the power of sin over men's lives has been broken." Charles A.M. Hall, *With The Spirit's Sword: The Drama of Spiritual Warfare in the Theology of Calvin* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1970), 76.

<sup>112</sup>Calvin asserts that "we are redeemed, because our sins are not imputed to us. Hence it

Calvin saw a close connection between *Christus Victor* and penal substitution.<sup>113</sup> But how did those that followed the Reformation understand this issue?

### **Christ the Warrior King and Post-Reformation Theology**

The post-Reformation period included a variety of perspectives on Christ that highlighted the view of Jesus as warrior king. As Protestantism developed, several divergent Christological perspectives arose. Yet, in many of these streams of thought, theologians identified Christ as a divine warrior who conquers his enemies. In particular, the Lutherans, Reformed Dogmaticians, as well as the Puritans and their contemporaries all recognized Christ as warrior king in their own unique way.<sup>114</sup>

Following the major emphasis on Christ as victor in Luther's theology, Lutherans defended the biblical notion that Jesus was a messianic king. Aulén accuses the Lutherans of abandoning this emphasis by Luther: "Luther's teaching on the Atonement was not followed either by his contemporaries or by his successors."<sup>115</sup> However, a closer look reveals that the Lutherans preserved Luther's atonement theology after all. In their understanding of key Old Testament messianic passages, Lutherans identified the coming

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follows, that we obtain by free grace that righteousness by which we are accepted by God, and freed from the chains of the devil and of death." John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Clark, 1841), 182.

<sup>113</sup>Blocher summarizes, "A likely interpretation thus emerges: Satan and death, as they draw their power from the administration of divine justice, were disarmed by the satisfaction of that justice. It agrees with the presence, usually, of the penal-sacrificial theme in context when the *Christus Victor* is proclaimed." Blocher, "The Atonement in John Calvin's Theology," 290.

<sup>114</sup>This section's treatment of the Lutherans and Reformed dogmatics leans heavily on the prior research found in sourcebooks by Schmid & Heppe, which are organized based on the loci of systematic theology. By leaning on their prior work, it ensures that this section has access to a wide range of theological views, demonstrating a representative sample of perspectives, while overcoming the language variations of the original material.

<sup>115</sup>Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 123.

messiah as a conquering warrior king.<sup>116</sup> As a messianic warrior, notes Hollaz, Christ “during that time in which He visibly dwelt on this earth, was a true King.”<sup>117</sup> Through the substitutionary victory of his death, the God-man proved himself to be the conqueror of the powers.<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, as Hollaz observes, “The resurrection is the act of glorious victory.”<sup>119</sup> The Lutherans also recognized that this initial victory through the atonement would culminate in a complete conquest of all of Christ’s enemies as he established the eschatological kingdom.<sup>120</sup>

Theologians in the stream of thought known as the Reformed Dogmaticians echoed this understanding of Christ as victorious king. In addition to their theology, the Reformed Dogmaticians also preserved this theme in their hymnody.<sup>121</sup> Calvin popularized the notion of viewing Christ’s role in the three offices of prophet, priest, and king. Of these three roles, the Dogmaticians contended for the primacy of the kingly office.<sup>122</sup> They also followed Calvin in seeing a tight connection between *Christus Victor*

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<sup>116</sup>John Gerhard points out that, in fulfillment of Ps 2, Christ demonstrates “dominion in the midst of His enemies, whom He suppresses, restrains, and punishes (Ps. 2:9; 110:2; 1 Cor. 15:25).” As cited in Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 374.

<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*, 372.

<sup>118</sup>See Quenstedt’s comments in *Ibid.*, 413.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, 380. Hollaz elsewhere adds, “Christ rose again in order to manifest the victory which He had obtained over death and the devil (Acts 2:24) and to offer and apply to all men the fruits of His passion and death.” *Ibid.*, 401.

<sup>120</sup>See Quenstedt’s comments in *Ibid.*, 375.

<sup>121</sup>Aulén asserts, “The Paschal season has never ceased to be the impregnable citadel of the classic idea of the Atonement.” Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 133.

<sup>122</sup>“In the order of intention the kingship comes first as the goal of the mediation. Before all things God gave to the Son as king many brethren to be filled with eternal glory; he receives the priesthood as the means to this end, because that is why it was given to him to prepare righteousness,” Johan Heidegger explains. Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. Ernst Bizer, trans. G. T. Thomson (London: Allen & Unwin, 1950), 453–54.

and penal substitution in which propitiation brings about redemption.<sup>123</sup> One of the purposes of Christ's resurrection was so that "the very full satisfaction achieved for our sins and the restoration of eternal righteousness might be attested by this victory of his over death."<sup>124</sup> As a result of the cross's conquest, Christ's messianic kingship will continue throughout the entire eschaton.<sup>125</sup>

The Puritans and their theological contemporaries featured Christ as warrior king in their theology and writings.<sup>126</sup> Four years after writing the legendary work *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan penned another allegory entitled *The Holy War* in which the Christ-figure, Emmanuel, is central to the unfolding narrative of the battle for man's soul.<sup>127</sup> Much of the literature on spiritual warfare during this time period maintained this Christ-centered viewpoint. Perhaps the most substantial Puritan reflection on the implications of Christ's conquest for the church is William Gurnall's *The Christian in Complete Armour* in which he applies the warfare passage of Ephesians 6:10-20 to believers.<sup>128</sup> The Puritans and their contemporaries recognized that the Old

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<sup>123</sup>Francis Turretin argues that redemption is achieved "by just satisfaction, as the sponsor pays for the debtor. Although gratuitous deliverance has a place so far as we are concerned—and deliverance by power obtains here, so far as the devil is concerned—and the exchange so far as Christ is concerned—yet as regards God the judge a just satisfaction must intervene." *Ibid.*, 472.

<sup>124</sup>*Ibid.*, 499.

<sup>125</sup>Heidegger explains, "And not even in heaven after the end of the world will Christ abdicate his mediatorial Kingship nor himself be divested of that kingship by God the Father." *Ibid.*, 484.

<sup>126</sup>While most of this section focuses on Puritan writers, it also highlights other theologians from this time period who commented on the divine warrior theme in Christology.

<sup>127</sup>John Bunyan, *The Holy War* (London: Dorman Newman, 1682; reprint, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

<sup>128</sup>William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour* (1662; reprint, London: Banner of Truth, 1964); Bryan G. Zacharias, *The Embattled Christian: William Gurnall and the Puritan View of Spiritual Warfare* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1995).

Testament anticipated the messianic victory of Christ the warrior king.<sup>129</sup> They also recognized the spiritual nature of the battle: “The angels of God,” claims Spurgeon, “are the standing army of King Jesus.”<sup>130</sup>

The Puritans and their peers saw the death of Christ in both its wrath-bearing direction toward God and its victory-achieving direction toward Satan, sin, and death.

John Owen, who championed penal substitution, asserts, “No proposition can be more plain than this, that the power of Satan was destroyed by the death of Christ.”<sup>131</sup>

Following the typology of David’s victory over Goliath, Jesus used his enemy’s own weapon to defeat him.<sup>132</sup> King Jesus, through the sacrifice of his own blood,<sup>133</sup>

“completely vanquished all His foes.”<sup>134</sup> Following prior theologians, Bavinck

recognized that the atonement frees believers from both the guilt and the guile of sin.<sup>135</sup>

Therefore, like their theological predecessors, the Puritans and their contemporaries

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<sup>129</sup>John Wesley explains from Isaiah 25 that “Christ will by his death destroy the power of death, take away the sting of the first death, and prevent the second.” As cited in Owen Collins, *The Classic Bible Commentary: An Essential Collection of History’s Finest Commentaries in One Volume* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999), 609.

<sup>130</sup>Charles H. Spurgeon, *Storm Signals: A Collection of Sermons* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 239.

<sup>131</sup>John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews with Preliminary Exercitations*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Ritchie, 1813), 3:474.

<sup>132</sup>Edwards explains, “Christ came into the world to destroy the works of the devil. And this was the very thing that did it, viz, the blood and death of Christ. The cross was the devil’s own weapon; and with this weapon he was overthrown, as David cut off Goliath’s head with his own sword.” Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of President Edwards* (New York: Leavitt & Allen, 1852), 4:158.

<sup>133</sup>“Jesus the king,” notes Kuyper, “bought His people with His own blood.” Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, trans. Henri De Vries (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1900), 179.

<sup>134</sup>Charles H. Spurgeon, *Spiritual Warfare in a Believer’s Life*, ed. Robert Hall (Lynnwood, WA: Emerald, 1993), 23.

<sup>135</sup>Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Sin and Salvation in Christ*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 3:372.

united *Christus Victor* and penal substitution, recognizing the cross as substitutionary victory.<sup>136</sup>

For the Puritans and their peers, the messianic mission of Christ should drive the militant mission of the church. It is the gospel of Jesus' victorious death and resurrection that helps believers stand firm against their foes.<sup>137</sup> Christians should not fear in the midst of spiritual warfare because, as Spurgeon states, "the result of the battle is certain, for as the Lord our Savior has overcome once, even so shall we most surely conquer in Him."<sup>138</sup> The church's warfare in Christ is fought through the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.<sup>139</sup> As a result of Christ's work in the kingdom community of the church, churches are "the armies of the Lamb, the grand object of whose existence is to extend the Redeemer's kingdom."<sup>140</sup> With the rise of the

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<sup>136</sup>Charles Hodge points out that "Christ redeems us not only from the curse of the law, from the law itself as a covenant of works, from the power of sin, and from the dominion of Satan, but also from all evil." Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Scribners, 1904), 2:520.

<sup>137</sup>Warfield explains that "as the Risen One He has become Head over all things; and that He must reign until He shall have put all things under His feet. Our brother, who has like us been acquainted with death—He it is who rules over the ages, the ages that are past, and the ages that are passing, and the ages that are yet to come." He continues, "If our hearts should fail us as we stand over against the hosts of wickedness which surround us, let us encourage ourselves and one another with the great reminder: Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David!" B. B. Warfield, *The Savior of the World* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1991), 212–13.

<sup>138</sup>He adds, "If Christ on the cross has spoiled Satan, let us not be afraid to encounter this great enemy of our souls. In all things we must be made like Christ. We must bear our cross, and on that cross we must fight as Christ did with sin and death and hell." Spurgeon, *Spiritual Warfare in a Believer's Life*, 23.

<sup>139</sup>Spurgeon insists, "In this combat, you will have to use a sword such as even evil spirits can feel. If you are to live through this fight and come away victorious, you will be forced to fight at close quarters. The foe aims at the heart and pushes home. A spear will not do, nor a bow and arrow. The enemy is too near for anything but hand-to-hand fighting. And our foes are not only of our house but also of our heart." He continues, "I find an enemy within that is always near, and I cannot get away from him. Now for the short sword of Holy Scripture, to stab and cut, near and now. No sling and stone will avail us here, but we must take the sword. You have to slay your foe, or your foe will slay you." *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>140</sup>Andrew Fuller, *The Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (New Haven, CT: Collier, 1825), 8:463.

Enlightenment, diversification and dissolution in theology emerged that set the stage for a variety of approaches to the divine warrior in Christology in contemporary theology.

### **Christ the Warrior King and Contemporary Theology**

In contemporary theology, the biblical motif of Christ as warrior king has received significant attention, with a variety of theological streams appropriating this theme in different ways.<sup>141</sup> When Aulén wrote *Christus Victor* in 1931, he asserted that “at least in regard to the doctrine of the Atonement, a door appears to stand open now, which has been closed for centuries, for the classic idea to come again to the fore; and it would not be hard to find indications in contemporary theological literature that it is already exercising its forces for a great advance.”<sup>142</sup> Aulén was precisely correct. The *Christus Victor* theory of the atonement has seen a resurgence in (1) Neo-Orthodox, (2) liberation, (3) feminist, and (4) evangelical theologies.<sup>143</sup>

First, responding to theological concerns about liberalism, Neo-Orthodox thinkers such as Barth crafted a doctrinal perspective that included an understanding of Christ as victorious warrior king. According to Barth, the kingdom of Christ stands in

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<sup>141</sup>This section has a different focus than chap. 1. In chap. 1, it surveyed contemporary approaches to the biblical theme of warfare in general. This section centers on contemporary appropriations of Christ as warrior king and the victory he achieves through the atonement. Boersma points out, “The rediscovery of the *Christus Victor* theme is a positive element in recent developments of atonement theology.” Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 199.

<sup>142</sup>Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 145.

<sup>143</sup>Other streams of thought that feature *Christus Victor* in contemporary theology include open theism, the New Perspective on Paul, and the emerging church movement. For *Christus Victor* in open theism, see Gregory A. Boyd, “Christus Victor View,” in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, ed. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 23-49. For *Christus Victor* in the New Perspective on Paul, see N. T. Wright, *The Scriptures, the Cross & the Power of God: Reflections for Holy Week* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 60; idem, *Evil and the Justice of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 156. For more on *Christus Victor* in the emerging church, see Brian D. McLaren, *Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 78–80.

“radical antithesis” to his rivals in the “sphere of Satan.”<sup>144</sup> The *Christus Victor* model of the atonement “reappeared in Barth,” notes Bloesch, where the heart of the atonement was “the overcoming of sin and the chaos, the victory of grace over human sin.”<sup>145</sup> Though Barth still reserved a place for the satisfaction model in his atonement theology, his primary emphasis was on the cross as the conquest of chaos.<sup>146</sup> This triumph is appropriated to humanity through the doctrine of election so that as humanity is “elected in Christ, the real elect one, humankind triumphs with Christ.”<sup>147</sup> Despite the victory that the cross achieves, Christians still wrestle with the powers who war against them through deception.<sup>148</sup>

Second, erupting from the turmoil of post-Vatican II Latin America, liberation theology developed as an alternative theological solution to the plight of untold millions living in poverty. It centered on Christ as warrior-liberator.<sup>149</sup> In many ways, liberation theology was an application of Moltmann’s theology of hope, which centered on eschatological deliverance for the oppressed.<sup>150</sup> With the oppression of the poor as its

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<sup>144</sup>Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance, vol. 1.1 (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 47–48.

<sup>145</sup>Bloesch, *Jesus Christ*, 149; Herbert Hartwell, *The Theology of Karl Barth: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 131–41.

<sup>146</sup>Bloesch, *Jesus Christ*, 149.

<sup>147</sup>Patterson, “The Work of Christ,” 580.

<sup>148</sup>Bloesch, *Jesus Christ*, 220.

<sup>149</sup>Explaining the focus of liberation theology, Deane Fife says, “Basically it is the effort to relate the teachings of the Christian faith to the lives of the poor and oppressed. Theology begins and ends with the downtrodden and their vision of life.” Deane William Fife, *Contemporary American Theologies: A Critical Survey* (New York: Seabury, 1981), 62. Gustavo Gutiérrez was instrumental in launching this movement. See Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988).

<sup>150</sup>Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (London: SCM, 1967), 326. Bloesch explains Moltmann’s eschatology of liberation: “This



starting point, the focus of liberation theology is that God is a “God of action, a liberator, and a God who calls us to action.”<sup>151</sup> Sin is not seen as a personal rebellion against a holy God rooted in Genesis 1-3 but a corporate oppression of the poor by the political and economic principalities and powers rooted in Exodus 1-3.<sup>152</sup> Put simply, Christ the warrior king is the liberator of the oppressed.<sup>153</sup> Through the liberation that Jesus accomplishes on the cross, he inaugurates the kingdom in order to transform society through the deliverance of the downtrodden.<sup>154</sup> Therefore, liberation theology sees Christ as the warrior king who achieves victory over the powers of political and economic tyranny to liberate the poor from the corporate sin of oppression.

Third, emerging in the 1970’s alongside of the secular feminist movement, feminist theology presented Christ as a warrior king whose liberating love delivers women from the oppression of men. Rejecting the patriarchal oppression that they

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world is not yet the kingdom of God but the battleground and construction site for the kingdom, which will come to earth from God himself.” Bloesch, *Jesus Christ*, 221.

<sup>151</sup>John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 132.

<sup>152</sup>African-American liberation theologian James Cone contends, “Sin is not primarily a religious impurity, but rather it is the social, political, and economic oppression of the poor.” James H. Cone, “Christian Faith and Political Praxis,” in *The Challenge of Liberation Theology: A First-World Response*, ed. Brian Mahan and L. Dale Richesin (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1981), 57. Letham laments, “Corporate and social sin is a major factor that the church has for too long neglected. Aspects of these themes are important and need to be stated. But in liberation theology the death of Christ is not held to be propitiation in the sense we have described it, and which we believe the Bible to teach.” Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 143.

<sup>153</sup>Leonardo Boff describes the proper understanding of Jesus as “the Christ, the only begotten and eternal Son of God, sent as man to liberate us from our sins.” Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Times* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978), 2. Referring to *Christus Victor*’s relevance to evil social structures, Boyd notes, “Because of this emphasis on the *Christus Victor* model, a number of black, liberation and feminist theologians have been making explicit or implicit use of *Christus Victor* themes (though often in a demythologized form).” Boyd, “Christus Victor View,” 48.

<sup>154</sup>Boff describes the kingdom in this way: “The Kingdom of God means a total, global, structural revolution of the old order, brought about by God and only by God.” Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 63–64.

perceived was the result of traditional male language and imagery for God, mainline feminist theologians sought women's liberation through the emasculation of God.<sup>155</sup> Feminists replaced the view of sin as personal insurgency against a God of holiness with the view of sin as broken relationship with a God of love.<sup>156</sup> Some feminist theologians reject the divinity of Jesus<sup>157</sup> while others see Jesus himself as a feminist.<sup>158</sup>

Despite these variations, there is consensus that the traditional male-oriented rendition of Christology results in "Christolatry" that is harmful to women.<sup>159</sup> While some feminists caricature the cross as divine child abuse,<sup>160</sup> they embrace a variation of the *Christus Victor* model in which Jesus is seen as a champion for women who delivers them from patriarchal subjugation.<sup>161</sup> Therefore, feminist theology sees Christ as the warrior king who demonstrates liberating love on the Cross in a way that delivers women

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<sup>155</sup>In this well-known feminist line, Mary Daly captures their concerns: "If God is male, then the male is God." Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1973), 9. Daly also calls for the castration of God. *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>156</sup>Sallie McFague explains that sin is "not pride or unbelief but the refusal of relationship—the refusal to be the beloved of our lover God and the refusal to be lover of all God loves." Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 139.

<sup>157</sup>Carter Heyward, *Our Passion for Justice: Images of Power, Sexuality, and Liberation* (New York: Pilgrim, 1984), 217.

<sup>158</sup>Leonard Swidler, "Jesus Was a Feminist," *Catholic World* 212, no. 1 (1971): 177–83.

<sup>159</sup>Rosemary Ruether contends, "Christology has been the doctrine of the Christian tradition that has been most frequently used against women." Rosemary Radford Ruether, *To Change the World: Christology and Cultural Criticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 45.

<sup>160</sup>Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker, "For God So Loved the World," in *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), 26.

<sup>161</sup>Ruether asserts that "what is paradigmatic about Jesus is not his biological ontology, but rather his person as a lived message and practice. That message is good news to the poor, a confrontation with systems of religion and society that incarnate oppressive privilege, and an affirmation of the despised as loved and liberated by God." Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Can Christology Be Liberated from Patriarchy?," in *Reconstructing the Christ Symbol: Essays in Feminist Christology*, ed. Maryanne Stevens (New York: Paulist, 1993), 23–24; Darby Kathleen Ray, *Deceiving the Devil: Atonement, Abuse, and Ransom* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim, 1998), 123–41.

from patriarchal oppression. In each of these revisionist models in contemporary theology, *Christus Victor* achieves liberation from every other oppression than the one that matters most—the wrath of God warranted by the sin of man.<sup>162</sup> Harold O. J. Brown rightly asks, “What does it profit a man if he liberate the whole world, yet fail to be liberated himself?”<sup>163</sup>

Fourth, evangelicals have identified Christ as a warrior king in several ways.<sup>164</sup> Evangelical theology recognizes that, in the fall, “Satan had gained mastery of the human race by defeating a man in holy war.”<sup>165</sup> From that point forward, people, events and institutions of the Old Testament typologically point ahead to the coming of a victorious warrior king.<sup>166</sup> In fulfillment of these messianic expectations, Leithart notes, “Jesus waged holy war against Satan himself.”<sup>167</sup> Therefore, though many evangelicals focus on the primacy of penal substitution in their view of the cross, they also see that the atonement was the point of greatest defeat for the kingdom of Satan and greatest victory

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<sup>162</sup>Harold Brown’s insightful observation about liberation theology rings true for the other theologies as well: “In affirming that salvation, to be truly and effectively human salvation, must include many kinds of human liberation, liberation theology has obscured if not denied the fact that only one kind of liberation deserves being called salvation, because only one kind of oppression is so totally beyond mere human correction that it requires a divine conquest.” Harold O. J. Brown, “What is Liberation Theology?,” in *Liberation Theology*, ed. Ronald H. Nash (Milford, MI: Mott, 1984), 15.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid.

<sup>164</sup>Because the primary focus of this dissertation is on an evangelical appropriation of Christobellian kingdom warfare, this historical summary will be kept to a minimum.

<sup>165</sup>Peter J. Leithart, *The Kingdom and the Power: Rediscovering the Centrality of the Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1993), 36.

<sup>166</sup>Jeffery, Ovey and Sach express that “the exodus is a paradigm for God’s deliverance of his people from hostile powers. Just as the Lord set his people free from slavery to Pharaoh, their oppressor, so also the Lord Jesus Christ has set us free from slavery to sin, the world and the devil, those hostile powers that once held us in bondage (cf. Eph. 2:1-3; Col. 2:14-15; Heb. 2:14-15; Rev. 12).” Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 36.

<sup>167</sup>Leithart, *The Kingdom and the Power*, 35.

for the kingdom of Christ.<sup>168</sup> The victory of the cross goes hand in hand with the conquest of the resurrection.<sup>169</sup> For evangelicals, Bright writes, “The victory of the Church, then, is the victory of the Cross.”<sup>170</sup> Overall, in evangelical theology the theme of Christ as warrior king is often present. However, it is usually in a latent form that does not seem to explore fully the vast implications that this theme can yield when rooted in the new evangelical consensus on the already but not yet nature of the kingdom.

### **Summary: Christ the Warrior King and Historical Themes**

In summary, a historical analysis of the divine warrior theme in Christology reveals several major themes. First, Christ the warrior king has been a feature of Christology in every stage of church history, even though theologians have presented it in a variety of ways. The theme of Christ the warrior king experienced: (1) progression in the patristics as it was developed, (2) regression in the medieval period as it was overshadowed by the satisfaction model, (3) integration in the Reformation as it united with penal substitution, (4) recalibration in post-Reformation theology as it adapted the Reformation renaissance into multiple streams of thought, and (5) variation in contemporary theology as it appeared in a myriad of theological systems. Though each chronological period demonstrated different contours to the motif, this historical analysis

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<sup>168</sup>James suggests that “the cross is the point of greatest defeat (Jesus was killed, crucified and buried); yet at the same time, it is the point of greatest triumph, for it was precisely in his death that his followers have life eternal.” James, “The Atonement in Church History,” 214. The systematic theology chapter will discuss the relationship of *Christus Victor* and penal substitution at length.

<sup>169</sup>Bloesch explains, “The atonement is a royal victory because of the resurrection. It is in the resurrection that we see the conquest of sin, death and the devil.” Bloesch, *Jesus Christ*, 161–62.

<sup>170</sup>John Bright, *The Kingdom of God*, rev. ed. (New York: Abingdon, 1980), 267.

has demonstrated that the divine warrior theme in Christology has held important standing in theological systems throughout church history.

Second, this historical analysis reveals that Aulén's landmark work on the subject, *Christus Victor*, was correct in what it affirmed about Christ the warrior king but incorrect in what it denied about the topic. As George notes, it correctly recognized the warfare motif in the atonement: "Despite its one-sided emphasis, Aulén's famous typology of the atonement reminds us that at the heart of the Christian gospel there is a titanic struggle between diabolical evil and the God of love."<sup>171</sup> However, this historical analysis shows that Aulén's antipathy to the satisfaction (or, as he calls it, Latin) view seems to be unwarranted from historical grounds. Instead, this historical evaluation demonstrates that these two models can (and perhaps must) co-exist in a robustly biblical view of the cross and resurrection.<sup>172</sup> The upcoming systematic theology chapter will further evaluate this claim.

Third, this historical analysis of Christ the warrior king confirms that a fresh exploration of the theme can yield significant insights into contemporary theology. Aulén closes his monumental work by saying, "Let it be added, in conclusion, that if the classic idea of the Atonement ever again resumes a leading place in Christian theology, it is not likely that it will revert to precisely the same forms of expression that it has used in the past; its revival will not consist in a putting back of the clock."<sup>173</sup> It seems as if a

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<sup>171</sup>He adds, "Through his cross and resurrection, Jesus Christ has emerged victorious over all the monsters and tyrants whose mission is to destroy and dehumanize all persons made in the image of God. In the wounds of Jesus we too share a victory over sin, hell, and the grave." George, "The Atonement in Martin Luther's Theology," 278.

<sup>172</sup>Michael Horton rightly notes, "Aulén has reminded us that an account of the atonement that does not include the theme of cosmic conquest is inadequate." Horton, *Lord and Servant*, 243.

<sup>173</sup>Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 158–59.

reappropriation of the divine warrior theme in Christology may have the ability not only to provide additional insights into key contemporary issues but even to reshape the practice of systematic theology altogether.

Writing thirty-seven years after the initial publication of *Christus Victor*, Aulén makes a claim that still resonates: “In the situation of theology today it may be, perhaps, even more needful to emphasize this perspective—the perspective of victory—than it was when my book first appeared.”<sup>174</sup> But how does Scripture portray the messianic expectation and fulfillment of the divine warrior king imagery in biblical theology? This chapter has offered a descriptive evaluation of the divine warrior motif in historical theology. The following chapter begins this dissertation’s constructive proposal for how to best understand the divine warrior theme as a Christological feature, beginning with the messianic expectation of the Old Testament.

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<sup>174</sup>Ibid., ix.

CHAPTER 3  
CHRIST THE WARRIOR KING AND  
BIBLICAL THEOLOGY:  
OLD TESTAMENT

“For the sensitive Christian reader of the Old Testament the frequent references to war create a variety of problems,” states Peter Craigie.<sup>1</sup> More graphically, atheist Richard Dawkins claims that “the Bible story of Joshua’s destruction of Jericho, and the invasion of the Promised Land in general, is morally indistinguishable from Hitler’s invasion of Poland, or Saddam Hussein’s massacres of the Kurds and the Marsh Arabs.” He continues, “The Bible may be an arresting and poetic work of fiction, but it is not the sort of book you should give your children to form their morals.”<sup>2</sup> At the root of their concerns is an interest in how to reconcile the centrality of ongoing warfare in the Old Testament with the character of God’s love in the New Testament.

What does the warfare worldview of the Old Testament reveal about the nature of Israel’s messianic expectation? How does the storyline of Scripture progress through conflict in ways that point ahead to a coming warrior king? How can Christians reconcile the violent warfare of the Old Testament with the non-violent teachings of Jesus in the New Testament? An assessment of the divine warrior theme in the messianic expectation

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<sup>1</sup>Peter C. Craigie, *The Problem of War in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 9.

<sup>2</sup>Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Mariner, 2008), 280. What is at stake in this discussion is even greater than Dawkins realizes. The issue is not just over whether the Bible is appropriate to form the morals of children, but whether it is suitable to ground the faith of believers.

of the Old Testament addresses these questions and more by framing Old Testament messianism in its redemptive historical context.

This chapter argues that the divine warrior theme is a central feature in the messianic expectation of the Old Testament. To accomplish this task, it begins by reflecting on the nature of messianic expectation in general. Then, it traces the relationship between the divine warrior motif and messianic expectation throughout the stages of redemptive history in the Old Testament. Beginning in the Garden of Eden, it goes on to consider the anticipation of a conquering messiah revealed in the patriarchs, the nation of Israel and the prophets. Finally, it concludes with a reflection on major themes in the Old Testament's messianic expectation. In summary, the Old Testament expects the coming messianic warrior king to be a new David bringing about a new reign over a new Israel through a new Exodus into a new creation.

Contemporary interest in the warfare of the Old Testament has surged in the last 150 years of scholarship, but it has rarely focused on its relation to messianic expectation. The lack of interaction between the two results from the historical-critical or history of religions approaches driving most recent considerations of Old Testament warfare.<sup>3</sup> Interest in Old Testament warfare launched with the work of Wellhausen, who popularized the term holy war, and was discussed by both Max Weber and Schwally.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>For a critique of these approaches, see Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 14–30.

<sup>4</sup>Ben C. Ollenburger, "Gerhard von Rad's Theory of Holy War," in *Holy War in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 6–7. Merrill defines holy war as "any kind of conflict in which Yahweh is explicitly identified as a protagonist for or against his people Israel." Eugene H. Merrill, "A Response to Tremper Longman III," in *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 197. This definition is broader than the one embraced by most Old Testament scholars who, though they lack agreement on which battles qualify as holy war, limit it to a select few skirmishes.



Building off of Wellhausen's perspective, Gerhard Von Rad penned the watershed book *Holy War in Ancient Israel* in which he argued for the cultic, sacral nature of holy war from a historical-critical perspective.<sup>5</sup> Next, Frank Cross initiated a history of religions approach to Old Testament warfare in which scholars compared the military activity of Israel to surrounding ANE cultures.<sup>6</sup> Recent biblical-theological approaches to the divine warrior theme have explored the Old Testament data.<sup>7</sup> However, each of these approaches has failed to account specifically for the divine warrior motif in the messianic expectation of the Old Testament.

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<sup>5</sup>He writes, "Thus, we can indeed consider holy war as an eminently cultic undertaking—that is, prescribed and sanctioned by fixed, traditional, sacred rites and observances." Gerhard Von Rad, *Holy War in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 51. For more on his methodology, see *ibid.*, 40. For more on the connection between Von Rad's work and Wellhausen, see Ollenburger, "Gerhard von Rad's Theory of Holy War," 12. Initial criticisms of his assertion that holy war was a sacral institution began with Smend. *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>6</sup>Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973); Patrick D. Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973). Miller critiques Von Rad for both his failure to use the history of religions approach and for his lack of consideration of theological imagery in Old Testament warfare. *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>7</sup>Tremper Longman and Daniel G. Reid, *God Is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997). For a critical review of Boyd's work, see D. A. Carson, "God, the Bible, and Spiritual Warfare: A Review Article," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42, no. 2 (1999): 251-69. In addition to Carson's concerns, this dissertation will argue by implication that Boyd's open theism undermines his treatment of the divine warrior theme rather than enhances it. For a review of Longman and Reid's work, see Eric W. Bolger, "God is a Warrior," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40, no. 4 (1997): 689; Robert B. Chisholm, "God Is a Warrior," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153, no. 612 (1996): 496-497. Concerns over Longman and Reid's approach include its (1) failure to integrate discussions of the kingdom into its treatment of warfare, (2) tendency to flatten out the significance of Old Testament war for new covenant believers, (3) neglect of Adam as the first divine warrior and the implications of Gen 3:15 for the Old Testament's treatment of warfare, and (4) inattention to the typological implications of Old Testament warfare for the coming of the messianic warrior king. Despite these significant deficiencies, it is still likely the best evangelical biblical theology of warfare currently available.

## **Christ the Warrior King and the Messianic Expectation of the Old Testament**

This section situates the upcoming discussion on the divine warrior theme in messianic expectation by not only discussing the nature of messianism in general but also declaring the presuppositions that shape this chapter's approach to the text. In short, the Old Testament is a messianic text that centers on the way God fights for his people as he seeks to establish his kingdom.<sup>8</sup> But what is the nature of the messiah in the Old Testament? How should Old Testament messianism be understood?

Contemporary treatments of messianic expectation in the Old Testament have reached a variety of conclusions about the nature of Old Testament messianism. Some scholars deny the messianic nature of the Old Testament text based on linguistic grounds.<sup>9</sup> Others reject it based on theological grounds because of the illegitimacy of the monarchy.<sup>10</sup> However, others have preserved the common perspective on the issue throughout church history and defended the centrality of the messianic nature of the Old Testament text.<sup>11</sup> This chapter agrees that messianic expectation is present in the Old Testament and central to the unfolding of God's redemptive historical plan.

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<sup>8</sup>For various popular-level lists of the messianic passages in the Old Testament, see O. S. Stearns, *A Syllabus of the Messianic Passages in the Old Testament* (Boston: Bartlett, 1884); Herbert Lockyer, *All the Messianic Prophecies of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988); James E. Smith, *What the Bible Teaches about the Promised Messiah* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993).

<sup>9</sup>Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 1.

<sup>10</sup>Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period: From the Beginnings to the End of the Monarchy*, trans. John Bowden (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 1:115.

<sup>11</sup>Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll R., eds., *Israel's Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003); James M. Hamilton, "New Testament: Christ Revealed," *The Tie* 76, no. 1 (2008): 10–11.

To evaluate the divine warrior theme in the messianic expectation of the Old Testament, it is important to define the term messiah. Because scholars dispute the definition of messianic expectation and since it bears such significance on the results of canonical interpretation, the need for a clear definition is all the more significant.<sup>12</sup> This dissertation will embrace Wolter Rose's definition that the messiah is "a future royal figure sent by God who will bring salvation to God's people and the world and establish a kingdom characterized by features like peace and justice."<sup>13</sup>

This concept of messianic expectation will unfold in the forthcoming sections of this chapter as it assesses the divine warrior theme based on the following theological presuppositions about the Christ-centered nature of Old Testament theology. First, Old Testament theology is messianic.<sup>14</sup> As such, the Old Testament displays an ongoing Christotelic anticipation of eschatological messianic fulfillment throughout its entire corpus.<sup>15</sup> Second, Old Testament theology is unified.<sup>16</sup> Because of the divine authorship

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<sup>12</sup>For an overview of the definition of messiah, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The One Who Is to Come* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 1–7; Mark J. Boda, "Figuring the Future: The Prophets and Messiah," in *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 35–37; Richard Schultz, "The King in the Book of Isaiah," in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. R. S. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 145–47. Heskett rightly notes that how messianism is defined shapes what will seem to be messianic in Randall Heskett, *Messianism within the Scriptural Scroll of Isaiah* (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 2.

<sup>13</sup>Wolter H. Rose, *Zemah and Zerubbabel: Messianic Expectations in the Early Postexilic Period* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 23; idem, "Messiah," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 566. The future orientation of Israel's messianism espoused by Rose seems to contrast with the perspective of Collins and Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God*, 1.

<sup>14</sup>James Hamilton claims that "the Old Testament is a messianic document, written from a messianic perspective in order to provoke and sustain messianic hope." Hamilton, "New Testament," 11.

<sup>15</sup>Indeed, even Von Rad recognizes the anticipation of eschatological fulfillment throughout the Old Testament: "Whether we take a text from the patriarchal narratives, or one from the Book of Joshua, or from the histories, we shall always notice that the event described stands in the shelter of a word of God that is pregnant with the future and points beyond itself to something yet to come." He continues, "Thus, exegesis of Old Testament words and texts must, under all circumstances, try to understand them in

of Scripture, the Old Testament provides the first stages of a unified narrative centered on the establishment of God's kingdom.<sup>17</sup>

Third, Old Testament theology is progressive. The drama of Scripture unfolds throughout multiple epochs as God's redemptive intentions become increasingly clear through both his acts and his self-revelation.<sup>18</sup> Fourth, Old Testament theology is redemptive-historical.<sup>19</sup> As the epochs of Scripture develop, they reveal how all of history is progressing toward the redemptive reign of the warrior Christ. Fifth, Old Testament theology is typological.<sup>20</sup> Throughout the Old Testament, God established people, events

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the light of this movement towards a fulfillment, to which, as we have seen, they are already themselves inherently open." Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 2:371–72.

<sup>16</sup>Clowney notes the unified nature of God's redemptive plan: "The Old Testament follows God's one great plan for human history and redemption, and the plan is not only from him, but centers on him: his presence in his incarnate Son." Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 37.

<sup>17</sup>On the relationship between divine authorship and the unified narrative of Scripture, see D. A. Carson, "Recent Developments in the Doctrine of Scripture," in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 45; Paul D. Feinberg, "The Meaning of Inerrancy," in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 282.

<sup>18</sup>The progressive nature of the Old Testament narrative is particularly relevant to discussions of messianic expectation because it enables Old Testament theology to recognize increasing development and clarity on the nature of the messiah as the storyline advances. Sailhamer notes that "in the later stages of the formation of the Hebrew Bible its authors were primarily concerned with making more explicit the messianic hope that was already explicit in the earliest texts. This is what I would call 'text and commentary.'" He continues, "In other words, the later stages in the formation of the Hebrew Bible treat the earlier stages much like the NT treats the OT. They build on and develop the messianic vision that is already present in the earlier texts." John H. Sailhamer, "The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44, no. 1 (2001): 22.

<sup>19</sup>Clowney points out, "The epochs of the history of redemption show the Lordship of the Second person of the Trinity. It is the coming of the Lord that is the climax of the epochs of redemption." Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 18.

<sup>20</sup>For more on the concept of typology, see Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Typological Structures* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981); Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002). For a summary of historical approaches to typology, see Gerard Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 153–65.

and institutions that intentionally and prospectively pointed ahead to a coming messianic warrior king.<sup>21</sup>

All theologians seem to approach the biblical text with some kind of typology. This typology directly impacts how they understand the theme of kingdom warfare. For example, the history of religions approach writes about this intercultural relationship in a way that suggests a typological connection between the Old Testament and the ANE. For these scholars, it is more than just coincidental connections.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, for these theologians, the starting place for an accurate treatment of warfare in the Old Testament is not the inspired Scripture of the New Testament but the parallel scripture of others in the ANE. While these scholars build their approach to kingdom warfare upon organic connections in the ANE, the biblical-theological approach advocated in this work prioritizes the typological connections that exist within the canon.<sup>23</sup> Instead of building a warfare theology on Canaanite myth and Hebrew epic, it should be rooted in the canonical foundation of the apostles and prophets.<sup>24</sup> Though there are limits to what this

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<sup>21</sup>Therefore, Clowney is correct to note, “To conclude that we can never see a type where the New Testament does not identify it is to confess hermeneutical bankruptcy.” Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 31. From the earliest stages of church history, interpreters embodied a Christ-centered typological approach to the canon. See David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 41–42; Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1998).

<sup>22</sup>For instance, F. M. Cross elaborates on “the relationships and continuities between Yahweh, god of Israel, and Canaanite ‘El and his mythology.” Then, he contends that “Yahwism also owes a debt to the myths of Ba’l” because its “language depicting Yahweh as divine warrior manifest is borrowed almost directly from Canaanite descriptions of the theophany of Ba’l as storm god.” This connection causes Cross to conclude that “any discussion of the language of theophany in early Israel must begin with an examination of the Canaanite lore.” Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 147.

<sup>23</sup>Of course, how typological connections with ANE literature function is unique to biblical typology. However, key typological characteristics including historical correspondence and (at times) escalation characterize this type of ANE typology along with appropriate linguistic and imagery parallels.

<sup>24</sup>In a personal conversation, Patrick Miller confirmed the accuracy of this parallel.

chapter can accomplish, it seeks to fill this void in the literature by demonstrating that the divine warrior theme is a central concept in Old Testament messianism.<sup>25</sup>

As a result of these factors, this chapter is structured based on redemptive-historical epochs rather than individual canonical books of the Old Testament. This approach seems best not only because it allows the chapter to synthesize more data within its space limitations but also because it enables it to demonstrate the progressive development of the Old Testament's understanding of the coming messiah as a warrior king.<sup>26</sup> In light of the established definition of the messiah and the explanation of the theological presuppositions that shape the following exercise in Old Testament theology, the subsequent sections will trace the divine warrior theme in the messianic expectation of the Old Testament.

### **Christ the Warrior King and the Garden of Eden**

From the garden of creation to the garden of new creation, the Bible presents a pattern of cosmic conflict. Thus, the portrayal of both the creation account in general and

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<sup>25</sup>Several areas of study are outside the scope of this chapter that are, nevertheless, relevant to its discussion and worthy of further consideration. First, it will not consider the divine warrior theme in the ANE in general. For more on warfare in the ANE, see Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 83–90; Boyd, *God at War*, 73–92; Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel*. Second, it will not consider the divine warrior theme in the intertestamental literature. For more on warfare in the intertestamental literature, see Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism*, trans. G. W. Anderson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956), 311–21; William Horbury, *Messianism among Jews and Christians: Biblical and Historical Studies* (New York: T & T Clark, 2003). For the divine warrior theme in the messianic expectation of the Qumran community, see Andrew Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 235–36, 265–66, 337–38. Third, it will not offer a sustained interaction with contemporary approaches to messianism, but instead will focus on its relation to the divine warrior theme. For more on contemporary approaches to messianism, see William Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM, 1998), 13–25.

<sup>26</sup>Longman and Reid take a similar approach: “The pervasiveness of the theme of the divine warrior in the Old Testament, as well as the length and complexity of that portion of the canon, suggests that a synthetic approach to the Old Testament material is more manageable.” Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 17. The same structure will be followed in the New Testament chapter.

the Edenic narrative of Adam and Eve in particular is pivotal to establish the trajectory of warfare throughout the turning points of redemptive history. This section argues that the creation account presents (1) God as a divine warrior who creates the world through the authority of his word, (2) humanity as viceregents called to exercise dominion over his creation, (3) sin as rebellion against the kingship of God and embrace of the rulership of the Serpent, and (4) promise as a messianic word of hope about future deliverance from the Serpent through the seed of the woman.<sup>27</sup>

### **The Creating Warrior King and the Authority of God**

Recently, Peter Enns' work *Inspiration and Incarnation* and his subsequent dismissal from Westminster Seminary have once again ignited a firestorm of debate in the evangelical world over the creation account in Genesis 1-11, especially as it relates to the warfare-oriented creation accounts of other ANE religions. Scholars have offered a number of explanations on the relationship between kingdom warfare and the creation accounts of both the Bible and the ANE. Theologians like Enns make the general suggestion that the biblical creation account could be influenced by the ANE pattern of creation myth.<sup>28</sup> More specifically, some Old Testament scholars seek to tie the biblical creation account with either Babylonian and Canaanite creation myths or Egyptian creation accounts.<sup>29</sup> In addition, Gregory Boyd perceives the Genesis 1 account both as

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<sup>27</sup>For more on a Christ-centered approach to Genesis, see Tremper Longman, *How to Read Genesis* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 163–76; Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

<sup>28</sup>Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 39–41.

<sup>29</sup>For a comparison of the biblical creation account to Canaanite creation myths, see Cross, *Canaanite Myth*. For a comparison of the biblical creation account to Egyptian creation myths, see Gordon

creation (Gen 1:1) and re-creation (Gen 1:2ff.) made necessary by the chaos created through the warfare of good and evil in the creative process.<sup>30</sup> If that concept is not troubling enough, Boyd has also recently suggested that the process of evolution should be viewed as part of cosmic warfare.<sup>31</sup> How can Boyd reconcile these concepts with the biblical declaration that in God's eyes, the pre-fall creation was "very good" (Gen 1:31)?

Instead, an evangelical view of the creation account as kingdom warfare recognizes that God as sovereign king creates the cosmos through the authority of his word. Though there may be parallels between the creation account in Genesis and the warfare-oriented creation myths of surrounding cultures, the biblical narrative is unique in its portrayal of God as sovereign king who demonstrates his authority by creating the world through his word (Gen 1:3).<sup>32</sup> God's majesty over what he makes is seen not only in the authority of his word to pronounce the existence of creation but also the capacity to announce the goodness of creation (Gen 1:4, 31). From God's role in creation, it becomes evident that he is the reigning king who speaks his kingdom into existence through his authoritative word.

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Johnston, "Genesis 1 and Ancient Egyptian Creation Myths," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165 (2008): 178–94.

<sup>30</sup>Boyd's treatment of Gen 1 in *God at War* may be the most unusual portion of the book. In his defense of Gen 1 as re-creation, he suggests, "This theory postulates a prehumanoid world of indefinite duration, about which we know nothing more than that it somehow became a battlefield between good and evil and was consequently made into a total wasteland." Boyd, *God at War*, 109.

<sup>31</sup>Building on a theory espoused by Ralph Winter, Boyd makes the case for evolution as cosmic warfare in which the evolutionary process results from pre-fall cosmic conflict between good and evil. Gregory A. Boyd, "Evolution as Cosmic Warfare: A Biblical Perspective on Satan and 'Natural Evil'," in *Creation Made Free: Open Theology Engaging Science*, ed. Thomas Jay Oord (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009), 125–48.

<sup>32</sup>Boyd, *God at War*, 131. Moore states, "If the events of primeval humanity happened in history, as we believe they did, we should not be surprised that remnants of these narratives exist in fragmented form in other religious systems." Russell D. Moore, "Natural Revelation," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 112.



## The Cultivating Warrior King and the Viceregency of Man

God's kingly role in Genesis 1 culminates in the creation of man who is made in the image of the warrior king (Gen 1:27).<sup>33</sup> Because God is depicted throughout Scripture as a divine warrior, then part of what it means for man to image God is to establish rulership.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Alexander notes that "the concept of royalty underlies the expression 'image of God.'"<sup>35</sup> This act of dominion is precisely what God calls man to exercise over creation (Gen 1:28; 2:15).<sup>36</sup> Gentry summarizes the concept, "As servant-king and son of God humanity will mediate God's rule to the creation in the context of a covenant relationship with God on the one hand and the earth on the other. Hence the concept of the kingdom of God is found on the first page of Scripture. Indeed, the theme is kingdom through covenant."<sup>37</sup> The dominion depicted in Genesis 1 is reaffirmed

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<sup>33</sup>For more on the meaning of the term image of God, see Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 11–101. This dissertation affirms that there are structural (reflecting who God is), relational (reflecting how God relates), and functional (reflecting what God does) dimensions to man being made in the image of God.

<sup>34</sup>Old Testament scholar Stephen Dempster comments, "Being made in the image of God signifies humans exercising dominion as God's vice-regents of creation." Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 59.

<sup>35</sup>Alexander continues, "In the ancient Near East, in both Egypt and Mesopotamia, the phrase 'image of God' was commonly linked to kings. The king was the living 'image of a god.'" T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 76; J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 26; Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 1:146–47. For more on ANE parallels with the kingship dimension of the image of God in Gen 1:26, see Brian K. Payne, "The Summing Up of All Things in Christ and the Restoration of Human Viceregency: Implications for Ecclesiology" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 101–03.

<sup>36</sup>Leahy adds, "The command of Genesis 1:26 and 28 is usually called 'the cultural mandate,' and such it is; but an even better term would be 'kingdom mandate.'" Frederick S. Leahy, *The Victory of the Lamb: Christ's Triumph over Sin, Death and Satan* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2001), 3.

<sup>37</sup>Peter J. Gentry, "Kingdom through Covenant: Humanity as the Divine Image," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12, no. 1 (2008): 30.

throughout the canon, as seen in the creation song of Psalm 8 where the psalmist celebrates how God has put all things under man's dominion (8:6-7).<sup>38</sup>

Humanity's task is to cultivate creation in order to bring it under dominion. While the rulership of man is intended to span all creation, the garden imagery of Eden suggests that the garden functions as the throne room of God's original viceregens.<sup>39</sup> As the sovereign king's viceregens, they are to spread shalom to God's entire created kingdom.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, the garden before the fall reveals a picture of anointed divine image bearers reflecting the character of the king who are called to advance the kingdom from its throne-room in Eden until all creation is brought under dominion.<sup>41</sup> God's viceregens appear ready for kingdom warfare. In the garden, the opening of Scripture's storyline suggests that kingdom warfare is indeed normative. It is the natural result of the call to dominion issued by God to his viceregens as a rival to his throne emerges. Soon, however, a deceptive rival to the kingship of God would compromise their dominion.

### **The Compromised Warrior King and the Fall of Man**

The sin of Adam shatters the shalom of Eden. In the process, dominion and authority are exchanged for judgment and promise. In the confrontation with the serpent,

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<sup>38</sup>Dempster adds, "The rest of the canon assumes the royal overtones of Genesis 1, indicating the unique authority assigned to the primal couple, and thus to all humanity." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 60.

<sup>39</sup>Discussing the focus of Gen 1 on geographical dominion, Dempster posits, "The geographical aspect is limited to the garden of Eden, the throne-room, as it were, of the kingdom." *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>40</sup>For a description of Edenic shalom, see Cornelius Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 10.

<sup>41</sup>It is important to note that prior to the fall of Satan, there is no rival to the kingdom of God. However, the call to dominion that occurs in Gen 1 and 2 implies that if a rival kingdom arises, it must be brought under subjection through conflict.

a new stage of kingdom warfare arrives. Since the mysterious fall of Satan precedes the fall of man, it is incorrect to conclude that kingdom warfare begins with fruit and fig leaves. Instead, the rejection of God by Satan immediately ignites a hostile spiritual conflict. The first record of this spiritual conflict on a historical level occurs in the temptation account of Genesis 3:1-7. Through crafty deception (3:1-5), the serpent lures Adam and Eve into sin (3:6-7) that carries cosmic implications—it compromises their dominion, forfeits their viceregency, breaks creation, and enables Satan to become the god of this world (2 Cor 4:4).<sup>42</sup> Sin, defined by Cornelius Plantinga as “culpable shalom-breaking,” shatters the peace of God’s creation as it usurps the dominion of God’s viceregents.<sup>43</sup>

The effects of the fall reverberated in ways that exacerbated this cosmic conflict.<sup>44</sup> A pattern emerges through this initial confrontation in which the Word of God and the deception of Satan rival for rulership in the heart of man.<sup>45</sup> In a reversal of God’s intention for man’s rulership over the beasts of the field, Adam and Eve are deceived by the serpent and ultimately relinquish their authority over the cosmos to him.<sup>46</sup> Like an invading force, sin ruptures the relationship between humanity (Gen 3:8-12), removes the

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<sup>42</sup>Leahy, *The Victory of the Lamb*, 12.

<sup>43</sup>Plantinga, *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be*, 14.

<sup>44</sup>Moore explains, “The nihilism of the fall wasn’t simply that the primeval couple ate from the wrong tree. They worshiped the wrong god and thus attacked the entire structure of the divine economy.” Russell D. Moore, *Tempted and Tried: Temptation and the Triumph of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 140.

<sup>45</sup>Dempster points out, “The flagrant rebellion against the divine word by the pinnacle of creation, which has just been invested with the divine rule, is a heinous crime against the cosmos and its Creator.” Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 66.

<sup>46</sup>Alexander comments, “By submitting to the serpent, Adam and Eve fail to exercise their God-given dominion over the crafty animal.” Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 78.

dominion of humanity (Gen 3:13-15), and requires judgment for humanity (Gen 3:16-19).<sup>47</sup> There is a surge in interpersonal conflict (Gen 3:12, 16) between the man and woman as their focus shifts from seeking dominion over creation to striving for dominion over one another. For both the man (Gen 3:17-19) and the woman (Gen 3:16), they now experience increased turmoil in the primary areas where they had been called to exercise dominion. Likewise, the shalom of peace that characterized humanity's connection with creation is corrupted in futility (Gen 3:17-20). Whereas the creation was designed to be the locus of man's dominion as he advanced the kingdom, it is now the location where conflict occurs to reclaim the kingdom from its new, insurgent ruler.

As a sign of the loss of humanity's dominion, God expels Adam and Eve from his throne room and sends them east of the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:22-23).<sup>48</sup> Adam and Eve are cast out of the garden (Gen 3:23-24), which exemplifies the broken relationship they now have with God. Furthermore, as the first act of warfare against his disobedient chosen people, God sets up warrior angels to guard the garden with fiery swords against the unwelcome return of his rebellious viceregents (Gen 3:24).<sup>49</sup> These warrior angels set in opposition to the people of God point to a recurring pattern throughout the narrative of Scripture in which God battles against his people when they rebel.<sup>50</sup> Yet, in the midst of

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<sup>47</sup>David L. Smith, *With Willful Intent: A Theology of Sin* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 290.

<sup>48</sup>This establishes a pattern in which God's people turn away from Edenic order when moving east. See Peter J. Leithart, *A House for My Name: A Survey of the Old Testament* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 2000), 53.

<sup>49</sup>The pattern of God guarding his chosen place from unqualified entrants continues in both the prelude to the promised land conquest and the protection to the inner sanctuary of the temple. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 128.

<sup>50</sup>Though Longman and Reid fail to recognize Gen 3:24 as the first act of God fighting against his rebellious people through an act of judgment, they are helpful at noting this pattern in later portions of the Old Testament in Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 48–60.

the wreckage following the first cosmic conflict between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, God offers a ray of hope through the promise of a future deliverer.

### **The Coming Warrior King and the Promise of Seed**

The first presentation of the coming messiah as a warrior king emerges in the initial prophecy of Scripture. In the aftermath of this first conflict, God issues a condemnation of the serpent, which proclaims that the dominion usurped by Satan will be restored through the seed of the woman who will crush his head (Gen 3:15).<sup>51</sup> Some scholars have rejected the messianic nature of this skull-crushing prophecy.<sup>52</sup> Others contend that the original audience, Adam and Eve, may not have recognized the messianic nature of God's pronouncement.<sup>53</sup> However, both later canonical revelation and subsequent historical attestation confirm that Christians have properly understood Genesis 3:15 as the first messianic prophecy of Scripture.<sup>54</sup> This prophecy is often

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<sup>51</sup>James M. Hamilton, "The Glory of God in Salvation through Judgment: The Centre of Biblical Theology?," *Tyndale Bulletin* 56, no. 1 (2006): 64. On the individual, singular dimension of the term seed, see Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*; James M. Hamilton, "The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 2 (2006): 30-55; T. Desmond Alexander, "Messianic Ideology in the Book of Genesis," in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. R. S. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 19-39; C. J. Collins, "A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15): Is the Woman's Seed Singular or Plural?," *Tyndale Bulletin* 48 (1997): 139-48.

<sup>52</sup>Fitzmyer states, "Moreover, this verse does not mention [Messiah], or even have a hidden reference to a coming Messiah, despite the later interpretations often given to it in both the Jewish and Christian tradition." Fitzmyer, *The One Who Is to Come*, 28. Vos also seems skeptical about the messianic nature of Gen 3:15 as he suggests seed should be understood in "a collective sense," though he concedes that the "woman's seed may find representation in a single person." Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975), 54-55.

<sup>53</sup>It is unclear how thoroughly the original audience would have understood this first messianic expectation, but the canonical context of Scripture makes clear that it was intended to point ahead to a coming warrior king. For more, see Longman, *How to Read Genesis*, 166-69; Sailhamer, "The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible," 22.

<sup>54</sup>Alexander explains, "There is a very long tradition supporting a messianic reading of Gen. 3:15. The first indication of such an interpretation comes in the Septuagint translation of this verse, dating

referred to as the *protoeuangelion* (first gospel) or “mother promise” because it sets the trajectory for messianic expectation throughout the canon.<sup>55</sup> In this first prophecy, God foreshadows that a second Adam will win a decisive victory that will restore the dominion rejected by the failure of the first Adam.<sup>56</sup>

The warfare connotations implied by the description of this head crushing imagery cannot be missed. Final victory over the serpent will come through head-crushing conflict.<sup>57</sup> This initial messianic prophecy establishes a programmatic pattern that marks the storyline of Scripture in which the advancement of the kingdom comes through the judgment of head crushing.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, the fact that this head crushing comes through the seed of the woman explains why Scripture documents the preservation of the genealogical lineage that ultimately leads to the One who is the virgin-born seed of the woman (Gen 5:1-32; Matt 1:18-25). The clash of the kingdoms is narrowed to a skirmish of the seeds—the seed of the woman versus the seed of the serpent (Rev 12:4-

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from the third century BC.” He continues, “A similar understanding appears in the earliest Aramaic translations of Genesis.” He then adds, “These works interpret this verse as referring to a victory over Satan in the days of King Messiah. Various New Testament allusions to Gen. 3:15 also possibly reflect a messianic interpretation of this verse (1 Cor. 15:22-28; Heb. 2:14; Rev. 12:1-13:1). A similar trend is found in the writings of some of the early church fathers, the earliest known examples appearing in the works of Justin (c. AD 160) and Irenaeus (C. AD 180).” Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 105; R. A. Martin, “The Earliest Messianic Interpretation of Genesis 3:15,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84 (1965): 425–27.

<sup>55</sup>Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 5, 277; Leahy, *The Victory of the Lamb*, 19–20.

<sup>56</sup>Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 84; Robert L. Reymond, *Jesus Divine Messiah: The New and Old Testament Witness* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2003), 71.

<sup>57</sup>Boyd contributes, “Something of the centrality of the warfare theme in Scripture, and especially of the warfare dimension of Christ’s death, is signified by the fact that the first messianic prophecy given to us in the Bible proclaims that Christ will crush the head of Satan.” Boyd, *God at War*, 242.

<sup>58</sup>Hamilton, “The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman,” 30–55.

6).<sup>59</sup> All of scripture portrays the development of this cosmic conflict between rival kingdoms.

In conclusion, in the Garden of Eden, the program of Christocentric messianic expectation begins as God promises that a head-crushing seed of the woman will come to destroy the parasitic dominion of the serpent. As God speaks his good creation into being by his word (Gen 1-2), he also establishes Adam and Eve as his royal image bearers and calls them to exercise dominion over the earth (1:26-27), beginning with their throne room in Eden.<sup>60</sup> Yet, through crafty deception, the serpent lures Adam and Eve into sin (3:1-7) that carries cosmic implications—the creation is broken and their dominion is abandoned (3:14-19). A pattern emerges through this initial transaction in which the Word of God and the deception of Satan rival for rulership of the heart of man.<sup>61</sup> Yet, in the midst of the wreckage of this enemy invasion, God makes a promise to raise up an offspring who will subdue the serpent by reversing the curse of death brought about by sin (3:15), thus establishing the program of salvation through head-crushing conflict that recurs throughout the biblical narrative.<sup>62</sup> While this prophecy anticipates a final

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<sup>59</sup>Johnston points out, “All the way from Genesis to the Revelation, throughout the whole Bible, there is conflict between these two lines of seed.” Joseph Johnston, *Christ in Genesis: A Clergyman’s Study of the First Book of Moses as a Scripture of Prophecy* (New York: Exposition, 1959), 29.

<sup>60</sup>Old Testament scholar William Dumbrell comments on the restoration of this dominion, “The creation of humanity in Genesis 1 thus climaxes in the presentation of the species as vice-regent over creation. . . . If the fall robbed human beings of this function, we would expect the biblical doctrine of redemption to restore it.” William J. Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel: A Theological Survey of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 17.

<sup>61</sup>Stephen Dempster exclaims, “The flagrant rebellion against the divine word by the pinnacle of creation, which has just been invested with the divine rule, is a heinous crime against the cosmos and its Creator.” Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 66.

<sup>62</sup>James Hamilton traces this theme of head-crushing in Hamilton, “The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman,” 30–55.

messianic seed of the woman, the patriarchal narratives unfold how God preserves the genealogical line through which the messianic warrior king would come.

### **Christ the Warrior King and the Patriarchs**

As the next redemptive-historical stage of kingdom warfare, the patriarchal narratives serve an important function in shaping the divine warrior theme in the messianic expectation of the Old Testament. If the Garden of Eden is the place where Scripture unfolds the creation and corruption of man's viceregency, then the patriarchs are the people through whom God perpetuates the messianic line that will ultimately restore it.<sup>63</sup> It is noteworthy that most treatments of warfare in the Old Testament, including whole Bible theologies by Longman and Reid as well as Boyd, either neglect or minimize the importance of kingdom warfare in the patriarchal period.<sup>64</sup> This section argues that the patriarchal narratives (1) document the conflict between the collective seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent following the fall, (2) narrow the covenantal lineage through which the future warrior king would come, (3) and establish royal expectations about the coming messianic warrior.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Greidanus writes, "The patriarchs are more than individuals; they also represent their 'seed,' Israel." Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 144. See also John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 4.

<sup>64</sup>Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*; Boyd, *God at War*. An exception to this neglect is Millard C. Lind, *Yahweh Is a Warrior: The Theology of Warfare in Ancient Israel* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1980), 36–46. The most likely reason for this oversight stems from Von Rad's focus on the holy war of Israel. Because he frames the contemporary discussion on warfare in the Old Testament and chooses to center on the nation of Israel, others have focused there as well. Furthermore, conflict in the patriarchal period is less overt than the military conquests of Israel. As Waltke argues, "The theme of God's deliverance, though not prominently displayed in the patriarchal material, is nevertheless present." Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 390.

<sup>65</sup>For the purposes of this chapter, the patriarchal narratives include the remainder of Genesis as Moses describes the story of conflict that occurs in the transition between God's people in Eden and Israel. This section will not provide a comprehensive treatment of the patriarchal period. Instead, it will



## **The Conflict of the Seeds and the Protection of the Warrior King**

Kingdom warfare does not end after the fall of Adam and Eve. Instead, Genesis 4-11 reveal the aftermath of Eden as an ongoing battle between the collective seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.<sup>66</sup> Throughout this initial seed warfare, God protects the messianic lineage through which the warrior king would ultimately come. The messianic tenor that characterizes the conflicts of the patriarchs is framed by the warfare-oriented prophetic expectation of Genesis 3:15 and Genesis 49:8-12.

Alexander comments on how messianic warfare shapes the patriarchal period:

Recent studies have tended to reject the long-standing view that Genesis 3:15 and 49:8-12 are important passages concerning the Old Testament portrayal of the Messiah. Taking Genesis as a unified literary work, there are, however, substantial grounds for believing that messianic ideology permeates not only these verses but also the entire work. Central to this is the recognition that the writer of Genesis focuses on a unique line of ‘seed’ from which will arise a king of the tribe of Judah through whom all nations will be blessed. This future king will be responsible for the restoration of ‘Edenic’ conditions upon earth and the overthrow of the powers of evil. Genesis 3:15 and 49:8-12 are vital components of this overall picture.<sup>67</sup>

This messianic ideology is seen in Genesis 4-11 in the conflict between the seeds. As Longman points out, many of the patriarchal narratives follow the same pattern as in the conflict of Genesis 3 including sin, judgment speech, token of grace, and judgment.<sup>68</sup> Conflict between the seeds quickly escalates in Genesis 4 as Cain—

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trace the development of the divine warrior theme in it to connect it to the Old Testament’s ongoing messianic expectation.

<sup>66</sup>The term “seed of the serpent” does not imply that these are actually biological descendants from the serpent. Instead, it suggests that this group of people images its father, the Devil, in its activities in opposition to God’s kingdom.

<sup>67</sup>Alexander, “Messianic Ideology in the Book of Genesis,” 19.

<sup>68</sup>Longman, *How to Read Genesis*, 114. Indeed, this pattern seems to characterize the chosen people of God throughout the canon until the coming of the messiah.

representing the seed of the serpent—murders Abel—representing the seed of the woman (4:8). After God rejects the offering of Cain (4:5) and warns him of the impending assault of sin (4:7), Cain images the pattern of the serpent when he brings death upon an image bearer of God by shedding innocent blood (4:8).<sup>69</sup> Though God protects Cain from retribution (4:15), this conflict of the seeds pulls humanity further from Edenic shalom as it settles further east of Eden (4:16). The escalation of conflict is clearly seen in Lamech’s song as he positions himself as a greater Cain who surpasses the vengeance of his ancestor (Gen 4:23-24).<sup>70</sup> Then, Moses records two genealogies to contrast how the seed of the serpent is perpetuated through Cain (4:17-24) and the seed of the woman is preserved through Seth and on to Noah (5:1-32).<sup>71</sup>

The Noahic narrative records how God not only preserves a righteous remnant descended from the seed of the woman but also fights against those who rebel against him. Genesis 6 narrates how fallen angels described as the “sons of God” rebel against God by procreating with females (6:3).<sup>72</sup> They produce offspring in the order of the serpent who are renowned for being mighty men of war (6:4) as man perpetuates violence (6:11). In contrast to this seed of the serpent that causes God to promise judgment against humanity (6:7), Noah is highlighted as a righteous descendant of the seed of the woman

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<sup>69</sup>Picking up on the reference in Heb 12:24, Greidanus rightly recognizes Abel as a type of Christ because he is an innocent seed of the woman. Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 90.

<sup>70</sup>For more on how Lamech’s song fits into the redemptive historical narrative of kingdom warfare, listen to the sermon, Russell D. Moore, *Sermon: Lamech’s Song of the Sword* (Louisville: Highview Baptist Church, 2010).

<sup>71</sup>Lamech’s hope that Noah might bring “relief” (5:29) echoes the Gen 3:15 narrative in a way that confirms Noah as the continuation of the woman’s messianic lineage. See James M. Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 88.

<sup>72</sup>Willem A. VanGemeren, “The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4: An Example of Evangelical Demythologization,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 43, no. 2 (1981): 343–48.

who God will preserve through the judgment of the flood as he de-creates the world (6:8).<sup>73</sup> The language used to describe the flood in 7:20-24 parallels later imagery used to describe *herem* warfare. God commands Noah to build the ark as an instrument of wood, which will provide salvation through the waters of judgment. Following the flood, God establishes a covenant with Noah who is presented as a second Adam who is God's viceregent commanded to be fruitful and take dominion over the post-flood new creation (9:1-3). God also provides the covenantal sign of a rainbow in the shape of a military weapon (a bow; 9:13) to highlight his promise to withhold widespread warfare against humanity for its rebellion (9:12).

After the Noahic narrative presents God's preservation of the messianic seed and his judgment upon the serpent's seed, the story sets the stage for a pattern that recurs in kingdom warfare—conflict with Canaan. Imaging the first Adam, Noah as a second Adam sins (9:21), and his sin is followed with the curse of Canaan and the blessing of Shem (9:25-27). Just as Noah was the continuation of the line of the seed of the woman, Shem is also “pictured as the one through whom the royal seed line was to live on.”<sup>74</sup> As the storyline of Scripture progresses, this opposition between the people of God and the people of Canaan culminates in the conquest of the Promised Land. After documenting how God frustrates the prideful efforts of the tower of Babel (11:1-9), Genesis 11 transitions to the story of Abraham with another genealogy (11:10-32), which emphasizes the ongoing preservation of the messianic lineage that would culminate in the warrior king.

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<sup>73</sup>Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 68.

<sup>74</sup>Groningen, *Messianic Revelation*, 127.

## The Covenant with Abraham and the Lineage of the Warrior King

In Genesis 12-24, God establishes a covenant with Abraham in which he is selected as the person through whom both God's chosen people and his messianic king will emerge.<sup>75</sup> In some regards, Genesis 1-11 functions as a preamble to Genesis 12, which is like a second creation account.<sup>76</sup> Likewise, Moses presents Abraham as a new Adam figure.<sup>77</sup> As part of the Abrahamic call in Genesis 12:1-3, God promises to make Abraham's offspring a great nation which will receive blessings from God and channel them to others.<sup>78</sup> When understood in light of God's "mother promise" in Genesis 3:15, it becomes apparent that God is narrowing the lineage through which messianic deliverance will come.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, the covenantal call of Abraham introduces the dual emphasis of land and seed that characterizes forthcoming covenantal commitment and messianic expectation, especially at key junctures of kingdom warfare.

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<sup>75</sup>This section about the patriarch Abraham will use only the name Abraham rather than referring to him as Abram in those instances prior to when God changes his name.

<sup>76</sup> Longman, *How to Read Genesis*, 126–27.

<sup>77</sup>Wenham notes the parallels that show Abraham to be a new Adam: "He, like Noah before him, is a second Adam figure. Adam was given the garden of Eden: Abraham is promised the land of Canaan. God told Adam to be fruitful and multiply: Abraham is promised descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven. God walked with Adam in Eden: Abram was told to walk before God." He continues, "In this way the advent of Abraham is seen as the answer to the problems set out in Genesis 1-11: through him all the families of the earth will be blessed." Gordon J. Wenham, *Story as Torah: Reading Old Testament Narrative Ethically* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 37.

<sup>78</sup>Boda explains, "These two promises (seed, land) also shape much of what is to come in the grand redemptive story of the Old Testament and will be repeated at key junctures, for instance, as God begins the great rescue of the Exodus (Ex 6:1-9), as Moses charges the people poised for conquest (Deut 6:1-9), or as God makes covenant with David in Jerusalem (2 Sam 7:10-16)." Mark J. Boda, *After God's Own Heart: The Gospel According to David*, *The Gospel According to the Old Testament* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2007), 20.

<sup>79</sup> Longman, *How to Read Genesis*, 170; Groningen, *Messianic Revelation*, 135.

In both Abraham's rescue of Lot and his relationship with Melchizedek, Moses shows him to be a warrior who protects his people and anticipates a coming priest-king. As marauding kings battle one another (Gen 14:8-11), they capture Lot as a prisoner of war and plunder his possessions (14:12). In response, Abraham musters his militia, wages war against the enemy, rescues his descendant, and plunders the adversary's possessions (14:13-16).<sup>80</sup> For the first time in what will become a pattern in kingdom warfare, God raises up a special deliverer who leads his chosen people to defeat their enemies and plunder their possessions.<sup>81</sup> Following Abraham's victory, the mysterious priest-king of Salem, Melchizedek, bestows a blessing upon him in celebration of his military conquest (14:19-20).<sup>82</sup> The tandem of Abraham as conquering warrior and Melchizedek as priest-king initiates a pattern that repeatedly appears in messianic expectation (see Pss 2:4; 110).<sup>83</sup>

The Abrahamic covenant includes several features that advance the kingdom warfare dimension of messianic expectation. God's first self-description in his covenant

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<sup>80</sup>Childs writes, "The whole Old Testament is filled with stories of wars and conflict. In the patriarchal period the members of an extended family formed a military group for fighting battles (Gen. 14:13ff)." Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 184.

<sup>81</sup>Dempster explains, "Genesis 14 is the first text in the Tanakh that features kingship and war. . . . Abram is portrayed as a conquering warrior." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 79; Groningen, *Messianic Revelation*, 140.

<sup>82</sup>Alexander describes the contrast between the king of Salem and the king of Sodom: "As a priest-king he acknowledges God's right to exercise sovereignty over the earth. The king of Sodom, in marked contrast, typifies earthly or godless kingship that places sovereignty in the power of the individual." Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 82.

<sup>83</sup>Longman discusses the way the rest of the canon recognizes a union of priest and king in Melchizedek: "Furthermore, since Psalm 110 suggests a combination of the roles of the priest and the warrior king, the author of Hebrews understood that Jesus was the most perfect expression of these roles, even surpassing the Davidic king who was the most immediate referent of this poem." Longman, *How to Read Genesis*, 173–74. Alexander adds, "While Melchizedek is clearly presented as the priest-king of Salem, we should also observe that Abraham himself displays both royal and priestly characteristics." Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 82.

with Abraham is as a shield that will protect him from all his enemies (Gen 15:1).<sup>84</sup>

Though there is uncertainty about the messianic lineage because of barrenness, Abraham is counted righteous as he trusts God's promise that Abraham's offspring will be as numerous as the stars (15:2-6). Then, God speaks of both the Exodus (15:13-14) and the conquest of Canaan (15:15-16) in ways that foreshadow his ongoing covenantal commitment to fight for his people against their enemies.<sup>85</sup> God's motivation for judgment against the nations is not only his selection of Abraham but also the sin of the nations (15:16).<sup>86</sup>

Even the covenantal sign of circumcision contains connotations of conflict. Because the original promise of Genesis 3:15 focuses on messianic victory through the seed, it is fitting that God's covenant with his messianic people is marked out by an act on the seed-generating organ of the body (17:10-14).<sup>87</sup> Concurrent with the sign of circumcision is God's royal promise that kings will come from Abraham's line (17:6).<sup>88</sup> Overall, the narrative of the Abrahamic covenant is messianic in nature because it

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<sup>84</sup>Groningen notes, "Abraham was to know that in covenantal service to God and on behalf of all peoples, he need not fear the opposition of enemies. There was to be no reason to think he was standing alone. The One whom he represented and served would not fail him." Groningen, *Messianic Revelation*, 135.

<sup>85</sup>As a result, scholars like House point out that the start of the Canaanite conquest in Josh 6 occurs as a fulfillment of God's promise in Gen 15:16. Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 204.

<sup>86</sup>God's extended forbearance with the sins of the Amorites and other nations is certainly noteworthy because he does not bring immediate judgment upon them for their iniquity. *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup>Groningen, *Messianic Revelation*, 136. As redemptive history progresses, circumcision of the flesh gives way to circumcision of the heart (Jer 4:4), which ultimately foreshadows the spiritual circumcision of Christ's atonement (Col 2:11-12). Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 166.

<sup>88</sup>Because God prophesied that kings would come from Abraham and reign in Israel (Gen 17:6; 49:9-11; Num 24:7, 17; Deut 17:14-20), this prophetic expectation demonstrates that Israel's desire for a king in general is not evil. Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 163.

confirms that Abraham was “God’s royal representative who had to press the claims of God upon the land, the nations, and the wealth of the cosmos.”<sup>89</sup>

Though it seemed like God’s provision for an Abrahamic son would never come, he at last perpetuates the lineage of the seed through Isaac. After Isaac’s miraculous birth, God commands Abraham to do violence against his chosen son by offering him as a sacrifice (22:1-14).<sup>90</sup> The messianic importance of the sacrifice of Isaac is that he was the one “through whom the line of the seed was to be continued and the messianic plan was to be carried out.”<sup>91</sup> Therefore, Abraham trusts that God is able to sustain this future hope, even if Isaac is lost. Then, the angel of the Lord pronounces blessings upon Abraham, which include the promise of military conquest as he will “possess the gates of his enemies” (22:17).<sup>92</sup> Picking up on the mother promise of Genesis 3:15, Genesis 22:17-18 again uses the singular form of offspring (בְּזֶרְעִי) to highlight that God’s covenantal promise will come through a messianic deliverer.<sup>93</sup> Overall, the patriarchal narrative of Abraham advances the kingdom warfare theme in

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<sup>89</sup>Groningen, *Messianic Revelation*, 141.

<sup>90</sup>Scholars debate whether Isaac is a type of Christ. For more on this debate (including representative perspectives from throughout church history), see Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 202–03. It seems accurate to agree with Greidanus and the early fathers that through both his unlikely birth and near-death, Isaac points ahead to the miraculous incarnation of Christ and his subsequent substitutionary death. *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>91</sup>Groningen, *Messianic Revelation*, 143.

<sup>92</sup>Alexander writes, “The divine oath contributes to the larger narrative in Genesis that anticipates a future king who will play a central role in establishing God’s blueprint for the earth. This king will mediate God’s blessing to the nations of the earth.” Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 165.

<sup>93</sup>Elsewhere Alexander points out that the connection between Gen 3:15 and 22:17-18 forms “part of a much larger picture in Genesis which centres on a unique line of descendants. The book of Genesis not only intimates that this lineage will eventually give rise to a royal dynasty, but also anticipates that a future member of this line will conquer his enemies and mediate God’s blessing to the nations of the earth.” T. Desmond Alexander, “Further Observations on the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 48, no. 2 (1997): 367; Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 84–85.

messianic expectation because he is a royal type of Christ who receives the covenantal promise of conquest and perpetuates the genealogy through which the seed of the woman would come.<sup>94</sup>

### **The Creation of Israel and the Royalty of the Warrior King**

In Genesis 25-50, patterns of kingdom warfare emerge in the messianic expectation of the time period as the fledgling nation of Israel develops. As the namesake of the nation, Jacob's life is marked by conflict. His struggle in the womb with Esau at birth not only secures his superiority over his older brother but also is a foretaste of the enmity that will emerge between Israel and rival nations such as Edom. As such, seed warfare continues as the offspring of the woman, Jacob, rivals against the seed of the serpent, Esau.<sup>95</sup> Jacob later recognizes that kingdom warfare also occurs in the spiritual dimension when he identifies the angels of the Lord as God's army gathered in God's camp (32:1-2). After wrestling with God all night (32:22-26), Jacob is blessed by God and given the new name Israel, which means "he does battle" (32:27-28).<sup>96</sup> In addition, the vigilante justice carried out by Israel's sons (35:25-29) causes him to lament the ongoing turmoil that it will likely produce with Canaan in a way that foreshadows future conflict between the two (35:30-31).

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<sup>94</sup>On Abraham as the seed of the woman who is a type of Christ, see Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 148.

<sup>95</sup>Esau is clearly shown to be the seed of the serpent as he despises his birthright by following his appetites (Gen 25:34). Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 83.

<sup>96</sup>Both Wellhausen and Ollenburger note that Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל) means El (God) does battle. Ollenburger, "Gerhard von Rad's Theory of Holy War," 3. Dempster discloses the results of Jacob's wrestling match with God: "Jacob wins the blessing and will be God's conquering warrior in the earth." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 87; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 332.



Though Joseph is not a direct descendant of the seed of the woman, he plays an instrumental role in preserving the messianic line as it narrows from Israel to Judah. After being sold into slavery (37:23-28), Joseph assumes a royal position in Egypt that serves the surrounding nation while preserving the lineage of the seed (41:38-46).<sup>97</sup> Joseph also engages in spiritual conflict with Potiphar's wife as he resists her attempts to seduce him using Satan's tactics of deception and accusation (39:7-23).<sup>98</sup> As Jacob sojourns to Egypt for the sake of his family's preservation, God renews the Abrahamic promise with him, which provides reassurance that his promise of seed and land still stands despite Jacob's departure from the land (46:1-4).<sup>99</sup> Though the messianic line did not descend directly from Joseph, he functions as a messianic type of Christ whose royal role as righteous sufferer allows him to deliver and protect the line of the warrior king.

In the blessings that Israel gives to his sons, he marks out Judah as the royal seed of the woman who will bestow blessing and fulfill messianic expectation (49:8-12).<sup>100</sup> This blessing of Israel's offspring follows his ironic blessing of Pharaoh through which God signals that the "hope for the world comes from Israel and not from Egypt."<sup>101</sup> Jacob first prophesies that Judah will have his hand "on the neck of your enemies," which

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<sup>97</sup>Groningen observes, "The Genesis account of Joseph particularly stresses the royal concept. . . . The 'royal one' endures suffering and renders service to the seed of Abraham as well as to the nations in the midst of whom he lives and with whom he interacts." Groningen, *Messianic Revelation*, 150.

<sup>98</sup>Greidanus notes the way Joseph serves as a type of Christ in this regard: "As Joseph was tempted by Potiphar's wife to take a short-cut to power, so Jesus was tempted by Satan to take a shortcut to power (Matt 4:9)." Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 385.

<sup>99</sup>For more on God's promise of his presence in this passage, a helpful resource is Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 439.

<sup>100</sup>Smith says, "In the present prophecy the channel of blessing further narrows to one particular tribe—the tribe of Judah." Smith, *Promised Messiah*, 54.

<sup>101</sup>Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 89.

implies that he will have victory over them (49:8).<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, Judah is like a lion who will wield the royal scepter and ruler's staff for eternity (49:9-10).<sup>103</sup> In this way, the patriarchal narrative of conflict in Genesis ends in the same way it begins—highlighting the expectation that God would raise up a messianic seed of the woman who would be a warrior king. As the patriarchal narratives yield to the annals of Israel, the messianic expectation of a warrior king continues to strengthen.

### **Christ the Warrior King and the Nation of Israel**

The work *Antiquities of the Jews* penned by Jewish historian Josephus frames Israel's national development primarily through military success and failure.<sup>104</sup> Why is that the case? He rightly corroborates what the storyline of Scripture confirms—that conflict is central to the progression (and regression) of the nation.<sup>105</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising that much of the scholarly literature on Old Testament warfare has centered on the holy war of national Israel.<sup>106</sup> However, what is largely absent is a consideration of how this redemptive historical period includes significant developments for the divine

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<sup>102</sup>As Dempster declares, "Moreover, the imagery of a warrior-king is used: he will place his hand on the neck of his enemies. This may allude to the battle between the seeds mentioned in Genesis 3, in which a blow to the head defeats the serpent." Ibid., 91; Alexander, "Messianic Ideology in the Book of Genesis," 32–37.

<sup>103</sup>The use of the terms rod and scepter sets forth "the concept of royalty exercising dominion," asserts Groningen. Groningen, *Messianic Revelation*, 172.

<sup>104</sup>Flavius Josephus, "Jewish Antiquities," in *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 166–386.

<sup>105</sup>However, Craigie notes why Scripture's treatment of war is distinct from (and more complicated than that of) Josephus: "The books on war by Josephus, Herodotus, and other ancient historians do not create problems, for we have come to expect war to be a basic theme of history writing, both ancient and modern. But war is a problem in the Old Testament exactly because it is not primarily a history book; rather, it is believed to be a part of God's revelation to mankind." Craigie, *The Problem of War in the Old Testament*, 9.

<sup>106</sup>Ollenburger notes that Von Rad's work in this area largely shapes contemporary treatments of warfare involving the nation of Israel. Ollenburger, "Gerhard von Rad's Theory of Holy War," 1–2.

warrior theme in the messianic expectation of the Old Testament. This section argues that the divine warrior theme is evident in the messianic expectation of national Israel as (1) the Exodus reveals the paradigm by which the future warrior king would battle, (2) the conquest reveals the pattern through which the future warrior king would triumph, and (3) the monarchy reveals the position in which the future warrior king would reign.

### **Christ the Warrior King and the Exodus**

The Exodus profoundly shapes Israel's reflection on its past and expectation of its future. Because the Exodus is the defining act of warfare in the Old Testament, it carries profound implications for the divine warrior theme in the Old Testament's messianic expectation. This section examines how the Exodus provides the paradigm, prototype and provision for kingdom warfare in the Old Testament.

**The Exodus and the paradigm of kingdom warfare.** One of the most hotly contested issues in the discussion of Israel's warfare is over what event establishes the paradigm for Israel's holy war. What is the Old Testament's warfare par excellence? How theologians answer this question will shape not only their view of Israel's warfare in particular but also their perspective on the Bible's warfare worldview in general. When Gerhard Von Rad started the resurgence of interest in the warfare of Israel, he contended that the paradigm for Israel's warfare was the sacral, defensive wars of the judges.<sup>107</sup> Initiating the Harvard movement's focus on the history of religions approach to Israel's warfare, F. M. Cross argued that the Exodus/conquest functioned as the inseparable

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<sup>107</sup>Von Rad, *Holy War*; Ollenburger, "Gerhard von Rad's Theory of Holy War," 29. Cross critiques Von Rad's approach to holy war, which centers on the judges and sacral, defensive warfare. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 88.

paradigm for Israelite conflict.<sup>108</sup> As one of Cross's followers, Patrick Miller contended that it was the period of the conquest alone that established the paradigm for Israel's battles.<sup>109</sup> Representing a group of several different authors, Millard Lind claims that it is the Exodus which serves as the paradigm for Israel's warfare.<sup>110</sup> Still others do not identify a particular event in Israel's history as the paradigm by which to understand the rest of Israelite conflict.

With so many opposing options, is it necessary or even possible to identify a paradigm for Israel's warfare? The quest for this paradigm is indeed necessary and possible.<sup>111</sup> The enterprise of identifying a paradigmatic Yahweh war for Israel is possible as we recognize how Israel's warfare fits into the contours, seams and structures of the storyline of Scripture. Whatever is elevated to integral status throughout the scope of the Bible should be understood as the paradigmatic conflict for the nation of Israel.

In light of the entire theological narrative of the Bible, it is best to understand the Exodus as the paradigmatic warfare experience of the nation of Israel. The Exodus conflict establishes a pattern of divine warfare that marks the history of the nation of Israel throughout the Old Testament. There are several reasons the Exodus deserves paradigmatic status. First, it serves as the constant refrain of Israel as they look back to

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid.; Ollenburger, "Gerhard von Rad's Theory of Holy War," 29.

<sup>109</sup>Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel*, 160.

<sup>110</sup>Lind, *Yahweh Is a Warrior*, 46; Ollenburger, "Gerhard von Rad's Theory of Holy War," 33; Boyd, *God at War*, 134. Lind claims that Miller and others reject the centrality of the Exodus because their historical-critical approach to the episode questions its legitimacy as an actual historical event. Lind, *Yahweh Is a Warrior*, 184.

<sup>111</sup>It is important to identify a paradigm because (1) it helps to provide a foundation for synthesizing the divergent portrayals of Israelite warfare, (2) it shows how Israel's warfare fits into redemptive history, and (3) it allows further study to more easily recognize theological implications.

God's faithful role as divine warrior (see Exod 13:8-9; Deut 11:4; Josh 2:10, 4:23; Ps 106; Ps 136). As Dempster contends, the Exodus is "the central salvation event in the Old Testament."<sup>112</sup> Second, it highlights the sovereign role God plays in advancing his kingdom purposes through the nation of Israel. Third, it elevates a pattern of redemption through conflict that reoccurs throughout the biblical text in God's victory over his enemies.<sup>113</sup> Fourth, the New Testament picks up this paradigm as it portrays Christ's incarnational assault on the kingdom of darkness as a second Exodus in which he is called out of Egypt (Matt 2:15), and then goes through the waters of judgment in his baptism to identify with the people of God (Matt 3:13ff.) before going through the waters of judgment in the second baptism of his death to deliver the people of God (Luke 12:50). It is true that the Exodus cannot be separated from the invasions of the conquest or the national deliverance of the Judges. Nevertheless, it seems like the Bible elevates the Exodus to paradigmatic status so that it informs how to understand the nature of Israel's warfare. Therefore, while Genesis 3:15 is programmatic in the pattern of victory through head crushing that it establishes, the Exodus is paradigmatic in the way that it develops how God brings about this victory through the cosmic conflict of deliverance.<sup>114</sup>

**The Exodus and the prototype of kingdom warfare.** The Exodus is not only the paradigm that shapes what Israel's future warfare looks like but also the prototype

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<sup>112</sup>Stephen Dempster, "Exodus and Biblical Theology: On Moving into the Neighborhood with a New Name," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12, no. 3 (2008): 4.

<sup>113</sup>Lois Barrett adds, "The most important 'holy war' in the Old Testament is the Exodus (the going out) of the Hebrew people from Egypt." Lois Barrett, *The Way God Fights: War and Peace in the Old Testament* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1987), 16.

<sup>114</sup>Moore notes that Israel "thought the enemy was behind them, drowned in the sea. But the enemy behind the enemy still lurked in the desert, and in their own uncircumcised hearts." Moore, *Tempted and Tried*, 53.

that influences how and why Israel fights. The book of Exodus begins with both a reaffirmation of the Genesis 1 mandate to be fruitful and multiply (Exod 1:7)<sup>115</sup> and the order of Israelite infanticide (1:16), each of which demonstrates that seed warfare continues in Egypt.<sup>116</sup> Moses also links the Exodus with the Abrahamic covenant in 2:24 as God decides to fight for his faithful people based on his previous promise.<sup>117</sup> In 4:22-23, God describes Israel as his firstborn son, which initiates a sonship theme that recurs in kingdom warfare—God battles on behalf of his faithful son (see Deut 14:1; Jer 31:9; Hos 11:1).<sup>118</sup>

Several warfare-oriented precursors set the stage for the Exodus. First, God sends plagues upon the Egyptians to demonstrate his dominion over the gods of Egypt.<sup>119</sup> Second, Payne notes, “The Passover is the pinnacle battle waged between Yahweh and the gods of Egypt.”<sup>120</sup> In the Passover, sacrificial blood purifies Israel and averts God’s warfare (12:13) as he battles against the Egyptians by striking down each of their

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<sup>115</sup>Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 95.

<sup>116</sup>Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 131–32.

<sup>117</sup>T. Desmond Alexander, “Royal Expectations in Genesis to Kings: Their Importance for Biblical Theology,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 49 (1998): 194.

<sup>118</sup>Schreiner details, “Considering the OT as a canonical unit, we observe that Israel occupies a special position as God’s son. And yet the Davidic king also functions as God’s unique son.” He adds, “God’s promise to the Davidic king does not contradict his promise to Israel; rather, the king represents Israel as a whole.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 235; idem, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 176. This sonship pattern seems to anticipate both the Davidic king as son and the coming messiah as true son and new Davidic king who ushers in a new Exodus. Moore, *Tempted and Tried*, 103.

<sup>119</sup>Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation*, 100–01; Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 97.

<sup>120</sup>Payne, “The Summing up of All Things in Christ,” 123–24.

firstborn (12:29).<sup>121</sup> Third, through the plundering of the Egyptians (Exod 3:22; 12:36), God provides his firstborn son Israel with a down payment of its inheritance as they depart for the Exodus as victors.<sup>122</sup> Fourth, God prepares Israel for departure while providing them with his presence for battle in the pillar of clouds and fire (13:21-22). Though God will fight for the Israelites in this battle, they are “equipped for battle” as they follow the Lord in faith (13:18). Likewise, they trust God’s eschatological promise of the land as demonstrated by them carrying the bones of Joseph out of Egypt (13:19).

Exodus 14 demonstrates the divine warrior’s victory over the Egyptians as he fights for faithful Israel.<sup>123</sup> After Israel flees Egypt, they are overwhelmed with fear (14:10), but Moses commands them to trust God, not fear their enemies (14:13).<sup>124</sup> The reason that God’s people should not fear God’s enemies is because God fights for them (14:14).<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, the divine warrior’s victory over his enemies is the means by

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<sup>121</sup>Alexander explains the connection between purity and victory: “The process of transferring the Israelites from the satanic power of the king of Egypt to the kingdom of God requires more than merely rescuing them from Egypt. If they are to live in the presence of God, they must regain the holy status humanity had prior to the disobedience of Adam and Eve. The Passover ritual performs this function in the historical context of the Israelites coming out of Egypt and becoming God’s people at Mount Sinai.” Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 129. The Passover signifies God’s protective deliverance through the shedding of blood. But it is followed immediately by Israel’s Exodus from Egypt in which God fights for them and grants them victory over their enemies. So, the Passover/Exodus event initiates a deep connection between the shedding of blood and the victory of God that the atonement culminates. See Thomas F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 29.

<sup>122</sup>Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 177.

<sup>123</sup>This idea contrasts with Cross’s argument that the earliest treatments of the Exodus did not attribute it to the divine warrior. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 87.

<sup>124</sup>The faith versus fear dialectic seen here is a common theme in kingdom warfare. Often, God’s leaders command his people not to fear during the battle because it is God who fights on their behalf (see Gen 28:15; Deut 31:6, 8; Josh 1:5; 1 Chr 28:20).

<sup>125</sup>Boda declares, “God’s kingship over Israel as a nation was demonstrated through his defeat of Egypt and defense of Israel at the sea. In this event Israel did not have to raise a spear or sword; God was their warrior. This was to be the defining moment for Israel: God was their king because God was their warrior who would fight for them.” Boda, *After God’s Own Heart*, 8.

which he receives glory from the nations (14:17-18).<sup>126</sup> After Israel safely crosses the Red Sea (14:21-22), God thwarts the Egyptian efforts to pursue the nation. As a result, even the Egyptians recognize that “the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians” (14:25). Before the Egyptian army can escape, the waters of judgment crash upon the enemies of God and none survive (14:27-28).<sup>127</sup> In his summary of the Exodus, Moses describes how the power of God delivers the people of God from the enemies of God and causes faith in God (14:30-31).<sup>128</sup>

In Exodus 15, Israel celebrates the divine warrior’s victory in the Exodus.<sup>129</sup> Rejoicing in God’s deliverance, Israel praises him as a “man of war” who uses the waters of judgment to crush his enemies (15:3; cf. Isa 42:13).<sup>130</sup> Moreover, it is the רִיחַ (wind/Spirit/breath) of Yahweh that not only parts the Red Sea to deliver Israel (14:21; 15:8) but also collapses the Red Sea to destroy the Egyptians (15:10).<sup>131</sup> Thus, Israel

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<sup>126</sup>This glory is connected to God’s kingship, as Laato notes, “Yhwh’s kingship was a central motif in the ideology of Yhwh war where Yhwh was seen as destroying all chaotic powers (political enemies) which opposed Israel.” Antti Laato, *A Star Rising: The Historical Development of the Old Testament Royal Ideology and the Rise of the Jewish Messianic Expectations* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1997), 56.

<sup>127</sup>Hamilton points out, “Israel is saved through the waters of judgment that engulf Pharaoh’s army, just as Noah was saved through the waters of judgment that engulfed all living things (Gen. 7:21–23).” Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 96. In addition, the complete destruction of God’s enemies foreshadows the *herem* warfare that will characterize the conquest.

<sup>128</sup>Waltke explains, “The glorification of *I AM* as Warrior at the Red Sea is first narrated in epic prose (Exod. 14:1-30) and then confessed by Israel in a rousing victory song (15:1-18).” Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology*, 385.

<sup>129</sup>O’Donnell observes, “Surprising to us, this warring wrath is one of the divine attributes Moses most magnifies. And he does so by using military metaphors.” He goes on to connect the imagery of Exod 15 with the eschatological picture of Christ’s return. Douglas Sean O’Donnell, *God’s Lyrics: Rediscovering Worship through Old Testament Songs* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010), 9.

<sup>130</sup>House states, “The fact that God is a warrior is proven by Yahweh’s use of the sea to crush Pharaoh’s army (15:1-10).” House, *Old Testament Theology*, 103.

<sup>131</sup>In addition to meaning breath or wind, the Hebrew term רִיחַ is used for the Spirit in the Old Testament as “the invisible activity of God in power through and amongst his covenant people.” Max Turner, “Holy Spirit,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of*



associates the military victory of God’s people with the cosmic activity of God’s Spirit.<sup>132</sup> While the Exodus engenders faith among Israel, it strikes fear in their enemies (15:16; cf. Josh 2:9-10; 1 Sam 4:7-8). In this song of celebration, Israel recognizes an inherent connection between the divine warrior and the Exodus—the divine warrior fights for his people in the Exodus by bringing them safely through the waters of judgment and delivering them from their enemies.<sup>133</sup> Future intertextual links in the Old Testament and typological connections in the New Testament demonstrate that the Exodus truly was the defining event for both Israel’s deliverance and its messianic expectation.<sup>134</sup>

**The Exodus and the provision for kingdom warfare.** The Exodus provides the foundation for kingdom warfare throughout the rest of the Pentateuch and beyond. In the first combat following the Exodus, both Moses and Joshua play integral roles in the battle, which links the Exodus with the upcoming conquest (Exod 17:8-13).<sup>135</sup>

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*Scripture*, ed. Brian S. Rosner et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 551. Wilf Hildebrandt points out the dual significance of רָחַץ in the Exodus, “In this passage, the active agent in bringing about Israel’s deliverance was the *ruah* that came from Yahweh himself.” Wilf Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 20.

<sup>132</sup>Miller adds, “In the process of recounting the redemptive activity of Yahweh and praising him for it, the hymn fuses in partial fashion the themes of cosmic warfare and holy war.” Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel*, 115.

<sup>133</sup>Later prophetic messianic expectation picks up on this link between the coming new Exodus and the future messianic warrior king. For example, Isaiah builds his depiction of the new Exodus (see 40:3-5, 41:17-20, 42:14-16, 43:1-3, 14-21, 48:20-21; 49:8-12; 51:9-10; 52:11-12, 55:12-13) upon the original Exodus (41:4, 9; 44:2, 7-8; 46:3-4; 48:8; 52:4). G. P. Hugenberger, “The Servant of the Lord in the ‘Servant Songs’ of Isaiah: A Second Moses Figure,” in *The Lord’s Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. R. S. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 123.

<sup>134</sup>Norbert Lohfink, *The Inerrancy of Scripture and Other Essays*, trans. R. A. Wilson (Berkeley, CA: Bibal, 1992), 84–85; Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 96.

<sup>135</sup>Hamilton states, “When Amalek fights against Israel in Exodus 17:8–13, we have another instance of the seed of the serpent opposing the seed of the woman.” Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 97; Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 27.

Furthermore, God commands Moses to record the details of the victory in what seems to be the first indication to draft the Pentateuch (17:14-16).<sup>136</sup> When Moses ascends Sinai to receive the covenantal law from God, the foundation of the divine warrior's entire direction to the nation is his identity as revealed through the victory of the Exodus (20:1). Between Sinai and Canaan, Israel fights several battles (Num 21:1-4, 21-35; Deut 2:26-37).<sup>137</sup> In addition, Balaam's oracle predicts the coming of a royal messianic figure.<sup>138</sup> The gentile prophet connects the head-crushing imagery of Genesis 3:15 ("crush the forehead of Moab," Num 24:17) with both the royal blessing of Judah ("a star" and "a scepter," Num 24:17) and the Exodus (Num 23:22; 24:8) as he anticipates a messianic warrior king.<sup>139</sup>

If warfare prompts the writing of the Pentateuch and the Exodus supplies the anchor for the Mosaic covenant, then it should come as no surprise that the law provides direction for how Israel should battle in holy war. This guidance is most clearly seen in Deuteronomy. Von Rad explains:

The book of Deuteronomy is in the whole Old Testament by far the richest source concerning the concepts and customs of holy war. As a single body of texts it not

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<sup>136</sup>As House explains, "Subsequent to the battle Moses is told to write about the affair in a scroll, which inaugurates the Bible's references to Moses' composing parts or all of the Pentateuch." House, *Old Testament Theology*, 108.

<sup>137</sup>At the same time, the nation also grumbles against the divine warrior and his leaders (Exod 16:3), as they "actually envied the floating corpses of the Egyptians they'd seen in the sea. At least those mortified corpses had full stomachs. The test revealed they wanted a Pharaoh more than a Father." Moore, *Tempted and Tried*, 69. This grumbling continues in Israel's future and leads to God fighting against the nation because of their rebellion.

<sup>138</sup>Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation*, 204.

<sup>139</sup>Longman says, "Balaam's oracle again anticipates the rise of the monarchy in Israel, but after the failure of the monarchy the idea that it anticipated a greater king who would derive from the Davidic line might have captured the imagination of the people." <sup>139</sup>Tremper Longman, "The Messiah: Explorations in the Law and Writings," in *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 25.

only contains a series of detailed normative orders and prescriptions about the behavior and customs in the camp, before the battle, and so forth, but also in striking contrast to the holiness law or the book of the covenant it is thoroughly saturated from the first to the last chapter by an outspoken war ideology, the origins and theological content of which cannot help becoming a problem to us.<sup>140</sup>

While Deuteronomy 1:19-46 recalls how God fights against unfaithful Israel in its rebellion, 2:1-3:22 recollects how God fights for faithful Israel in its obedience. In 7:1-5, God institutes *herem* warfare in which Israel was to “show no mercy” (7:3) to its enemies by carrying out genocide.<sup>141</sup> Israel should not fear the nations but have faith in the divine warrior (7:17-21; 20:1) who will provide progressive and decisive victory over its enemies (7:22-26).<sup>142</sup> As God commands the nation to initiate the conquest (9:1-3), victory is not based on the righteousness of Israel but the covenantal faithfulness of God (9:4-6).<sup>143</sup> The covenantal law also makes provision for a king who would lead the nation in dependence on God (17:16-17) and obedience to the law (17:18-20).<sup>144</sup>

Further examination of Deuteronomy’s treatment of warfare shows that holy war is a core concept in God’s covenantal direction to Israel. Von Rad asserts that

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<sup>140</sup>Von Rad, *Holy War*, 115. In contrast to his assertion at the end that this war ideology is problematic, this chapter seeks to demonstrate that this war ideology was intended by the divine author, the warrior king himself.

<sup>141</sup>The next section will further explain the troubling issue of God’s command of Canaanite genocide.

<sup>142</sup>Nelson notes, “Such fear might seem logical since the enemy’s power is so overwhelming (vv. 1, 7, 17), but the evidence of the even greater power of the Divine Warrior counters this.” Richard D. Nelson, “Divine Warrior Theology in Deuteronomy,” in *A God So Near: Essays on Old Testament Theology in Honor of Patrick D. Miller*, ed. Brent A. Strawn and Nancy R. Bowen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 244.

<sup>143</sup>Nelson notes the danger of self-righteousness for Israel: “Israel is tempted to engage in a binary juridical logic: our victory means our righteousness.” *Ibid.*, 248. This same temptation continues throughout redemptive history in the kingdom warfare of God’s people.

<sup>144</sup>Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 157. Grant suggests that Deut 17 presents the king as: chosen by God, dependent on God, exemplar of devotion to God, and humble before the people. Jamie A. Grant, *The King as Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy’s Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms*, Academia Biblica (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 213.

throughout Deuteronomy, the “idea of holy war was the actual core of all their thinking about Israel around which everything else could be organically grouped.”<sup>145</sup> As Israel goes out to war, the priests proclaim how God fights the battle (20:2-4) and the officers permit exemptions from the battle (20:5-8). In addition, the nation should show mercy to distant lands in combat (20:10-15), but the nations of Canaan must be devoted to complete destruction (20:16-18). Deuteronomy 23:9-14 shows that, because victory is contingent on the Lord’s presence in battle, Israel must maintain purity in the camp to preserve his presence.<sup>146</sup> While the blessings of Israel’s obedience include victory over enemies (28:7), the curse of Israel’s disobedience entails defeat by their foes (28:25). Moses then summons Joshua to anoint him as God’s warrior who will lead God’s people in the conquest of God’s enemies in Canaan (31:7-8). In the song of Moses, he celebrates the way God will fight for Israel against its enemies but also warns of how the Lord might war against Israel if it rebels (32:26-43).<sup>147</sup> As Deuteronomy ends, the final blessing of Moses (33:1-29) shows that “the warrior God is viewed in an uncomplicated way as the source of Israel’s prosperity and security.”<sup>148</sup>

Clearly, the Exodus provides the paradigm, the prototype, and the provision for kingdom warfare. Sailhamer summarizes these developments in the Pentateuch: “The compositional strategy within the Pentateuch itself has thus linked the Exodus with the

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<sup>145</sup>Von Rad, *Holy War*, 126.

<sup>146</sup>*Ibid.*, 42. See also Nelson, “Divine Warrior Theology in Deuteronomy,” 252.

<sup>147</sup>Nelson contends, “The Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32 takes up the prophetic notion of the Divine Warrior as one who fights against Israel’s enemies but who may also choose to turn against Israel.” Nelson, “Divine Warrior Theology in Deuteronomy,” 243. Sailhamer adds that “the central theme of each of the major poems in the Pentateuch is the promise of a coming ‘king.’” Sailhamer, “The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible,” 20.

<sup>148</sup>Nelson, “Divine Warrior Theology in Deuteronomy,” 259.

messianic future.”<sup>149</sup> Through an act of war, God rescues his people Israel from a domain of darkness (Egypt) and transfers them into a kingdom as beloved sons in the Promised Land. This section has sought to show that this link between the Exodus and messianic expectation is not only intentional and prospective but also warfare-oriented. The Exodus establishes a foundation for the advancement of kingdom warfare and messianic expectation during the conquest.

### **Christ the Warrior King and the Conquest**

The conquest of Canaan presents perhaps the most challenging yet rewarding insights into the divine warrior theme in the messianic expectation of the Old Testament. It is the initial phase in the culmination of God’s covenantal promises to his people.<sup>150</sup> The problem with the conquest for many scholars is how to explain how offensive wars culminating in genocide could be not only sanctioned by God but also carried out by the divine warrior.<sup>151</sup> As Craigie asks, “But still the problem remains. While it is clear that the wars were *religious* in character, were they *holy*?”<sup>152</sup> Understanding the conquest within its redemptive historical context offers tremendous insight into the kingdom

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<sup>149</sup> Sailhamer, “The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible,” 16.

<sup>150</sup> Miller comments, “The culmination of this primal march of holy war is the crossing of the Jordan and the taking of the land. The result is on the one hand the establishment of Israel in the land which had been promised to her and on the other hand the establishment of kingship and sanctuary for Yahweh.” Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel*, 162.

<sup>151</sup> Indeed, Von Rad would reject the conquest as holy war because he argues that the holy wars of Israel “appear in fact to have been exclusively defensive wars.” Von Rad, *Holy War*, 67. As a result, he claims “It thus becomes clear that the real military clashes with the Canaanites were secondary to the actual conquest.” *Ibid.*, 55. In contrast, this section will argue that the conquest was a significant component of Israel’s holy war, which demonstrates an offensive dimension to its character.

<sup>152</sup> Craigie, *The Problem of War in the Old Testament*, 48. Merrill defends the holiness of Israel’s wars in Eugene H. Merrill, “The Case for Moderate Discontinuity,” in *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 84–85.

warfare patterns that infuse the Old Testament's messianic expectation.<sup>153</sup> This section argues that the conquest is a second Exodus in which God (1) fights for faithful Israel in its obedience, (2) fights against unfaithful Israel in its rebellion, (3) expects Israel to carry out Canaanite genocide with messianic motivations, and (4) orders the plunder of God's enemies so that he might receive the spoils of victory.

The conquest is framed as a second Exodus in a number of ways. As God instructs Israel to have faith, not fear before the Exodus, he commands Israel to have faith, not fear before the conquest (Josh 1:5-9).<sup>154</sup> As the crossing of the Red Sea initiated the Exodus, the crossing of the Jordan River initiates the conquest (3:1-17).<sup>155</sup> As Israel celebrates the Passover prior to the Exodus, Israel observes the Passover prior to the conquest (5:10).<sup>156</sup> Moreover, linguistic parallels between the two events confirm that the conquest is presented as a second Exodus.<sup>157</sup> Later messianic expectation builds on the Bible's presentation of the conquest as a second Exodus as it depicts a coming warrior king who will bring about a new Exodus.

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<sup>153</sup>There is also value in considering the conquest within its Ancient Near Eastern context. See Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 62–82.

<sup>154</sup>Joshua's primary reason not to fear in battle is because of God's promise of his presence to Joshua in the midst of conflict: "I will not leave you or forsake you" (Josh 1:5; cf. Gen 28:15; Deut 31:6, 8; 1 Chr 28:20). Is this not the same type of language that Jesus, the second Joshua, uses as he gives the disciples the battle plan of the Great Commission? (Matt 28:20; cf. Heb 13:5)

<sup>155</sup>House contends, "As in the miracle at the Red Sea, the people are privileged to pass over on dry ground, a miracle that links the Exodus to the current historical situation." House, *Old Testament Theology*, 203.

<sup>156</sup>House comments that "the people celebrate Passover (5:10), which links them to their deliverance from Egypt. . . . What God did for them in Egypt God does for them in Canaan." *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>157</sup>Stone states, "The verbal parallels between these two texts establish an analogy between Yahweh's action in the Exodus and in the presence of Israel in Canaan." L. Stone, "Ethical and Apologetic Tendencies in the Redaction of the Book of Joshua," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 53 (1991): 32; Patrick D. Miller, *The Way of the Lord: Essays in Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 84.

**God fights for faithful Israel.** The conquest portrays the divine warrior fighting for faithful Israel in its obedience. Yahweh's cosmic conflict with the spiritual forces of evil manifests itself in Israel's military conflict with the historical forces of Canaan.<sup>158</sup> It was common for cultures in the ANE to see their gods as fighting for them.<sup>159</sup> Holy war in the ANE was often a complex endeavor involving many facets.<sup>160</sup> Ollenburger declares that "belief in Yahweh as a warrior who fights in defense of Israel is as old as Israel itself."<sup>161</sup> Yet, Scripture indicates the pattern is even more ancient than Israel. This pattern of God fighting for his people begins with the opening messianic promise of Scripture and continues from the Exodus through the monarchy, but it is most clearly seen during the conquest of Canaan.<sup>162</sup> God fights for his people to preserve the bloodline through which redemptive bloodshed would come.

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<sup>158</sup>Boyd notes that "Yahweh's various commands that the Israelites go to war against other nations must be understood against the backdrop of Yahweh's own cosmic warfare. What is at stake in such wars is not simply earthly territories or the dominion of earthly governments: from the perspective of the Old Testament, what is at stake is the kingly rule of the one true God." Boyd, *God at War*, 134. Longman and Reid add, "A number of passages in the Old Testament use the language of cosmological conflict to describe conflict on the historical plane." Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 79. Examples in the Old Testament abound (Exod 15; Deut 32-33; Judg 5; 2 Sam 22; Ps 18, 68, 77; Dan 7; Hab 3).

<sup>159</sup>Patrick Miller explains how this ANE tendency relates to Israel: "That the God of Israel should be regarded as the commander of divine or heavenly armies should not be surprising when one considers conceptions of divine warfare in other parts of the ancient Near East." Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel*, 6.

<sup>160</sup>According to Von Rad, Israel's holy war consisted of thirteen elements. Eugene Merrill summarizes Von Rad's list in this way: "1. Mustering by a trumpet call, 2. Consecration of the men (Josh 3:5), 3. Offering of sacrifices, 4. An oracle of God, 5. 'Yahweh has given,' 6. Yahweh leads the way, 7. Designated as 'Yahweh war' (1 Sam 18:17; 25:28), 8. 'fear not' formula, 9. enemy's loss of courage, 10. War cry, 11. Divine terror, 12 *herem* ('the high point'), and 13. 'to your tents' (1 Sam 4:10)." Merrill, "The Case for Moderate Discontinuity," 69.

<sup>161</sup>Ollenburger, "Gerhard von Rad's Theory of Holy War," 28. Additionally, Miller explains that "at the center of the salvation experience and theology of early Israel was the 'man of war,' the divine warrior. If one wished to know concretely what salvation meant in the early period – and indeed in later times also – it was simply: Yahweh fought for us and saved us." Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel*, 173.

<sup>162</sup>Longman and Reid provide the most extended analysis of how God fights for his people in their obedience and against his people in their rebellion. Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 31–61.

The pattern of Israel's holy war can be divided into three phases.<sup>163</sup> Prior to battle, God prepares Israel by revealing his will, preparing them spiritually, and purifying the camp.<sup>164</sup> During the battle, the divine warrior leads the march into conflict with the ark of his presence and enlists Israel as the combatants for warfare (Josh 6:6-7).<sup>165</sup> After the battle, the people commemorate the victory of the divine warrior through the celebration of praise (Num 10:35-36; Ps 98) and the acquisition of plunder (Josh 6:24).<sup>166</sup> Through this pattern, God repeatedly gives Israel's enemies into their hands during the conquest (Josh 6:2; 8:17-18; 10:8; 11:8).<sup>167</sup>

During the conquest, the contrast between how God fights for Israel in its faithful obedience and against Israel in its sinful rebellion is best seen when comparing Israel's first triumph at Jericho with its first failure at Ai.<sup>168</sup> Before the battle at Jericho,

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However, there are several shortcomings to their approach: (1) They do not recognize Genesis 3:15 as God's first promise to fight for his people or Gen 3:24 as God's first act of fighting against his people, (2) they do not evaluate the biblical data in light of the redemptive historical narrative of God establishing a kingdom for Christ, and (3) they do not extensively connect this pattern of God fighting for and against his people to his role in the spiritual warfare of the church.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid., 33–46.

<sup>164</sup>Longman and Reid note, "Many of the acts that preceded a war in the Hebrew Bible indicate the religious nature of the conflict. Sacrifice, circumcision, vows, oracular inquiries, ritual cleanness—each of these elements announced Israel's understanding that God was present with them in battle." Ibid., 37.

<sup>165</sup>Patrick Miller adds that "in the earliest texts having to do with the Ark it is clearly associated with the holy wars of Yahweh and perceived as a type of palladium in battle, embodying the presence of Yahweh as he marched to fight for Israel and acting as a security for victory over her adversaries." Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel*, 145; Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 40.

<sup>166</sup>While Israel was regularly allowed to keep the plunder, God often demanded full destruction of all the people and animals of those who were defeated in battle based on the concept embodied in the Hebrew term *herem*. For an extensive explanation of the practice of *herem*, see Philip D. Stern, *The Biblical Herem: A Window on Israel's Religious Experience*, Brown Judaic Studies 211 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1991).

<sup>167</sup>Further reflection on the New Testament's portrayal of Christ as warrior king shows how he fulfills each of these three phases of holy war. He demonstrates purity, achieves victory, and distributes plunder.

<sup>168</sup>The battle of Ai will be discussed below in the section on how God fights against Israel.



God commissions Joshua (Josh 1:1-9), Israel spies the land (2:1), the people cross the Jordan (3:14-17), they commemorate the crossing as a second Exodus (4:23-24), and Israel celebrates the Passover (5:10-12). In addition, Israel obeys Joshua's command to "consecrate yourselves" (3:5) by purifying themselves for battle through the covenantal sign of circumcision (5:1-8).<sup>169</sup> Then, Joshua receives a detailed battle plan from the angel of the Lord (5:13-6:5).<sup>170</sup> As Israel's battle begins (6:1-3), Dumbrell observes, "The conquest of Jericho, which calls for precise obedience to the divine commands, serves a paradigm for the manner in which Yahweh will dispossess Canaan and make it sacred space."<sup>171</sup> As God's presence goes with Israel into the battle through the ark (6:4-14), Israel devotes Jericho to destruction because it is God who fights for his people (6:21).<sup>172</sup>

The book of Judges also reveals the way God fights for his people.<sup>173</sup> What is distinctive about how God fights for his people in Judges is that he primarily does it in

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Dempster points out, "The pair of initial encounters with Canaanites, which result in both a stunning victory and an equally stunning defeat, make the same point, first positively, then negatively. Loyalty and faithfulness to Yahweh lead to miraculous victory at Jericho (Jos. 6), and disobedience with respect to the ban leads to an 'anti-miraculous' defeat at Ai (Jos. 7:1-6)." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 129. It is outside the scope of this chapter to do a full analysis of each of Israel's battles in the conquest.

<sup>169</sup>Longman and Reid note, "Since at the heart of holy war is God's presence with the army, Israel had to be as spiritually prepared to go to battle as they would be to approach the sanctuary." Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 35.

<sup>170</sup>Ibid., 33. Boda explains the importance of seeking God's will before the battle during both the conquest and the monarchy: "Inquiring of God was an important aspect in the battle strategy of Israel, for it represented the human royal figure's submission to the divine king and reminded him of his complete reliance on the divine king for victory." Boda, *After God's Own Heart*, 72.

<sup>171</sup>Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel*, 73.

<sup>172</sup>Miller writes, "The ark is at all points intimately and directly associated with the wars of Yahweh. One cannot assume that the Ark went out at every battle any more than one can assume that the *herem* or any other aspect of holy war was always present." Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel*, 151.

<sup>173</sup>Prince contends, "When the book of Judges is considered as a part of the fabric of the grand narrative of redemptive history, then the book's dramatic, suspense-filled stories of sin, salvation and violent warfare do not seem as foreign to us as followers of Jesus." David E. Prince, "Christ as Warrior-King: Preaching Christ from Judges," *The Tie* 76, no. 1 (2008): 16.

response to repentance. Repeatedly, the book of Judges displays a pattern of rebellion, repentance, request, and relief in which Israel realizes it has turned from God, requests his help (3:9) and is delivered through an anointed leader (2:16).<sup>174</sup> Israel's rebellion is described by the refrain that they "did evil in the sight of the Lord" (2:11; 3:7; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1). When Israel cries out to the Lord, he raises up deliverers (who are imperfect themselves) through whom he fights for his people.<sup>175</sup>

The way God fights for his people in the book of Judges perpetuates several patterns of kingdom warfare. First, it maintains the skull-crushing pattern of victory prophesied in Genesis 3:15 (Judg 4:21; 5:26).<sup>176</sup> Second, it confirms that Israel's victory comes not through their own strength but from faith in the divine warrior (7:2).<sup>177</sup> Third, because of the cycle of rebellion and repentance, Judges anticipates the coming of the Davidic monarchy because, as Dempster points out, "Israel is in need of a lasting kingship instead of a temporary judge."<sup>178</sup> Echoing God's original promise in Genesis

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<sup>174</sup>Prince summarizes the pattern, "Their rebellion aroused God's anger, and He chastised them by allowing them to be conquered and oppressed at the hands of foreign invaders. The people eventually cried out to the LORD who heard their cries and provided them warrior-saviors to deliver them from the hands of the enemy. And this cycle is repeated, again and again." *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>175</sup>Dempster explains, "The judges are thus human saviours for Israel because they are endowed with God's Spirit. They save by conquering the enemies of the people of God." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 131.

<sup>176</sup>Hamilton, "The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman," 35; Prince, "Christ as Warrior-King," 17.

<sup>177</sup>Longman and Reid assert, "Since God fights for Israel, the nation does not have to worry about the number of its troops or its weapons technology." Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 37; Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 432. David's head-crushing defeat of Goliath unites both of these features (head-crushing and dependence on God rather than military equipment) in 1 Sam 17. Of course, the coming Davidic king's victory on the cross does the same thing as well.

<sup>178</sup>Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 133; Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 157. Certainly, this need of a king not only foreshadows the coming Israelite monarchy but also (from a canonical context) points to the ultimate need for the lasting kingship of Christ who is the ultimate warrior-savior.

3:15 and anticipating how he would fight for his people through his messianic king, the conquest depicts the way that the divine warrior fights for his faithful people.<sup>179</sup>

**God fights against unfaithful Israel.** Though God is often a warrior who fights for faithful Israel, he is also an enemy who fights against unfaithful Israel.<sup>180</sup> Yahweh war is unique from other ANE cultures because Israel's deity not only fights for it in its covenantal obedience but also fights against it in its rebellion. God's covenant faithfulness through conflict meant that he not only fought for Israel in their conquests but also fought against Israel in their sin. The Torah makes provision for God's holy war against Israel during their times of rebellion (Deut 13:12-18) using the same type of language as in other passages that address *herem* warfare against enemy nations.<sup>181</sup> This pattern begins for Israel in the wilderness wanderings after it rejects the spy report of the promised land and then is defeated by the Canaanites (Num 14:39-45). It continues throughout Israel's time in the Promised Land whenever it goes to war with the nations while rebellious against God.

The clearest example of how God fights against his people in their rebellion occurs at the battle of Ai (Josh 7:1-9). Following Israel's decisive victory against Jericho,

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<sup>179</sup>Yet, as Russell Moore observes, it is essential to remember that these typological precursors were reserved for the faithful remnant of Israel: "The future restoration of Israel has *never* been promised to the unfaithful, unregenerate members of the nation (John 3:3-10; Rom. 2:25-29) — only to the faithful remnant." Russell D. Moore, "Personal and Cosmic Eschatology," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 906–07.

<sup>180</sup>See Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 48–60. Longman and Reid present the most helpful presentation of the contrast between how God fights for his people in their faithful obedience and against his people in their sinful rebellion.

<sup>181</sup>Eugene Merrill notes, "Deuteronomy 13:12-18 contains some of the common terms for Yahweh war, such as the utter destruction (*hrm*), smiting (*nkh*), and burning (*srp*), but it is radically different in that this time Yahweh war is directed against persons and places in Israel itself." Merrill, "The Case for Moderate Discontinuity," 71.

Achan kept some of the spoils of victory and kindled God's anger (7:1).<sup>182</sup> Then, Ai routs Israel (7:4), which fills the nation with fear rather than faith (7:5-9). The Lord informs Joshua that individual sin (7:10-11) is the reason he fights against Israel and allows them to be defeated (7:12).<sup>183</sup> After Israel identifies and punishes the rebellious one in its midst (7:16-26), God again fights for them in their repentance and grants them victory over Ai (8:1-29).

God's pattern of fighting against his unfaithful people continues during both the judges and the monarchy and culminates in the exile. As Dumbrell notes, "The book of Judges recounts the results of Israel's failure to complete the mandate for conquest issued in Deuteronomy and Joshua."<sup>184</sup> Repeatedly, God fights against Israel when they do what is right in their own eyes (Judg 2:14; 3:8; 4:2). After God establishes the Davidic monarchy, God brings defeat upon the nation whenever subsequent kings follow the pattern of Jeroboam by doing evil in the sight of the Lord (1 Kgs 15:34; 16:26; 22:52; 2 Kgs 15:24; cf. Amos 7:11).<sup>185</sup> In the history of Israel, the exile culminates the way God fights against his unfaithful people in their rebellion (2 Chr 36:17-20).<sup>186</sup> Consequently,

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<sup>182</sup>Hamilton notes, "This episode demonstrates that Yahweh's righteousness is not limited by his commitment to Israel. His commitment to them does not cause him to show an unjust favoritism toward his chosen people. When they sin he punishes them, showing the glory of his justice. Through the judgment of the defeat at Ai, however, Israel is delivered because they are thereby prompted to purge the evil from their midst." Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 150.

<sup>183</sup>Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 46.

<sup>184</sup>Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel*, 76.

<sup>185</sup>This pattern of rebellion including religious syncretism and self-exaltation all have "a common denominator—evil spirits at play behind them (1 Kgs 14:21-31; 15:25-16:34)." Moore, *Tempted and Tried*, 142.

<sup>186</sup>Longman and Reid state, "The reflex of the Exodus is the Exile. If the Exodus shows God's power on behalf of Israel, the Exile displays God's power against Israel. The Exodus is an expression of God's grace; the Exile displays his judgment. In the Exodus event we witness God as Israel's warrior; in the Exile, he is Israel's enemy." Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 52. Peter Craigie comments on the

the exile is not just a national issue but a religious one—the divine warrior’s punishment for a national insurrection against the first commandment.<sup>187</sup> The prophets also sound the warning that God will be the enemy of his people in the future if their rebellion continues (Isa 10:5-13; 44:28-45:13). Therefore, the pattern of God fighting against his people when they are unfaithful characterizes the kingdom warfare of the Old Testament and impacts its messianic expectation.

**Canaanite genocide.** The Canaanite genocide documented in the Old Testament is one of the major stumbling blocks that believers must be able to deal with in their defense of the credibility of the Christian faith.<sup>188</sup> How could a loving God command his chosen people to murder innocent men, women and children as a part of their warfare? Many scholars have sought to provide a solution to this dilemma.<sup>189</sup> The prominence of this issue is evident in the fact that Boyd’s current theological project, entitled *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God*, is an effort to give a new Christocentric take on the relationship between the violence of the Old Testament and the non-violence of the New Testament.<sup>190</sup> Understanding Canaanite genocide in its redemptive historical

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way the judgment of the exile is a polemic against Israel’s sin because it is the subversion of his intention for Israel’s rulership, “One of the tragic features of the military defeat of the chosen people lies in the fact that the defeat was a reversal of their own conquest.” Craigie, *The Problem of War in the Old Testament*, 77.

<sup>187</sup>Ibid., 70.

<sup>188</sup>Collins claims, “The testimony about the conquest of Canaan by divine command runs afoul of modern sensibilities about the morality of genocide.” John J. Collins, *Encounters with Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 5.

<sup>189</sup>A recent example is the multi-view book on Canaanite genocide. Stanley N. Gundry, ed., *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003).

<sup>190</sup>In his forthcoming book, Boyd seeks to explain the violence of the conquest in general and the Canaanite genocide in particular in five Christ-centered categories: (1) incarnational flexibility, (2)

context not only clarifies its purpose but also sheds light on the divine warrior theme in messianic expectation.

Canaanite genocide is commanded in the law and commences throughout the conquest of Israel. Deuteronomy makes a provision that Israel should carry out *herem* warfare against the Canaanites in which Israel should “show no mercy to them” (7:2) and “save alive nothing that breathes” (20:16). The first *herem* warfare occurs in Numbers 21:1-3 as God grants Israel victory over Canaanites in the wilderness before the nation enters the Promised Land. Indeed, the term *herem* (חָרַם) means that Israel will devote all of its enemies to destruction. Put simply, Canaanite genocide is an act of worship to the divine warrior.<sup>191</sup> In the conquest, Canaanite genocide occurs repeatedly (Josh 2:10, 6:17-21, 8:26, 10:28-40, 11:8, 11, 20; Judg 1:17; cf. Num 21:1-3; 1 Sam 15:3-21), although Israel does not execute the ban in every battle. The contrast between Israel’s obedience in the first battle of the Conquest in Jericho and their disobedience in the battle of Ai underscores “the importance of keeping *herem*. Obedience brings victory against the toughest opponents, while disobedience means defeat even against the weakest.”<sup>192</sup>

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contrastive pedagogy, (3) punitive withdrawal, (4) cosmic conflict, and (5) responsible identification. Boyd described these features in a lecture with Paul Eddy. See Gregory A. Boyd and Paul Eddy, *Wrath and Love* (Woodland Hills Church, St. Paul, MN, 2010). While there are problems in each of these five categories, it is outside of the scope of this section to address them in detail. However, two major overarching issues emerge. First, the result of Boyd’s approach is a radical discontinuity between the testaments in which the violence of the Old Testament is primarily explained away rather than reconciled with the New Testament data. Second, and more importantly, though Boyd describes his approach as a Christ-centered treatment, it does not seem to be Christocentric enough. Why? He fails to account for how Israel’s warfare not only preserves the messianic line through which Christ will come but also patterns the messianic victory by which Christ will conquer.

<sup>191</sup>Tremper Longman contends that “*herem* indicates that warfare is worship in the Old Testament. God won the victory, so he was due the spoils.” Tremper Longman, “The Case for Spiritual Continuity,” in *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 172.

<sup>192</sup>*Ibid.*, 173.

Scripture even claims in Joshua 11:20 that the divine warrior hardens the hearts of the Canaanites so that he can then fight for Israel, which results in the nation carrying out Canaanite genocide. How can a Christocentric approach to the Old Testament make sense of this troubling issue? A redemptive-historical analysis reveals four messianic motivations for the conquest.

First, the divine warrior commands the Canaanite genocide to protect purity. Israel was to eradicate its surrounding enemies in order to prevent the corruption that would (and later did) come as a result of embracing their idolatry. Therefore, Miller insists that the *herem* warfare of the conquest is “rooted totally in the First Commandment, and the book of Joshua thus confronts the reader with the threat to the First Commandment that is perceived to be found in easy alliances with those who do not serve the Lord.”<sup>193</sup> This relationship between warfare and purity is not new. Instead, the first kingdom conflict in Scripture between Adam & Eve and the serpent was a battle over purity. From Eden onward, a pattern emerges—victory requires purity; obedience means triumph while disobedience means defeat.

The law explicitly gives this call to purity as the grounds upon which Israel must carry out *herem* warfare against the nations who follow rival deities (Deut 7:3-6).<sup>194</sup> Furthermore, God orders the nation to implement a form of *herem* warfare upon its own citizens if they are compromising the holiness of the kingdom community (Deut 13:12-

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<sup>193</sup>Miller, *The Way of the Lord*, 85. Eichrodt adds, “The introduction of this custom of war into the worship of Yahweh was linked with the Mosaic demand for unqualified devotion to the cause of God.” Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Baker, vol. 1 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1961), 139–40.

<sup>194</sup>Merrill points out the relationship between the pursuit of spiritual purity and protection from rival deities: “Yahweh war, then, is essentially war against the imaginary gods of the world who challenge the sovereignty of Yahweh. In this sense, Yahweh war can perhaps more properly be termed *deicide* rather than *homicide*.” Merrill, “The Case for Moderate Discontinuity,” 71.

18). If Israel forfeits its holiness, then God will shift from fighting for it in its obedience to fighting against it in its rebellion. Dumbrell comments, “The institution of the *herem* (“ban”) is designed not to counter a military threat but to counter a religious threat.”<sup>195</sup> The need for holiness to achieve victory explains why Israel not only purified themselves before its battles but also why it was defeated (like at Ai) because of personal sin. Because purity precedes victory in God’s redemptive historical warfare pattern, this is precisely why the coming messiah had to be set apart as holy.

Second, the divine warrior commands the Canaanite genocide to project prophecy. In the slaughter of the Canaanites, God warns the surrounding nations that, just as the Canaanites face judgment for the wrath that they have stored up through their sin, everyone else outside of the messiah will face that same judgment in the future, including Israel. Michael Horton points out, “Just as God warns the world of the judgment to come, that event is not only anticipated but actually experienced in part by the idolatrous nations that occupy God’s land.”<sup>196</sup> From the beginning of kingdom warfare, conflict coincides with prophecy (Gen 3:14-18). The battle itself as well as the divine warrior’s pronouncements alongside it both serve as a word of salvation to God’s people and a word of judgment to God’s enemies.

The conquest in particular connects to prophecy in three key ways: (1) it is a response to prophecy as the divine warrior carries out the judgment of the Canaanites foretold in Genesis 15:14-16 and other places. (2) The conquest itself is an act of prophecy by which God warns the nations that they too will face judgment like the

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<sup>195</sup>Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel*, 73.

<sup>196</sup>Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 162; Longman, “The Case for Spiritual Continuity,” 173–74.



Canaanites for their sins if they do not submit to the reign of the divine warrior. (3) The *herem* warfare of the conquest provides foundational imagery for the oracles against the nations in the prophets (Isa 34:2, 5; cf. 11:15) to indicate the total triumph that Yahweh will accomplish against his enemies.<sup>197</sup>

Conservative evangelical explanations of the conquest have often focused primarily on this motivation of prophecy, by emphasizing God's justice in condemning sinners to death in the Canaanite genocide. For example, Hamilton asserts that "the ban on the Canaanites heralds the infinite majesty of the justice of Yahweh, whose holiness demands perfect loyalty, whose worth is such that anything less than absolute allegiance defiles unto death."<sup>198</sup> They rightly claim that God is just in condemning some nations to genocide because all people are worthy of death since we are sinners. This is true as far as it goes. But without considering the other reasons for Canaanite genocide, this reason alone could make the divine warrior appear arbitrary or capricious. There is a danger for evangelical treatments of the Canaanite genocide to limit themselves to the issues of purity and prophecy already discusses, but what other messianic motivations shaped the conquest?

Third, the divine warrior commands the Canaanite genocide for messianic preservation. The conquest is part of how God sustains the chosen lineage through which he would bring about the world-rescuing messiah. The "mother promise" of the messiah in Genesis 3:15 is itself a prophecy that is prototypical of *herem* warfare because the

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<sup>197</sup>Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 178. Cross adds that these war oracles in which God fights for his people emphasize the need for his people to respond with faith in Yahweh as the only hope of victory. Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 229.

<sup>198</sup>Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 141.

coming seed of the woman will entirely crush the serpent. Daniel Gard explains that the primary reason for Canaanite genocide was “for the preparation of the nation of Israel to bring forth the One who would come as a Savior not only for Israel but for all the children of Adam.”<sup>199</sup> Without the divine warrior’s preservation of Israel during the conquest, the lineage of the woman’s seed would not be protected, and thus, God’s promises would fail.<sup>200</sup>

God also roots the call to Canaanite genocide in his covenantal faithfulness to his promise to Abraham. When the divine warrior gives instructions to the nation about herem warfare in Deuteronomy 7:1-5, it is rooted in his election of the nation as his chosen people (Deut 7:6-11). Thus, according to Merrill, there is a close connection between genocide, the election of Israel, and the preservation of the messianic line: “Israel was the elect people of God, chosen not just to mediate the message of salvation to the world but also to serve as his agent in bringing to pass his will on the earth. At times, notably in the years of the Conquest, this divinely ordained task would require the taking up of arms as the army of God.”<sup>201</sup> Canaanite genocide is an eschatological intrusion of divine judgment for the sake of messianic preservation. Therefore, God preserves the nation of Israel through Canaanite genocide to maintain the genealogical purity of the messianic line.<sup>202</sup> Though the Canaanite genocide may seem arbitrary, capricious, and contradictory

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<sup>199</sup>Daniel L. Gard, “A Response to Eugene H. Merrill,” in *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 105.

<sup>200</sup>Dumbrell points out, “The ban appears to have been conceived as an acknowledgement of Yahweh’s help.” Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel*, 66.

<sup>201</sup>Merrill, “The Case for Moderate Discontinuity,” 84.

<sup>202</sup>Leahy explains the struggle with the serpent for this messianic preservation, “Satan repeatedly endeavours to annihilate the Messianic line, especially the royal line of David; and he repeatedly seeks to corrupt the true religion and to inculcate idolatry.” Frederick S. Leahy, *The Victory of the Lamb*:

to God's love, is there anything ultimately more loving than preserving the messianic line through which salvation would come and hope would radiate to all nations?

Fourth, the divine warrior commands the Canaanite genocide to present a typological pattern. The typology of the conquest points ahead to the coming death and resurrection of Christ. The storyline of Scripture reveals a pattern of *herem* warfare that begins in the Garden of Eden and concludes in the garden of the new creation. Longman explains the typological significance of Israel's *herem* warfare in this way: "The God of the Old Testament is not a different God from the God we encounter in the New Testament. Nor did God change his mind. The war against the Canaanites was simply an earlier phase of the battle that comes to its climax on the cross and its completion in the final judgment. The object of warfare moves from the Canaanites, who are the object of God's wrath for their sin, to the spiritual powers and principalities, and then finally to the utter destruction of all evil, human and spiritual."<sup>203</sup> The *herem* warfare that God establishes for the nation of Israel can only be understood rightly if it is rooted in a recognition of the Bible's initial pronouncement of *herem* warfare against the Serpent in the garden (Gen 3:15).

This *herem* warfare sets a typological pattern that finds its fulfillment in the New Testament. First, it climaxes on the cross as God directs this judgment of sin upon Christ who satisfies his wrath so that all those who are united to him in faith do not stand under its condemnation. Could it not be reasonable to say that, in a sense, the atonement is God carrying out the *herem* of holy war on his son? By taking on the death blow of the

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*Christ's Triumph over Sin, Death and Satan* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2001), 28.

<sup>203</sup>Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," 184–85; Merrill, "The Case for Moderate Discontinuity," 82.

devil, Jesus proves himself to be the faithful one of God who the divine warrior fights for. By taking on the sins of the world, Jesus becomes the enemy of God who the divine warrior fights against. Second, the church's cosmic conflict should be understood as *herem* warfare not because it is called to take up military arms to advance the kingdom. Instead, it is because the Spirit has been poured out on the church as the spoils of Christ's victory (Eph 4:8) and it is called to take up the full armor of God in its assault on the kingdom of darkness (Eph 6:10-20).<sup>204</sup>

Third, the *herem* warfare of God carried out by Israel also points ahead to a coming eschatological fulfillment in which God devotes all of his enemies to destruction fully and finally. Therefore, what someone believes about the justice of God in fully crushing his enemies through the *herem* warfare of Israel reveals everything about what they believe about the final judgment of Christ.<sup>205</sup> Clearly, this pattern of *herem* warfare continues throughout redemptive history as kingdom warfare unfolds. By understanding Canaanite genocide within the storyline of Scripture, it provides insight into both the preservation of the messianic line and the expectation of the messianic warrior king.

**Spoils of victory.** Senator William L. Marcy (D-NY) popularized the saying “to the victor goes the spoils” in 1828 following Andrew Jackson's presidential victory. Yet, he simply politicized a military concept that victorious armies have implemented throughout the annals of history. In the surrounding ANE culture, Israel's counterparts

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<sup>204</sup>Understanding the redemptive historical transformation of *herem* warfare for new covenant believers is essential. It protects the church from sanctioning or approving genocidal activity.

<sup>205</sup>Longman, “The Case for Spiritual Continuity,” 185. Hamilton adds, “The total destruction of the inhabitants of the land is only just if the deity who calls for such a measure is worthy of all honor. If Yahweh's worth is not so great that those who reject him have committed a crime that cries out for infinite justice, then the zero-tolerance policy against the people of the land is a brutal, unjust, ego-maniacal atrocity.” Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 105.

commonly plundered their enemies after a successful conquest.<sup>206</sup> The holy war of Israel was similar in this regard.<sup>207</sup> The common pattern for Israel's holy war was that God fought for Israel against its enemies and poured out the spoils of victory upon his people as a victory gift.<sup>208</sup> The central act of salvation in the Old Testament (the Exodus) the central military campaign (the conquest) and the central figure for Israel's messianic expectation (David) demonstrate the close connection between defeating Israel's enemies and plundering their possessions.<sup>209</sup>

The Exodus was the foundational act of deliverance for the nation of Israel.<sup>210</sup> Prior to the tenth plague and the Passover, Moses commanded the people to plunder the Egyptians by requesting silver and gold (Exod 12:35; cf. 11:2).<sup>211</sup> In fulfillment of not only the Abrahamic promise that God would bring Israel out of Egypt with great possessions (Gen 15:14) but also the Mosaic promise at the burning bush (Exod 3:21-22), God grants Israel favor with the Egyptians so that they might plunder their enemies' possessions as the Exodus begins.<sup>212</sup> As Yahweh leads Israel out of Egypt, he pours out

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<sup>206</sup>On plundering in the military practices of the ANE, see Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel*, 6; Cross, *Canaanite Myth*; Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 83–90; Boyd, *God at War*, 74.

<sup>207</sup>Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," 172.

<sup>208</sup>Plundering the possessions of the enemy was a major feature of Israel's *herem* warfare. Ibid., 184–85; Stern, *The Biblical Herem*. Niehaus notes the Ancient Near Eastern pattern: "Thus tribute paid to the earthly suzerain was considered tribute rendered to his god." Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 82.

<sup>209</sup>This section could examine many other examples of Israel plundering their enemies. However, it will be limited to the Exodus, the conquest, and David because of their prominence in shaping the trajectory of the biblical narrative.

<sup>210</sup>Dempster, "Exodus and Biblical Theology," 4.

<sup>211</sup>On the relationship between plundering the Egyptians and the Exodus, see George W. Coats, "Despoiling the Egyptians," *Vetus Testamentum* 18, no. 4 (1968): 450–57.

<sup>212</sup>Russell D. Moore, "Exodus 11:1-13:16," in *Exit Strategy: The Gospel of Jesus in the Book of Exodus*, forthcoming, 9.

the spoils of victory upon the nation as both a sign of the current conquest and a provision for future success.

Plundering God's enemies is a central part of the *herem* warfare Israel implements during the conquest. The law's instruction about Canaanite genocide included direction regarding the spoils of victory. First, God allows Israel to plunder distant nations that God defeats on its behalf and enjoy the spoils of its enemies, which God has given them (Deut 20:14-15). Second, during the conquest of Canaan, Israel is to completely destroy the spoils of victory as an act of devotion to the divine warrior (20:17). In the conquest, Israel implements both approaches to the spoils of victory.<sup>213</sup>

In addition to God's activity regarding the spoils of victory in the conquest, the origin of the Davidic monarchy sheds light on the issue as well. In the final battle before David is anointed as king of Israel (2 Sam 2:4), he conquers the Amalekites and distributes the spoils of victory to his people. After the Philistines reject David (1 Sam 29:1-11), he returns to Ziklag only to find that the Amalekites had raided the city and captured both their families and their possessions (1 Sam 30:1-3). Following the direction of the Lord (1 Sam 30:8), David's army strikes them down and plunders their possessions (1 Sam 30:17-20).<sup>214</sup> Unwilling to follow in the path of King Saul, David takes the plunder that is rightfully his (1 Sam 30:20) and distributes it to his people – not only to those who battled along with him but also to those who watched the baggage (1 Sam

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<sup>213</sup>Though scholars differ on the reasoning, most agree that Israel's application of this dimension of *herem* warfare is inconsistent. Wright observes, "While it is true that Israel's practice did not follow what is prescribed here, it seems to be as likely that the idealization *preceded* Israel's wars in the land (i.e., as a prior statement of what should have happened, but did not), as that it was a seventh-century *postidealization* of what should have happened, but everybody knew had not." Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, New International Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 231.

<sup>214</sup>John Woodhouse, *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 534.

30:21-25) and even to those who were not yet subjects of his kingdom (1 Sam 30:26-31).<sup>215</sup> In 1 Samuel 30, David establishes the precedent that the true Davidic king receives the spoils of victory in order to distribute them to his people.<sup>216</sup> The prophets anticipate a coming messiah who would be a new David that would bring about a new Exodus. Because the Exodus, the conquest, and the Davidic kingship have close connections with the plundering of the enemy, is it possible that Israel's messianic expectation of a new David bringing about a new Exodus would also anticipate the outpouring of a victory gift upon his people?<sup>217</sup>

### **Christ the Warrior King and the Davidic Monarchy**

The expectation of a coming messianic warrior king reaches new heights with the establishment of the Davidic monarchy. The Davidic monarchy provides a nexus of warfare and kingship that promotes this expectation.<sup>218</sup> Whereas previous epochs of redemptive history indicated the warfare-nature of messianic expectation, the monarchy

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<sup>215</sup>Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, vol. 7, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B & H, 1996), 280–81.

<sup>216</sup>Woodhouse, *1 Samuel*, 529–42. This concept frustrates Walter Brueggemann who is incredulous that while “Saul is rejected for taking spoil; David is saluted and championed for doing the same!” Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 203.

<sup>217</sup>The upcoming section on the messiah's warfare and the expectation of victory suggests that the Old Testament prophets affirm this proposal.

<sup>218</sup>France observes, “The predominant conception of the Messiah is a kingly one. . . . He is the projection of the ideal of kingship, very often conceived as a member of the family of David, or even a David *redivivus*.” R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1971), 87. For more on the concept of the messiah as David *redivivus*, see Antti Laato, *Josiah and David Redivivus: The Historical Josiah and the Messianic Expectations of Exilic and Postexilic Times* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1992), 1–27.

solidifies the latent anticipation of a coming royal king.<sup>219</sup> This section argues that examining the divine warrior theme in the messianic expectation generated by the Davidic monarchy: (1) clarifies the legitimacy of Israel's desire for kingship, (2) considers the role of the Davidic covenant in messianic expectation, and (3) captures the relevance of the Psalms to the anticipation of a future warrior king.

**Christ the warrior king and the legitimacy of kingship.** Old Testament scholars contest whether the Israelite monarchy was a legitimate office intended by God because of the nation's situation or an illegitimate office allowed by God because of the nation's sin.<sup>220</sup> If kingship is an illegitimate office, then it seems that it would undermine its credibility for messianic expectation. In other words, why would God focus his prophetic revelation regarding a future messiah on a royal office compromised by illegitimacy and accommodation to sin? When considered in its redemptive historical context, it appears that, though Israel's motives were impure in seeking a king, God not only anticipated the establishment of Israelite kingship by earlier developments but also uses the reality of Israelite kingship to foreshadow later progress in messianic expectation.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>219</sup>Boda recognizes this connection between Davidic messianic expectation and earlier phases by noting that Ruth "reveals God's faithfulness to raise up and preserve David and his dynasty in order that the fundamental promises to Abraham would be fulfilled not only for his people, but also for all the nations of the earth." Boda, *After God's Own Heart*, 17.

<sup>220</sup>Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, 1:115; John L. McKenzie, *A Theology of the Old Testament* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1974), 245.

<sup>221</sup>For more on the debate about the legitimacy of Israel's monarchy in general and the nation's desire for a king in particular, see David M. Howard, "Review Article: The Case for Kingship in Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets," *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (1990): 101–15.



In 1 Samuel 8, God grants Israel's request for a king, even though sinful motives drive their longings for kingship. As Boda points out, "Therefore, God's problem with kingship in 1 Samuel is not with the royal office per se, but rather with the Israelite conception of kingship, especially their intention to switch their reliance and allegiance from divine to human king."<sup>222</sup> The royal anticipation already seen throughout the Torah (Gen 49; Deut 17) demonstrates that God intended to establish a monarchy for Israel. The problem is not what Israel wanted (a king) but why Israel wanted it (to be like the other nations because they did not trust God). Israel neglected how God fought for them in the past like at the Exodus.<sup>223</sup> As a result, they longed for a human deliverer who would fight on their behalf like the surrounding nations.<sup>224</sup> Despite Israel's sinful motives and despite the failed monarchy of Saul, God establishes the Davidic dynasty to fulfill prior royal expectations and to signal forthcoming messianic anticipation.

**Christ the warrior king and the Davidic covenant.** The Davidic covenant continues the progression of kingdom warfare through covenantal commitment. The Old Testament covenants demonstrate an ongoing pattern in which the divine warrior demonstrates covenant faithfulness through cosmic conflict.<sup>225</sup> God's covenant with

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<sup>222</sup>Boda, *After God's Own Heart*, 15.

<sup>223</sup>Boda adds, "God's offense at the Israelites' request for a military king can only be understood in light of the greatest salvation event in Israel's history." *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>224</sup>Boda explains, "Therefore, in light of the fact that military protection was the key prerogative of kingship within Israel, one can understand why kingship and battle were linked in the minds of the Israelites and why their request was interpreted as a rejection of God's kingship in the heavenly realms." *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>225</sup>Niehaus argues that all of history, including the unfolding of kingdom warfare, is covenantal. Jeffrey J. Niehaus, "The Warrior and His God: The Covenant Foundation of History and Historiography," in *Faith, Tradition, and History: Old Testament Historiography in Its Near Eastern Context*, ed. Alan R. Millard, James K. Hoffmeier, and David W. Baker (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 299–312. This reality is clearly seen in the way that the epochs of kingdom warfare often progress at

Adam (Gen 1:26-29) identifies him as viceregent of creation who as a ruler created in God's image is called to establish dominion over the entire creation.<sup>226</sup> God's covenant with Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) carries connotations for the development of both dominion and dynasty as God establishes a genealogical line that will capture a geographical territory through warfare.<sup>227</sup> God's covenant with Israel not only appeals back to the Exodus event to validate his previous covenant faithfulness through conflict (Exod 20:1) but also creates provisions for both the execution of holy war (Deut 7:1-26; 20:1-20) and the establishment of kingship (Deut 17:14-20).<sup>228</sup> After the Davidic covenant, God's commitment to demonstrate covenantal faithfulness through conflict culminates in the promise of a new covenant (Jer 31:31-40). The promise of God's new covenant not only looks back to his covenant faithfulness through conflict at the Exodus (Jer 31:32) but also looks ahead to a covenantal dominion for the people of God that will not be uprooted or overthrown by their enemies (Jer 31:40).<sup>229</sup> This warfare connection seen throughout the Old Testament covenants is central to both the establishment of the Davidic covenant and the development of the Davidic lineage.

The Davidic covenant promises a perpetual royal line that will have final victory over its enemies ultimately through a Davidic Son who will have a lasting reign

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the point of covenantal developments from the warrior king. Thus, the theme of covenant derives its significance from its kingdom connection.

<sup>226</sup>Both the Adamic covenant and the Davidic promise have the characteristics of a covenant even though the actual term is not used. Jeffrey J. Niehaus, "Covenant and Narrative, God and Time," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 53, no. 3 (2010): 553.

<sup>227</sup>Boda, *After God's Own Heart*, 20.

<sup>228</sup>Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 157.

<sup>229</sup>For more on the new covenant, see Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel*, 144-47; Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 166.

(2 Sam 7:1-17).<sup>230</sup> After Saul's death, David officially receives the monarchy (2 Sam 5:1-16), destroys the Philistines (2 Sam 5:17-25), and recovers the ark (2 Sam 6:1-23) as his first acts of kingship.<sup>231</sup> Then, the Davidic covenant not only recounts God's unlikely selection of David but also reinforces his promise of rest for Israel from all its enemies (2 Sam 7:8-11).<sup>232</sup> Next, God promises to raise up a son of David who will also be a son of God that will have an everlasting dominion over the Davidic kingdom (2 Sam 7:12-16).<sup>233</sup> Therefore, the Davidic covenant not only shapes the interpretation of the Davidic line as it unfolds but also influences the anticipation of the Davidic messiah as it escalates.

The Davidic covenant is followed by Davidic conquest in which David's kingdom warfare seems to culminate the conquest of Canaan and inaugurate the fulfillment of the covenant. David appears to be the warrior king par excellence who completes the conquest commanded by the divine warrior.<sup>234</sup> As David celebrates God's victory in song (2 Sam 22:1-51), his language indicates that he sees his triumph in line

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<sup>230</sup>This view of the Davidic covenant contrasts with Cross who contends both that it was confused, combining sacral elements of Canaanite influences, and that it resulted in Israel reinterpreting the patriarchal covenants, reading royal ideology back into them that was not originally there. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 227, 261.

<sup>231</sup>Dempster states, "Just as David is the supreme warrior, so he is supremely devoted to God. When he establishes Jerusalem as a political and military capital for the nation, he desires to make it the religious centre too. His first act after capturing the city is to retrieve the ark of the covenant and bring it to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6)." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 141.

<sup>232</sup>Boda observes that the Davidic covenant includes God's "election of David from obscurity and his protection of David before all his enemies (2 Sam 7:8-9a)." Boda, *After God's Own Heart*, 43.

<sup>233</sup>Niehaus explains, "David's warfare is in fact the Lord's warfare against those who would resist the establishment of his chosen king, and, *ipso facto*, the establishment of the Lord's earthly kingdom in the form and manner which he intends." Niehaus, "Covenant and Narrative, God and Time," 554.

<sup>234</sup>Dempster notes, "David is thus the pre-eminent warrior." He also points out the purpose of David and his mighty men, "They finished the job that Joshua had started. Consequently, David, as ruler, was exercising the dominion and authority given to humanity at the beginning in his various triumphs." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 141.

with the original promise of seed warfare (Gen 3:15).<sup>235</sup> It seems that, through the reign of David and the beginning of Solomon's kingship, the covenant promises are coming to fruition.

However, sinful rebellion leads to the demise of the kingship as well as the nation, and it ultimately leads to exile. Warfare provides the backdrop for David's moral failures. He commits adultery with Bathsheba during the time "when kings go off to war" (2 Sam 11:1), has Uriah assassinated on the front lines of battle (11:14-18), and later takes a military census (2 Sam 24).<sup>236</sup> Following David's reign, Israel's kings turn from God in sin. As a result, God wars against them in their rebellion. It begins with the coup launched by Absalom (2 Sam 15-16),<sup>237</sup> continues in the moral and military rebellion of Solomon (1 Kgs 11:1-13), and culminates in the idolatrous usurpation of Jeroboam whose sin epitomizes the shortcomings of Israel's future kings (1 Kgs 12:25-33; cf. 1 Kgs 15:34; 16:19, 26; 22:52).<sup>238</sup> God's warfare against the nation because of the king's rebellion culminates in the exile by which it seems that the promises of God have failed (2 Kgs 25:21). Yet, in the midst of despair, a ray of messianic hope is preserved in the

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<sup>235</sup>Dempster points out, "David is cast as the ideal warrior who conquers all enemies. Here he is realizing the hope promised to the seed of the woman." *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>236</sup>Boda writes, "It is never stated explicitly why assessing military potential was inappropriate for Israel, but it may be related to the need for Israel to rely on God for their military power and victory or to the promise that the number of descendants of Abraham would be uncountable." Boda, *After God's Own Heart*, 137; Moore, *Tempted and Tried*, 106-07.

<sup>237</sup>Niehaus exclaims, "Absalom betrayed his king and his household and would likely have put them to death had he been able to usurp the kingship. He was an enemy of God's kin and therefore of God." Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 161. What is true of Absalom as an enemy of God is true of each of Israel's rebellious monarchs.

<sup>238</sup>This pattern of rebellion in the Davidic monarchy reveals that there is a Jeroboam behind the Jeroboam—the serpent of old that seeks to undermine the lineage through which the promised messiah would come. As a result, David's fidelity as model king contrasts with Jeroboam's infidelity as model anti-king. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 282. The choice for Israel's kings is to walk in the way of wisdom or the way of Jeroboam. The coming messianic king would be faced with the same choice.

narrative as 2 Kings 25:27-30 documents the restoration of king Jehoiachin.<sup>239</sup>

Throughout the covenantal development of the Davidic monarchy, the office anticipates a future warrior king who will establish the kingdom of God through a righteous reign.

**Christ the warrior king and the Psalms.** The Psalms expect a coming Davidic warrior king who will establish the kingdom of God. In the Psalms as well as the wisdom literature, Scripture shows the close relation between God's call to dominion, God's king, and wisdom.<sup>240</sup> As the songbook of Israel, the Psalms reveal the nation's messianic hope of a coming warrior king.<sup>241</sup> What is noteworthy about the Psalms is not just that they demonstrate a close connection to the kingdom in general and Davidic royalty in particular (although that is significant). What is significant is that the expectation of a messianic warrior king permeates them. To demonstrate the divine warrior theme in the messianic expectation of the Psalms, this section will focus on select ones that reflect this motif.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>239</sup>Dempster remarks, "A definite line can be drawn from Adam to Jehoiachin, and Jehoiachin represents the hope not only for Israel's future but also for that of the world." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 155.

<sup>240</sup>Dempster explains, "Wisdom literature specifically deals with this concern for legitimate mastery and control of creation." *Ibid.*, 202. It is outside the scope of this dissertation to address the divine warrior theme in the wisdom literature, but it is an important area of further research.

<sup>241</sup>"The placement of Ruth, which ends with the genealogy of David, before Psalms," notes Block, "seems to reflect a messianic hope." Daniel I. Block, "My Servant David: Ancient Israel's Vision of the Messiah," in *Israel's Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll R. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 20. Thus, even from the structure of the corpus, the Psalms are linked to the Davidic monarchy.

<sup>242</sup>For more on the divine warrior theme in the Psalms, see Harold W. Ballard, "The Divine Warrior Motif in the Psalms" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1995).

First, Psalm 2 is a royal psalm that anticipates a coming Davidic warrior king who will defeat the enemies of God and achieve a global, everlasting reign.<sup>243</sup> Gentile kings, as ongoing manifestations of the seed of the serpent, revolt against both the divine warrior and his anointed (Ps 2:1-3).<sup>244</sup> In derision, the divine warrior scoffs at their threat because he has established his chosen person—the anointed warrior king—in his chosen place—Mount Zion (2:4-6).<sup>245</sup> In 2:7-9, the Davidic king shows that he has received the anointing for victory from the divine warrior because of his established sonship, his universal inheritance, and his impending conquest.<sup>246</sup> As the Psalm concludes in 2:10-12, it issues a warning to the nations, which is rooted in the Abrahamic covenant—the promise of opposition to those that rival against God’s chosen one and the promise of blessing to those that align with God’s warrior king.<sup>247</sup>

Second, Psalm 68 both celebrates how the divine warrior protects his people by fighting against his enemies and anticipates his future victory by which the nations will

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<sup>243</sup>Grant says, “Psalm 2 celebrates the rule and reign of Yahweh and his anointed over all the kings and rulers of the nations of the earth. It is a kingship psalm which paints a picture of the universal rule of Yahweh via his king from Zion.” Grant, *The King As Exemplar*, 10–11. Psalm 2 is referenced multiple times in the New Testament, each with messianic connotations.

<sup>244</sup>Alexander contributes, “Within the biblical meta-story the royal house of David becomes the focus of attention as regards the fulfillment of God’s creation blueprint. One element of this expectation is the anticipation of a conflict involving kings who are at one with Satan in opposing God’s sovereignty on the earth. This is perhaps best illustrated by Psalm 2.” Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 109.

<sup>245</sup>Smith explains, “Psalm 2 pictures God’s anointed king ruling upon Mt. Zion in spite of the efforts of Gentile rulers to overthrow him.” Smith, *Promised Messiah*, 154.

<sup>246</sup>As in the Davidic covenant of 2 Sam 7, sonship is central to the enthronement of the king in Psalm 2. In its redemptive historical context, it is best to understand this sonship as both Davidic and divine in nature. Boda, *After God’s Own Heart*, 57. Moore, *Tempted and Tried*, 132. The perspective argued here contrasts with Brueggemann who contends that the term Son of God was only a royal, political term with no bearing on the divine, metaphysical nature of the coming messiah. Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 620–21.

<sup>247</sup>Boda adds, “The Davidic king they dare threaten is none other than the inheritor of their lands who wields unlimited power over them.” Boda, *After God’s Own Heart*, 57.

submit to his dominion. In 68:1-10, Israel recalls God's protection in the wilderness and exults in the expectation that he will scatter his enemies (68:1; cf. Num 10:35). God is portrayed as a divine warrior who fights for his people, plunders their enemies, and is garbed in military array (68:11-23).<sup>248</sup> Paul's use of Psalm 68:18 in Ephesians 4:8 sheds particular light on the relationship between the divine warrior theme and messianic expectation in this passage.<sup>249</sup> When understood within the warfare worldview of the Old Testament and Paul in Ephesians, the apostle appears to argue that the typological fulfillment of this warfare psalm comes through the eschatological conquest of Christ.<sup>250</sup> While Psalm 68 portrays Yahweh as the divine warrior (Ps 68:29-32), Ephesians 4 shows that it is also true of the messiah (Eph 4:8; cf. 4:5). While in Psalm 68 Yahweh ascends following his victory (Ps 68:18), Ephesians 4 points to how Christ ascends to the right hand of the Father after his conquest (Eph 4:8; cf. Eph 1:20-23; Acts 1:9).<sup>251</sup> While Psalm 68 claims that the divine warrior plunders captives and receives gifts from men, Ephesians 4 asserts that the divine warrior plunders captives and gives gifts to men.

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<sup>248</sup>Smith, *Promised Messiah*, 202.

<sup>249</sup>On the difficulty of interpreting Ps 68, see Frank S. Thielman, "Ephesians," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 820. On the messianic nature of the Psalms, see Tremper Longman, *How to Read the Psalms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 67–68. For a discussion on the options regarding whether Paul misquotes Ps 68 in this passage, see Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 289–93. It seems as if the recognizing the divine warrior theme in both passages can aid interpreters in affirming that the Spirit-inspired apostle Paul did indeed interpret the text correctly.

<sup>250</sup>Timothy G. Gombis, "Cosmic Lordship and Divine Gift-Giving: Psalm 68 in Ephesians 4:8," *Novum Testamentum* 47, no. 4 (2005): 374.

<sup>251</sup>For more on Paul's portrayal of Christ's ascension as exaltation in Ephesians, see Erwin Penner, "The Enthronement of Christ in Ephesians," *Direction* 12, no. 3 (1983): 12–19.

Juxtaposing the two texts, it seems that the conquering warrior king takes the spoils of victory in order to give them to his people.<sup>252</sup>

Third, Psalm 72 is a royal psalm concluding book 2 of the Psalter, which longs for God to establish the universal reign of his messianic warrior king. The psalmist pleads with the divine warrior for righteousness to characterize the reign of the Davidic messiah (72:1-7).<sup>253</sup> Then, he cries out to God asking that the messianic reign might establish a global dominion over all nations (72:8-11).<sup>254</sup> Last, he looks forward to the way this coming king will deliver the oppressed and bless the nations (72:12-20).<sup>255</sup> As such, Psalm 72 anticipates a messianic warrior king whose reign will be righteous, universal, beneficial, and perpetual.<sup>256</sup>

Fourth, Psalm 89 is a lament song that ends book 3 of the Psalter in which Israel recalls the divine warrior's covenant with David and requests his messianic covenantal protection in the future. In 89:1-4, the psalmist recounts God's covenant faithfulness through conflict perpetuated for the nation of Israel in the Davidic covenant. The psalm also portrays the superiority of the divine warrior to other heavenly beings in

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<sup>252</sup>For more on how the triumphant Christ takes from his enemies in order to give to his people, see the section on Eph 4:8 in Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994), 131–33.

<sup>253</sup>Boda notes, “Through the Davidic king, the promise given to Abraham to bring blessing to the entire earth is to be realized. This ideal picture of quantitative blessing and prosperity, however, is based on an important qualification. Making this all possible is the moral quality of justice that will typify the king's reign.” Boda, *After God's Own Heart*, 81.

<sup>254</sup>The universal dimension of the messiah's reign echoes Ps 2 and 110 in which “the vice-regency of the Davidic royal has a global dimension: it expects nothing less than global domination of Yahweh's rule through this royal figure.” Ibid., 59.

<sup>255</sup>Alexander claims, “It anticipates a time when a future Davidic king will bring blessing to the nations by overthrowing all those who resist his God-given authority. The righteous king will be at one with God in all he does.” Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 166.

<sup>256</sup>Smith, *Promised Messiah*, 195.



the divine council because of his victory over his cosmic enemies (89:5-18).<sup>257</sup> Then it rehearses God's establishment of the Davidic monarchy in which he anoints David and promises him an everlasting dynasty, which will have victory over all its enemies (89:19-37).<sup>258</sup> Notably, this section echoes themes already established in the messianic expectation of the Old Testament such as anointing (89:20-21), head-crushing (89:22-23), and covenantal inheritance (89:26-29). In contrast to the divine warrior's past faithfulness, the next section laments how he now battles against Israel because of the rebellion of the Davidic monarch (89:38-45). In the midst of God's judgment, the psalm ends with longing for God to restore the kingdom through his covenantal commitment (89:46-52).<sup>259</sup> Therefore, the messianic hope of Psalm 89 roots itself in God's pattern of fighting against the Davidic monarch in his sinful rebellion and for the Davidic monarch in his faithful obedience.

Fifth, Psalm 110 is a future-oriented royal psalm in which David anticipates the coming reign of a messianic warrior-priest. The divine warrior commands the Davidic king to sit in the place of honor as he fights on the monarch's behalf to place all his enemies under his feet (110:1).<sup>260</sup> As in the other royal psalms previously discussed,

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<sup>257</sup>Boyd, *God at War*, 131.

<sup>258</sup>Boda writes, "The promise of God toward David is recited in careful detail in 89:19-37. Even though the psalmist accurately expresses the conditional character of each generation's participation in the Davidic covenantal blessings (vv. 30-32), it is also clear that such disobedience could never threaten the enduring promise of a line for David (vv. 33-37)." Boda, *After God's Own Heart*, 148.

<sup>259</sup>Boda adds that the use of the term messiah in 89:51 "is witness to the need for this prophetic witness to sustain Israel through the period between the fall of Jerusalem and the arrival of Jesus." Ibid., 150. The typological irony cannot be overlooked in this psalm. Whereas the anointed one of David was to rule the kings of the earth (89:27), they now mock the footsteps of God's anointed (89:51). Is this not the pattern Christ reverses as the new David in the gospels? Though his enemies mock him, he is the one who will ultimately rule the kings of the earth.

<sup>260</sup>France notes, "The Messianic dominion was not to be won by his own power, but would be conferred on him by God, and would be exercised in a realm higher than that of a national kingship, at the

David anticipates how the coming warrior king will establish a lasting reign through kingdom warfare.<sup>261</sup> Distinctly from the aforementioned warfare psalms, psalm 110 presents the messiah as both a king in the order of David and a priest in the order of Melchizedek, thus anticipating a future priest-king (110:4).<sup>262</sup> The divine warrior king will come to destroy his enemies and establish his kingdom as the culmination of Israel's messianic expectation (110:5-7).<sup>263</sup> Throughout the Psalms discussed in this section, the messianic expectation of a coming warrior king provides a constant refrain for the nation of Israel.

This section has contended that the divine warrior theme is evident in the messianic expectation rooted in the major events and institutions of the nation of Israel: (1) the Exodus reveals the paradigm by which the future warrior king would battle, (2) the conquest reveals the pattern through which the future warrior king would triumph, and (3) the monarchy reveals the position in which the future warrior king would reign.

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right hand of God. It carried also a priestly function, and it would last forever." France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 103; Boda, *After God's Own Heart*, 59. The New Testament presents the messianic imagery of 110:1 as fulfilled in the reign of Christ (Acts 2:32-35; 1 Cor 15:25; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:22; 1 Pet 3:22).

<sup>261</sup>Boda explains, "The descriptive promises that follow each of the quotations echo the same military theme evident in Psalm 2. The first declaration (vv. 2-3) is addressed to the human king, promising authority to extend from Zion over his enemies through an army willing and numerous." He continues, "The second declaration (vv. 5-7) is addressed to the divine king, describing to God how the human king (the Lord is in small capitals; cf. v. 1) is at God's right hand and from this place will crush kings and rulers and judge nations. The final image of the lifting of the head is a sign of the victory that is assured in verse 1." *Ibid.*, 59; James E. Smith, *What the Bible Teaches about the Promised Messiah* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 186-90.

<sup>262</sup>Longman states, "Here, though, we learn that God promised David not only an eternal dynasty but also a priesthood that will last forever. Furthermore, this priest-king is a warrior." Longman, "The Messiah: Explorations in the Law and Writings," 26.

<sup>263</sup>Smith contributes, "While the enemies fall, this Messianic warrior presses on to total victory." Smith, *Promised Messiah*, 190.

The prophetic literature builds on these events and institutions as it further develops the divine warrior theme in the messianic expectation of Israel.

### **Christ the Warrior King and the Prophets**

The divine warrior theme functions as a prominent feature in the Old Testament's messianic prophecy.<sup>264</sup> From the opening conflict in the canon, Scripture is prophetic in nature as God promises a future skull-crushing seed of the woman (Gen 3:15).<sup>265</sup> Yet, the prophets make several unique contributions to Israel's expectation of a coming warrior king. First, the prophets demonstrate escalation as they elevate structures and seams that have already marked the messianic expectation of the Old Testament.<sup>266</sup> Second, the prophets provide clarification as they offer fresh insights into the inter-textual significance of past events in Israel's history.<sup>267</sup> Third, the prophets incorporate

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<sup>264</sup>This evaluation of Israel's messianic expectation will be limited to a few key examples from prophecy in the Old Testament because the divine warrior theme is simply too prominent to cover it entirely in this brief section. Further work certainly needs to be done in this area because most of the literature on the divine warrior in the Old Testament marginalizes the witness of the prophets since the authors either: (1) question the messianic nature of prophecy in general, (2) fail to set messianic prophecy in its Christ-centered canonical context, (3) have space limitations, or (4) focus on the military dimension of Israel's holy war to the exclusion of this theme in the prophets.

<sup>265</sup>Dempster explains how the prophets rooted their eschatological expectation in this mother promise: "Humanity has been restored to its original position, and it has been brought about by a Davidic king—a new Adam. The scion of David has conquered the serpent of Genesis 3." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 176.

<sup>266</sup>Eichrodt notes that the way in which the divine warrior theme "remained very much alive at all periods is too well known to require substantiation by examples. It is embellished with details drawn from the myth of the struggle with Chaos; and in the colourful language of the prophets it reaches its highest level of intensity." Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:229. While Eichrodt is right to note the divine warrior motif's pervasiveness and escalation in the prophets, his argument for embellishment from chaos myth seems strained.

<sup>267</sup>The Old Testament's messianic expectation progresses through a pattern of anointed savior-kings who anticipate the coming of Christ. Eichrodt explains that the prominence of the "figure of the Saviour-King" in the messianic expectation of the prophets is especially striking as it clarifies these earlier expectations. *Ibid.*, 1:482.

combination as they merge various streams of messianic expectation.<sup>268</sup> Fourth, the prophets exemplify anticipation as they look ahead to eschatological messianic fulfillment.<sup>269</sup>

This section argues that the prophets anticipated a future warrior king who would be a new David leading a new Israel into a new creation through a new Exodus in a new covenant fulfillment of the divine warrior's messianic promises. To accomplish this task, it will trace the divine warrior theme in the messianic expectation of Isaiah, Daniel, Joel and Zechariah.<sup>270</sup> Though the divine warrior motif appears frequently throughout the prophets, this section will focus on these texts both because they prominently feature the theme and because they are prominently discussed in the literature.<sup>271</sup>

### **Christ the Warrior King and Isaiah**

Israel's messianic expectation of a coming victorious king who will fight for the divine warrior's people and achieve eschatological victory is perhaps most clearly

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<sup>268</sup>The prophets recognize, relate, and intensify the intersection of the kingdom and conquest themes that permeate the Old Testament's messianic expectation. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 111. Thus, Von Rad asserts that "the prophetic movement understood itself as custodian of the patriarchal order of the holy war." Von Rad, *Holy War*, 97.

<sup>269</sup>Eichrodt observes how Israel's reflection on the divine warrior's deliverance in the past intensified its anticipation of his victory in the future: "The greater the benefits men had experienced at his hands in the Exodus from Egypt, in the battles for the conquest of the Promised Land, and in the wars leading up to the founding of the Davidic kingdom, and the more menacingly swelled the power of the hostile nations, the higher soared their expectations of the new dominion he would achieve, and the more marvelous appeared the time of his ultimate victory." Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:460.

<sup>270</sup>This section will present the material based on its canonical ordering in the Old Testament. Each prophet will be placed in historical context as the discussion develops. This chapter will analyze the divine warrior theme in the messianic expectation of Isaiah most thoroughly because (1) it is a prominent theme in perhaps the most important prophetic witness in shaping the understanding of the messiah for both Israel and the New Testament, and (2) it has been under-explored in contemporary literature.

<sup>271</sup>Rather than also interact with implicit typology seen throughout the typological structures of the Old Testament, this section focuses on explicit typology in the prophetic literature itself.

seen in the prophecy of Isaiah.<sup>272</sup> As a pre-exilic prophet, Isaiah emphasizes both the holiness of God and the future victory that he will bring about as divine warrior.<sup>273</sup> Von Rad contends, “It is not too much to say that Isaiah sees the whole universal activity of Yahweh in history in the form of holy war, of a final eschatological mobilization and battle of Yahweh for Zion.”<sup>274</sup> Though some scholars contest the legitimacy of messianism in the Old Testament in general and Isaiah in particular, this section assumes it.<sup>275</sup> As with the entire storyline of Scripture, Isaiah’s writing is best understood in light of how it fits into God’s unfolding plan to establish a messianic kingdom.<sup>276</sup>

Before assessing the divine warrior theme in the messianic expectation of Isaiah, it is helpful to evaluate whether the motif is present throughout his prophetic

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<sup>272</sup>Some reject messianism in the following Isaianic passages. See Fitzmyer, *The One Who Is to Come*, 35–43; Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 17. Others, like Tate, argue that these passages were not originally intended to carry royal messianic expectation but later had this ideology infused into them. See Marvin E. Tate, “King and Messiah in Isaiah of Jerusalem,” *Review and Expositor* 65, no. 4 (1968): 421. However, for support of single authorship and messianic intentionality in Isaiah, see Walter C. Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 158–67.

<sup>273</sup>This chapter assumes the pre-exilic timing, single authorship, and theological unity of the book of Isaiah. See Schultz, “The King in the Book of Isaiah,” 147–48. Regardless of views on authorship, consensus is shifting toward an embrace of both the structural and theological unity of Isaiah in contemporary Isaianic studies. See John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 4; Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 462–63; Willem A. VanGemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 252; Antti Laato, “*About Zion I Will Not Be Silent*”: *The Book of Isaiah as an Ideological Unity* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1998), 209.

<sup>274</sup>Von Rad, *Holy War*, 107. See Isa 5:12, 19; 10:12.

<sup>275</sup>Some reject messianic expectation in the Old Testament based on linguistic grounds such as Collins and Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God*, 1. Others reject messianic expectation in the Old Testament based on theological grounds because of the illegitimacy of the monarchy such as Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, 1:115.

<sup>276</sup>Alec Motyer, *Look to the Rock: An Old Testament Background to Our Understanding of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 22; Chris Peterson, *Christ and His People in the Book of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 25.

witness.<sup>277</sup> If the divine warrior theme permeates Isaiah's writings, then it implies that his inclusion of warfare imagery in his messianism is not incidental but intentional. Like the other authors of the storyline of Scripture, a warfare worldview seems to shape the construction and the content of Isaiah's declarations. Specifically, the divine warrior theme is an inescapable reality in Isaiah because of four redemptive historical seams that hold the work together.<sup>278</sup> First, Isaiah relentlessly represents Yahweh as the divine warrior.<sup>279</sup> Isaiah presents Yahweh as a warrior king who will do for Israel what they cannot do for themselves.<sup>280</sup> Second, Isaiah describes the nature of warfare in terms of cosmic conflict. Throughout the storyline of Scripture, biblical authors such as Isaiah often describe Yahweh as battling with hostile monsters.<sup>281</sup> Isaiah also demonstrates a

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<sup>277</sup>Since the purpose of this section is to demonstrate the prevalence of warfare imagery throughout Isaiah, it will take a synthetic approach that amalgamates data from across the work into several categories. Though the findings of this section are consistent with a rigorous exegetical analysis of the passages referenced, it is outside the scope of this section to conduct such an assessment.

<sup>278</sup>Reid and Longman declare, "Isaiah won't let us escape the fact that our God is violent. In fact, Scripture often describes him as a warrior, a warrior king who obliterates his enemies." Daniel G. Reid and Tremper Longman, "When God Declares War," *Christianity Today*, October 28, 1996, 14. Mays argues that Isaiah's vision of the divine warrior includes God as a royal deity with Jerusalem as the earthly seat of his reign who has called a Davidic king to represent his rule. See James L. Mays, "Isaiah's Royal Theology and the Messiah," in *Reading and Preaching the Book of Isaiah*, ed. Christopher R. Seitz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 39. He rightly suggests that a better understanding of the royal expectation of Isaiah can be grasped through studying it alongside of the Psalms. *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>279</sup>See Isa 6:5; 24:23; 33:22; 41:21; 43:15; 44:6; 52:7; 66:1.

<sup>280</sup>John N. Oswalt, "Isaiah," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. Brian S. Rosner et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 219.

<sup>281</sup>Specifically, he battles against the creatures Leviathan (27:1-8; cf. Job 3:8, 41:1; Pss 74:14, 104:26), Rahab (51:9-15; cf. Job 9:13, 26:12; Pss 87:4, 89:10), the sea itself—Yamm (51:10), and the serpent (27:1; 51:9). Scholars often identify a relationship between this biblical theme of Yahweh's battle with the sea and other accounts in the ANE such as in John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973). For instance, Longman and Reid note the relationship between Isa. 27:1 and a Ugaritic text, "The similarity between the two passages illustrates in the most pointed way imaginable that the poets of the Old Testament drew on the conflict myths of the broader Near East to describe Yahweh's conflict with the forces of chaos." Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 78; Boyd, *God at War*, 96.

correlation between the historical dimension of warfare and the cosmic dimension of warfare.<sup>282</sup>

Third, Isaiah's prophetic witness, especially in chapters 38-55, is saturated with the warfare theme of a coming new Exodus.<sup>283</sup> Whereas the first Exodus achieved a militaristic victory against the historical enemies of Israel, Isaiah points to a new Exodus that will capture an eschatological victory against the cosmic enemies of Yahweh.<sup>284</sup>

Fourth, Isaiah's war oracles disclose how God not only fights for Israel in its faithful obedience but also fights against Israel in its sinful rebellion.<sup>285</sup> Isaiah repeatedly offers war oracles against the nation in which Yahweh both battles for Israel in judgment against its enemies (Isa 10,13-21, 23-24, 34, 37-39) and against Israel in judgment as his enemy (Isa 8; 10:5-13; 22; 28-29; 36-37; 44:28-45:13).

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<sup>282</sup>For example, Isaiah recounts the Exodus as a victory over Yahweh's cosmic enemies (51:9) in such a way that "the one victory is a microcosm of the other." Boyd, *God at War*, 88; Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976), 117; F. F. Bruce, "The Crooked Serpent," *Evangelical Quarterly* 20 (1948): 285.

<sup>283</sup>Among scholars, there is a near consensus that chaps. 38-55 center on a new Exodus motif. See Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:229-35; B. W. Anderson, "Exodus Typology in Second Isaiah," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage*, ed. B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson (New York: Harper, 1962), 177-95.

<sup>284</sup>Isaiah builds his portrayal of the new Exodus (40:3-5, 41:17-20, 42:14-16, 43:1-3, 14-21, 48:20-21; 49:8-12; 51:9-10; 52:11-12, 55:12-13) upon the original Exodus (41:4, 9; 44:2, 7-8; 46:3-4; 48:8; 52:4). Hugenberger, "The Servant of the Lord in the 'Servant Songs' of Isaiah," 123. The warfare connotations of this new Exodus theme are closely tied to how Isaiah incorporates Day of the Lord imagery in the book. See Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 127. It is outside of the scope of this section to do a more extensive evaluation of the Day of the Lord in Isaiah (see Isa 2; 13:10; 34:4).

<sup>285</sup>Merrill notes that "God's dealings with the nations in eschatological times are decidedly militaristic in flavor." Merrill, "The Case for Moderate Discontinuity," 73. For more on the war oracles in Isaiah and the rest of the OT, see Duane L Christensen, *Transformations of the War Oracle in Old Testament Prophecy: Studies in the Oracles against the Nations* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1975). Looking more broadly at the prophetic literature, Childs observes, "The radical contribution of the prophets lay, not in denying God's warlike activity – he still waged war against his enemies – but in projecting Israel as God's new enemy." Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*, 185.

**Christ the warrior king in Isaiah 7, 9, and 11.** Because a warfare worldview permeates Isaiah's prophetic witness, it is not surprising that his messianic expectation anticipates a messianic warrior king. To make this case, this section will examine the divine warrior theme in some of the most prominent messianic passages in Isaiah: Isaiah 7:1-17, 9:1-7, 11:1-16, and the servant songs (42:1-7, 49:1-7, 50:4-10, 52:13-53:12).<sup>286</sup> An analysis of these passages suggests that the divine warrior motif serves as a unifying dimension for Isaiah's anticipation of a future royal figure who will usher in God's kingdom by securing salvation for his people.<sup>287</sup>

Isaiah 7, 9, and 11 anticipate a new David who will fight for his people and secure eschatological victory. Isaiah 7:1-17 presents a coming Immanuel who will be with his people in the midst of battle as he defeats Yahweh's enemies.<sup>288</sup> Isaiah 9:1-7 presents the coming messiah as a Davidic son who will establish his kingdom of righteousness and justice through warfare, bringing joy to his people by dividing the

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<sup>286</sup>Why limit this analysis to these texts? First, all of these passages have been commonly recognized as messianic throughout the centuries of church history. See Daniel Schibler, "Messianism and Messianic Prophecy in Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33," in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. R. S. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 87. Second, there is an identifiable interrelationship between the texts, which enhances the ability to consider whether the divine warrior motif coheres throughout all of them. See H. G. M. Williamson, "The Messianic Texts in Isaiah 1-39," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Day (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 241-44.

<sup>287</sup>Schibler argues that it is valid to speak of messianism in these texts even though the Hebrew root for messiah does not appear. See Schibler, "Messianism and Messianic Prophecy in Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33," 89.

<sup>288</sup>VanGemenen, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word*, 260. The Immanuel concept of "God with us" did not originate in this prophecy of Isaiah. Instead, God's presence among his people is a central feature throughout the biblical storyline as seen in Eden, the tabernacle, the pillar of cloud/fire, the temple, the ark, the Christ, the church, and the new creation. More importantly, the vast majority of the OT's linguistic confirmations of "God with us" refer to his presence with his people in the midst of conflict. For example, see Gen 21:22; Exod 3:12, 4:12,15, 18:19, 33:15-16; Num 14:14; Deut 31:8, 31:23; Josh 1:5,9,17, 3:7, 6:27; Ps 46:7. In Isaiah itself, Immanuel language recurs in 8:8,10; 41:10.



spoils of victory.<sup>289</sup> Isaiah 11 presents a messiah who will be a new Davidic king who will establish a new reign over a new creation through a new Exodus.<sup>290</sup> In sum, Isaiah 7, 9, and 11 present the messiah as a Davidic king who will deliver Yahweh's people through warfare.<sup>291</sup>

**Christ the warrior king in Isaiah's servant songs.** A similar picture of the messiah as warrior king emerges through an analysis of the divine warrior theme in the servant songs of Isaiah.<sup>292</sup> The mosaic of Isaiah's variegated servant songs reveals a nuanced picture in which the messiah is not only an exalted warrior king but also a humble suffering servant. Among modern Isaianic scholars, there is no consensus on the identity of the servant in these servant songs.<sup>293</sup> Each of the four servant songs (42:1-7,

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<sup>289</sup>Clearly, the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7) underlies Isaiah's messianic expectation in this passage. For more on that connection, see Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 37; Peterson, *Christ and His People*, 82. In 9:3, "divide the spoil" (בְּחַלְקֵי שָׁלַל) suggests a link with 53:12 (יַחְלֶקְךָ שָׁלַל) where the spoils of victory that are plundered by the suffering of the servant king are divided among his people. See Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 112; John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, trans. W. Pringle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 4:129.

<sup>290</sup>Several notable scholars recognize three aspects to Isaiah's messianic expectation in 11:1-9 – the messiah's character, the messiah's rule and the messiah's new creation. See Motyer, *Look to the Rock*, 34–35; idem, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 121–24; Peterson, *Christ and His People*, 126. This analysis suggests a fourth dimension—the messiah's new Exodus (11:10-16).

<sup>291</sup>Boda adds, "The focus of the first part of the book of Isaiah is clearly on the royal stream." Boda, *After God's Own Heart*, 150.

<sup>292</sup>On the links between Isaiah's messianic expectation in chapters 7, 9, and 11 and the servant songs, see Block, "My Servant David," 50–56; Hugenberger, "The Servant of the Lord in the 'Servant Songs' of Isaiah," 114–15.

<sup>293</sup>Two alternatives dominate the literature on the identity of the servant. First, some contend that it refers to corporate Israel. Second, others suggest it refers to a future, ideal individual. For a critique of the various positions, see Hugenberger, "The Servant of the Lord in the 'Servant Songs' of Isaiah," 105–19. For a survey of proposals on the Servant's identity through the centuries, see C. R. North, *The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah: An Historical and Critical Study*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 6–116. For an overview of contemporary treatments of the servant in Isaiah, see Scot McKnight, *Jesus and His Death: Historiography, the Historical Jesus, and Atonement Theory* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005), 60–68. For an explanation of the Jewish view of the identity of the servant in Isaiah, see Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 119–27. This section holds the view that the servant songs refer to

49:1-7, 50:4-10, 52:13-53:12) paints a slightly different picture of the messiah, but Isaiah interweaves the divine warrior theme throughout all of them. When understood within the context of chapters 38-55, the servant songs seem to describe a new messiah leading a new Israel in a new Exodus to a new creation.<sup>294</sup>

The first servant song (42:1-7) portrays the messiah as a royal figure whose kingdom will have a global reach as he establishes justice among the nations.<sup>295</sup> The second (49:1-7) and third (50:4-10) servant songs present the servant as a prophetic figure who perseveres through suffering with the expectation of future victory through Yahweh's vindication.<sup>296</sup> Finally, the fourth servant song depicts how the suffering

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corporate Israel in some places, which function typologically as a precursor to the messiah. But they primarily focus on a future individual messiah on the whole. See Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 158–63.

<sup>294</sup>John I. Durham, "Isaiah 40-55: A New Creation, a New Exodus, a New Messiah," in *The Yahweh/Baal Confrontation and Other Studies in Biblical Literature and Archaeology: Essays in Honour of Emmett Willard Hamrick*, ed. Julia M. O'Brien and Fred L. Horton (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Biblical, 1995), 55; Robert B. Chisholm, "The Christological Fulfillment of Isaiah's Servant Songs," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163 (2006): 394. On the Isaianic servant as a new Moses, see Scott Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995); Patrick D. Miller, "Moses My Servant: The Deuteronomic Portrait of Moses," *Interpretation*, no. 41 (1987): 251–53. On the new Israel in the servant songs, see Edmund P. Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1988), 197; Motyer, *Look to the Rock*, 37. On the use of the servant songs in the New Testament, see R. T. France, "The Servant of the Lord in the Teaching of Jesus," *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 26–52. On the new Exodus in the servant songs, see Hugenberger, "The Servant of the Lord in the 'Servant Songs' of Isaiah," 119–39.

<sup>295</sup>Perhaps picking up on the language of Gen 3:15 in which the seed of the woman will be bruised on the heel (הַשָּׂרֵפֶנִי עֲקָבָה), the servant, who is a bruised reed (קִנְיָהּ רַצִּוּיָהּ; 42:3), then goes on to establish justice (42:3-4) by crushing the head of the serpent in triumph. Hamilton, "The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman," 42; Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 94; Tremper Longman, "The Divine Warrior: The New Testament Use of an Old Testament Motif," *Westminster Theological Journal* 44 (1982): 300–02.

<sup>296</sup>Because the servant king is also a prophet (Isa 49:2), the means of the messiah's victory will be through the proclamation of God's word. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, 290; J. Daniel Hays, "If He Looks Like a Prophet and Talks Like a Prophet, Then He Must Be . . . : A Response to Daniel I. Block," in *Israel's Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll R. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 64; Vernard Eller, *War and Peace from Genesis to Revelation* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1981), 101. Indeed, the Gospel of John confirms that this messianic prophet-king is in fact the Word of God (John 1:1).

servant's sacrificial substitution will achieve the victorious conquest of the divine warrior (52:13-53:12).<sup>297</sup> Though Yahweh was usually the one to receive the spoils of victory from Israel's *herem* warfare in the past, Isaiah makes it clear that it is the triumphant servant king who receives the rewards from his conquest and disperses them to the remnant (53:12).<sup>298</sup>

In sum, the divine warrior theme permeates Isaiah's servant songs as he portrays the messiah as both a suffering servant and a triumphant king who establishes a new creation through a new Exodus.<sup>299</sup> Thus, there is a unity in Isaiah's messianic portrait between the royal figure in chapters 7, 9, and 11 and the shepherd king of the servant songs.<sup>300</sup> Recognizing the divine warrior theme in each passage helps to demonstrate this unity in Isaiah's messianic expectation.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>297</sup>Scholars have thoroughly discussed this passage in contemporary literature. For a consideration of this text in light of its ANE context, see John H. Walton, "The Imagery of the Substitute King Ritual in Isaiah's Fourth Servant Song," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122 (2003): 734–43. For a detailed analysis of how Isaiah 53 fits into the story of Israel, see N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 589–605. For an in-depth discussion of the atonement in the fourth servant song, see Peter J. Gentry, "The Atonement in Isaiah's Fourth Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 11, no. 2 (2007): 20–47.

<sup>298</sup>Longman and Reid comment, "This final verse of the Servant passage seems to indicate that the Servant, having passed through a severe trial, is awarded as a mighty warrior a portion of the spoils of war." Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 112; Calvin, *Isaiah*, 4:129; Eller, *War and Peace from Genesis to Revelation*, 107; Duane F. Lindsey, "The Career of the Servant in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (Concluded)," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140 (1983): 35. These rewards are embodied by the concept of a new creation and are poured out upon the remnant. See Gentry, "The Atonement in Isaiah's Fourth Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)," 33, 42. Gentry concludes, "And as King, the Servant fights the battle for his people and wins. He conquers not only their sin, but death itself. The many share in the victory of the one just as the one has borne the sins of the many." *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>299</sup>Motyer, *Look to the Rock*, 35.

<sup>300</sup>Schultz, "The King in the Book of Isaiah," 154–59; Oswalt, "Isaiah," 222. Chisholm notes how intertextual links render it unnecessary for Isaiah to explicitly spell out the relationship between the servant and the future Davidic king of Isa 7, 9 and 11 in Chisholm, "The Christological Fulfillment of Isaiah's Servant Songs," 397.

<sup>301</sup>This claim does not suggest that the divine warrior theme is the only means of recognizing unity in Isaiah's messianic expectation. Instead, it contends both that the divine warrior theme reveals unity and that it is an underdeveloped theme in studies of Isaiah's messianic expectation.

## Christ the Warrior King and Daniel

The book of Daniel presents the messiah as a coming son of man who will subdue rival enemies and establish an everlasting kingdom. Writing during the time of both the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires, Daniel's prophetic message regularly reflects a focus on the kingdom of the divine warrior.<sup>302</sup> While the first half of Daniel (chapters 1-6) contains narratives of God's providential preservation in the lives of his chosen people, the second half (7-12) features God's providential plan through apocalyptic visions of the future.<sup>303</sup> As Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's first dream, he ends with the indestructible kingdom that the God of heaven will establish, which will crush the kingdoms of the world. (2:44).<sup>304</sup> Therefore, even before the noteworthy messianic passage in Daniel 7, the structures and themes of Daniel as a whole lend themselves to an expectation of a coming warrior king establishing a future kingdom.<sup>305</sup>

Daniel 7 presents the messiah as a coming son of man who will establish everlasting dominion as he defeats rival kingdoms.<sup>306</sup> After describing the four beasts

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<sup>302</sup>The expectation of an everlasting kingdom of God is a major feature throughout the book of Daniel (2:44; 4:3, 34; 6:26; 7:14, 18, 27). Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology*, 146.

<sup>303</sup>Eichrodt explains the function of apocalyptic in the book, "The conviction, amid the seemingly hopeless distresses of the time of persecution, that one was set in the last decisive moments before the final victory of the cause of God, and would receive from him the reward of either eternal acceptance or rejection, filled the historical moment with a final, absolute importance, and gave each individual combatant the sense of taking part with his whole existence in the world process now hastening to its goal." Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Baker (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1967), 2:514-15.

<sup>304</sup>Alexander notes, "Daniel foresees an eternal kingdom that will bring to an end various kingdoms associated with human rulers. Furthermore, the picture of this stone becoming a mountain that fills the whole earth echoes other Old Testament passages that associate the temple of God with a mountain. This vision is consistent with the expectation that God's temple will fill the earth." Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 111.

<sup>305</sup>In particular, Dan 2 parallels the eschatological vision in Dan 7, setting the stage for the greater detail disclosed at that point. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 215.

<sup>306</sup>France observes, "The keynote of Daniel 7 is that of vindication and exaltation to an

who, as seeds of the serpent, set themselves up as rival kingdoms (7:1-8), the passage depicts the Ancient of Days taking his seat in the divine court to pronounce judgment upon their rule (7:9-12).<sup>307</sup> Then, 7:13 describes the son of man as a future royal ruler who will ride upon the clouds as a divine warrior.<sup>308</sup> In 7:14, he receives authority to rule so that he might establish a global, everlasting kingdom.<sup>309</sup> After Daniel 7, this son of man is portrayed as a promised anointed one (9:25-26).<sup>310</sup> Both the New Testament in general and Jesus in particular recognize Daniel 7's messianic expectation as fulfilled in Christ the warrior king.<sup>311</sup>

### **Christ the Warrior King and Joel**

The book of Joel presents the messiah as a conquering king who defeats his enemies on the eschatological day of the Lord and pours out his Spirit to his people as a victory gift. The prophet Joel calls Israel to repentance in the midst of national calamity as the nation anticipates God's future deliverance. Of particular relevance to the divine

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everlasting and universal dominion." France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 145.

<sup>307</sup>Dempster describes Dan 7:1-8 as a picture of "anti-creation" in which the final beast evokes "the memory of the beast that spoke at the beginning (7:7-8; Gen. 3:1-5)." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 215.

<sup>308</sup>This portrayal of the messiah as a divine warrior riding on the clouds perhaps has parallels with other ANE depictions of storm gods, and certainly parallels pictures of Yahweh as divine warrior (Ps 104:3; Isa 19:1). On possible ANE parallels, see Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 16-17.

<sup>309</sup>Longman explains, "It is clear that in the future a warring king would appear, commissioned by God (the Ancient of Days) to battle the evil human kingdoms represented by the hybrid beasts in the first part of the vision. What is particularly intriguing about the description of this figure is that there are hints that this king himself is divine." Longman, "The Messiah: Explorations in the Law and Writings," 27; N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 565.

<sup>310</sup>Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 201.

<sup>311</sup>France states, "Jesus saw Daniel 7:13-14 as portraying an individual Messiah." France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 147; Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 206; Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology*, 700.

warrior theme in Joel's messianic expectation is Joel 2, which seems to indicate that the messiah would give the Spirit as the spoils of victory to his people. The central theme in Joel's prophecy is the Day of the Lord, which he often presents with the imagery of warfare.<sup>312</sup> After describing the devastation of a locust infestation (Joel 1:1-12), Joel calls Israel to repent (Joel 1:13-20) because they face a coming military invasion on the eschatological Day of the Lord that will destroy far more than just their crops (Joel 2:1-11).<sup>313</sup> Yet, though Yahweh promises judgment to the unrepentant, he also will show mercy to the repentant (Joel 2:18-19) by fighting for his people against their eschatological enemy (Joel 2:20).<sup>314</sup>

As a result of this eschatological conquest, Yahweh will pour out the Spirit on all his people as the spoils of his victory on the eschatological day of the Lord (Joel 2:28-29).<sup>315</sup> The Spirit will be both the ultimate manifestation of God's presence with his people (Joel 2:27) and the unmistakable sign of his salvation for his people (Joel 2:32).<sup>316</sup> Because most believers (rightly) view this promise of the Spirit in Joel 2:28-32 through the lens of Peter's citation at Pentecost (Acts 2:17-21), it can be easy (wrongly) to lose

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<sup>312</sup>Duane Garrett surveys the interpretive options and concludes that the military force described in Joel 2:1-11 is indeed a future apocalyptic army. Duane A. Garrett, "The Structure of Joel," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 28, no. 3 (1985): 293. For more on the link between the divine warrior motif and the Day of the Lord theme throughout the Old Testament, see Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 61-71.

<sup>313</sup>Thomas B. Dozeman, "Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Yahweh's Gracious and Compassionate Character," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108, no. 2 (1989): 210-11.

<sup>314</sup>Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 39-41.

<sup>315</sup>Willem A. VanGemeren, "The Spirit of Restoration," *Westminster Theological Journal* 50 (1988): 81-82.

<sup>316</sup>In Peter's Pentecost sermon, he uses the promise of salvation in Joel 2:32 as the basis for his call to repentance (Acts 2:21, 38). Daniel J. Treier, "The Fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32: A Multiple-Lens Approach," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40, no. 1 (1997): 19.

sight of the warfare context of the original prophecy.<sup>317</sup> Yet, Israel recognized a close connection between the future Day of the Lord and the coming messiah. Therefore, it seems as if Joel's prophecy indicates that the messiah will bring about judgment and deliverance on the Day of the Lord and will pour out the Spirit upon his people as the spoils of his eschatological victory.

### **Christ the Warrior King and Zechariah**

Zechariah presents the coming messiah as both a righteous branch and a future shepherd-king who will reign over the people of God. As a post-exilic prophet, Zechariah's expectation of the divine warrior's future deliverance for the nation overflows with warfare imagery.<sup>318</sup> In chapters 1-8, Zechariah's messianic expectation centers on the idea that a future deliverer will be like a branch emerging from the root of Israel. Picking up on earlier prophecies of a coming "Branch of David" who would fulfill the royal lineage (Jer 23:5; Isa 11:1), Zechariah 3:8 confirms this expectation as well.<sup>319</sup> In 6:12-13, Zechariah prophesies that the Branch will be a future royal figure whose role will intertwine with a priestly dimension as he rebuilds the temple and ushers in peace.<sup>320</sup>

While Zechariah 1-8 emphasize the royal expectation of a coming Davidic Branch, chapters 9-14 escalate the warfare imagery of a coming shepherd-king who will

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<sup>317</sup>For a helpful treatment of Joel 2:28-32 in its original context, see Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 136-39.

<sup>318</sup>See Zech 1:21; 3:8; 6:12-13; 8:7; 9:8-13; 10:3-5, 12; 11:7; 12:8-10; 13:7; 14:1, 3, 9.

<sup>319</sup>France adds that Zechariah 3:8 "makes it clear that the 'Branch' is a future figure, distinct from Joshua." France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 100.

<sup>320</sup>Laato explains, "In the light of 3:8-10 and the present form of 6:9-15 the Branch must be regarded as an eschatological figure, the Messiah, who will appear in the future." Laato, *Josiah and David Redivivus*, 252. For a view that sees Zechariah 6:12-13 as referring to the high priest Joshua and only typologically to the messiah, see France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 100.

rule God's people.<sup>321</sup> Echoing previous messianic expectation in Genesis 49 and Psalm 72, Zechariah 9:8-13 presents the coming warrior king and his future global rule.<sup>322</sup> While victory characterizes his reign, humility reigns in his character (9:9).<sup>323</sup> When the divine warrior replaces the worthless shepherds of Israel (10:3) with a messianic shepherd-king (11:4-14), the people of God will become like mighty men in battle who "fight because the Lord is with them" (10:5).<sup>324</sup> Yet, though the smitten shepherd-king will suffer as he is struck by the sword (13:7), he will ultimately re-establish the rulership of the divine warrior as he wars against God's enemies and plunders their possessions on the eschatological day of the Lord (14:1-9).<sup>325</sup>

The prophets predict a restoration of the kingdom of God that will be brought about through a messianic warrior king. The clarity of the warfare imagery in these prophecies gives understanding to why Israel sought to make Christ king (John 6:15) and treat him to the triumphal entry of a conquering warrior as he entered Jerusalem at the

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<sup>321</sup>France contributes, "It is commonly recognized that Zechariah 9-14 formed an important background both for Jesus' thought and words especially at the time of the passion, and also for the Evangelists' presentation of the narrative." *Ibid.*, 103-04.

<sup>322</sup>Iain Duguid, "Messianic Themes in Zechariah 9-14," in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. R. S. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 266-69.

<sup>323</sup>Zechariah 9:9 emphasizes this humility because the coming warrior king is mounted not on a war steed but a humble donkey. France states that this shows the messiah will be victorious "in the sense of one who has been given victory by another's power. Thus there is no contrast with the lowliness depicted in the following phrase." France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 105.

<sup>324</sup>For more on Zechariah's portrayal of the messiah as shepherd-king, see Laato, *Josiah and David Redivivus*, 278-79.

<sup>325</sup>Groningen explains that Yahweh will reign "because the Messiah, experiencing the ignominy of a donkey ride, the rejection of the people to whom he was sent, and death at their hands under the governing hand of Yahweh, will conquer and overcome all opposition and usher in his kingdom." Groningen, *Messianic Revelation*, 912; Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 71.



beginning of the Passion Week (Luke 19:28-40).<sup>326</sup> Though they rightly understood the warfare implications of the messiah's coming, they wrongly perceived its nature. A prophetic convergence appears as this theme of the divine warrior's victory coalesces with a more subtle stream of expectation that it would come through suffering. The messiah who will bring eschatological victory for his people will accomplish this act of war by being pierced for our transgressions. Overall, the prophetic literature anticipates a future warrior king who will fight for God's people in fulfillment of the Old Testament's messianic expectation.

### **Summary: Christ the Warrior King and Old Testament Themes**

In summary, a biblical analysis of the divine warrior theme in the messianic expectation of the Old Testament reveals several major themes. First, messianic expectation provides a foundation for the entire Old Testament and emerges as a recurring refrain throughout the Hebrew Bible. As Sailhamer asserts, "The messianic thrust of the OT was the whole reason the books of the Hebrew Bible were written."<sup>327</sup> In God's providential plan to establish his dominion, he points forward to a coming warrior

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<sup>326</sup>Reymond, *Jesus Divine Messiah*, 242.

<sup>327</sup>Sailhamer, "The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible," 23.

king who would inaugurate his kingdom.<sup>328</sup> Therefore, a messianic approach of the Old Testament is essential to a Christian understanding of it.<sup>329</sup>

Second, the divine warrior theme is a central motif in the messianic expectation of the Old Testament. Many scholars recognize the importance of the divine warrior theme for the study of the Old Testament in general. For example, Patrick Miller contends that “any theology of the Old Testament or any overall interpretation of the Old Testament should give significant attention to the conception of God as warrior and the role that it plays in the literature.”<sup>330</sup> While there is scholarly agreement on the importance of the divine warrior theme to Old Testament theology in general, this chapter has sought to fill the void resulting from a lack of consideration about how it applies to messianic expectation in particular. In the same way that Miller asserts, “It is not possible to talk of God as king without talking of God as warrior,” this chapter suggests it is not possible to speak of the messiah without recognizing him as warrior king.<sup>331</sup> Clearly, the

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<sup>328</sup>Goldsworthy comments on the centrality of the kingdom of God (and its king) in the Old Testament: “The idea of the rule of God over creation, over all creatures, over the kingdoms of the world, and in a unique and special way, over his chosen and redeemed people, is the very heart of the message of the Hebrew scriptures.” Graeme Goldsworthy, “Kingdom of God,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. Brian S. Rosner et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 618.

<sup>329</sup>McConville asserts, “the validity of a Christian understanding of the Old Testament must depend in the last analysis on [the] cogency of the argument that the Old Testament is messianic.” Gordon McConville, “Messianic Interpretation of the Old Testament in Modern Context,” in *The Lord’s Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. R. S. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 17.

<sup>330</sup>Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel*, 171. Miller also writes, “My aim in these concluding words is simply to call attention to the centrality of the divine warrior imagery and language in the Old Testament and the consequent need for a major focus upon it in any theological treatment of the Old Testament.” *Ibid.*, 170–71. Waltke suggests, “The concept of *I AM* as warrior occupies a prominent position in Old Testament theology and should not be shelved.” Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology*, 393.

<sup>331</sup>Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel*, 174.

divine warrior motif is central, rather than peripheral, to the relationship between biblical theology and Christology.<sup>332</sup>

Third, the Old Testament presents the messiah as a second Adam who will, as the seed of the woman, crush the head of the serpent. Throughout the redemptive historical development of the Old Testament, seed warfare marks the cosmic conflict that ensues.<sup>333</sup> As kingdom warfare unfolds, its various stages point back to Eden and build upon the mother promise of Genesis 3:15.<sup>334</sup> Groningen observes, “The maintaining of this conflict and the outworking of the hostility between the two ‘seeds,’ leading to the eventual complete victory of the seed of the woman, was, is, and always will be a central concern in the task of the Messiah.”<sup>335</sup> Both the messianic preservation through Israel and the messianic expectation of Israel reflect the anticipation of a coming warrior king who would be the promised seed of the woman.

Fourth, the culmination of the Old Testament’s messianic expectation is of a new David establishing a new reign over a new Israel in a new creation through a new Exodus. As a result, the kingdom of Israel paves the way for the coming kingdom of Christ.<sup>336</sup> The corporate hope of God’s people now channels itself to an individual

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<sup>332</sup>Miller explains that “the view of Yahweh as warrior can hardly be a peripheral matter in the effort to work out a biblical theology.” *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>333</sup>Hamilton notes that “in the Bible’s metanarrative, from the moment God uttered his judgment against the serpent, the seed of the woman (the collective of those who trust God) were hoping for the seed of the woman (the man who would achieve the ultimate victory over the serpent).” Hamilton, “The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman,” 43.

<sup>334</sup>Niehaus notes, “God’s theocratic rule is an act of creation/re-creation. Israel in its promised land is an emblem of humanity in the Garden, and Canaan is compared to Eden.” Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 31.

<sup>335</sup>Groningen, *Messianic Revelation*, 128.

<sup>336</sup>Craigie, *The Problem of War in the Old Testament*, 99. Childs says, “What emerges in the Old Testament is the promise of a righteous king, an anointed one, from the lineage of David whose reign

warrior king who would restore the nation, and thus the whole world, through the fulfillment of the divine warrior's covenantal promises.<sup>337</sup> Dempster provides a helpful summary of how the various kingdom-oriented strands of messianic expectation in the Old Testament converge together:

Humanity is called to be the image of God, fails in its task and is replaced by Israel, who is regarded as God's son. A tribe is singled out within Israel, a family within the tribe, and an individual - David - becomes the focus. And yet David, his sons and their failures, point forward to a just Davidic king who will bring the benefits of the rule not only to Israel but to all of humanity. Similarly, the dominion of Adam begins over all creation, and then the land of Canaan becomes the focus, and next the city of Jerusalem and the temple. And from this particular place, the rule of God extends outwards to Israel and the nations, even to the ends of the earth.<sup>338</sup>

But how does Israel's messianic expectation of a coming warrior king align with the New Testament's depiction of Jesus? How does the New Testament present Christ as a warrior king through his missional ministry in the incarnation, vicarious victory in the atonement, militant mission in the church, and complete conquest in the eschaton? While this chapter has evaluated the divine warrior theme in the messianic expectation of the Old Testament, the following chapter will examine the divine warrior motif in the messianic presentation of the New Testament.

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will be likened to the kingdom of God." Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*, 242.

<sup>337</sup>Von Rad notes, "Here the ancient religious conceptions of holy war—which for the longest time had been connected to the collectivity of the people—have now finally reached the individual, to shape as well that individual's very personal faith in the trials of life." Von Rad, *Holy War*, 133. Though, in contrast to him, this concept was not a post-exilic theme that emerged but rather seems to be part of the intention of the holy war motif all along.

<sup>338</sup>Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 231; Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 620.

## CHAPTER 4

### CHRIST THE WARRIOR KING AND BIBLICAL THEOLOGY: NEW TESTAMENT

Building on the messianic expectation of the Old Testament, the New Testament presents Jesus as a warrior king. Yet, the nature, timing, purpose, and results of his warrior kingship are different from the reigning anticipation of the time period. He fulfills this expectation but in ways that transform its meaning and significance. A warfare worldview is “central to the whole New Testament.”<sup>1</sup> This warfare worldview centers on the motif of the kingdom of God in general and the character of Christ the warrior king in particular.<sup>2</sup> Boyd rightly suggests that “the thematic unity of Christ’s ministry (as well as that of his disciples and the early postapostolic church) becomes fully intelligible only against the backdrop of a warfare worldview.”<sup>3</sup>

What does the New Testament reveal about Christ the warrior king? How does the storyline of Scripture culminate in the New Testament through Christ’s cosmic conflict with the rivals to the kingdom of God? In what ways does kingdom warfare progress in the church and in the eschaton? An analysis of the divine warrior theme in the

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<sup>1</sup>Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 18.

<sup>2</sup>Alexander states, “The establishment of Christ’s viceregency is undoubtedly one of the central ideas associated with the kingdom of God in the New Testament.” T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 94.

<sup>3</sup>Boyd, *God at War*, 19.

messianic fulfillment of the New Testament sheds light on these issues and more by examining the motif within the context of Scripture's warfare worldview.

This chapter argues that the divine warrior theme is a central feature in the messianic fulfillment of the New Testament. To accomplish this task, it begins by reflecting on areas of continuity and discontinuity in the kingdom warfare of the two testaments. Then, it traces the divine warrior theme in the incarnation of Christ as it is expressed in his life and ministry. Next, it considers the warfare orientation of his death and resurrection. After these reflections on Christ himself, the chapter considers the continuing kingdom warfare of the church. Then, it examines the eschatological culmination of the divine warrior theme in the end times. Finally, it concludes with a reflection on major themes in the New Testament's messianic fulfillment of this Christocentric concept. In summary, the New Testament presents Christ as a divine warrior king who declares kingdom warfare through his life and ministry, defeats kingdom rivals through his death and resurrection, defends kingdom citizens through his church and word, and destroys kingdom opposition through his return and reign.

### **Christ the Warrior King and the Two Testaments**

Kingdom warfare continues in the New Testament, but it is transformed by the coming of Christ. Thus, there is both continuity and discontinuity between the testaments in the area of spiritual conflict.<sup>4</sup> Longman and Reid comment that the results of a biblical theology of warfare "are an illuminating study in the continuity and discontinuity between the different epochs of divine revelation, most notably between the Old and New

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<sup>4</sup>Because it is outside of the scope of this chapter to do a complete analysis of the continuity and discontinuity of the warfare worldview in both testaments, the following is a representative sample.

Testaments.”<sup>5</sup> Any biblical theology of warfare must balance this tension between continuity and discontinuity if it wants to understand the impact of kingdom warfare on Christian theology.

### **Christ the Warrior King and Continuity**

There are continuities between the Old Testament’s messianic-expectation-shaping kingdom warfare and the New Testament’s messianic-fulfillment-achieving kingdom conflict. This continuity is three dimensional, exhibiting national, typological, and spiritual aspects. First, continuity in kingdom warfare is national as it reveals the redemptive-historical progression of the kingdom of God.<sup>6</sup> While kingdom warfare is no longer pursued through theocratic military conflicts in the New Testament, the national component of Israel’s warfare is continued in Christ who, as the true Israel of God, inaugurates the kingdom of God by destroying the enemies of God through the cross (Col 2:14-15).<sup>7</sup> He advances the kingdom of God towards a promised land that includes rest

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<sup>5</sup>Tremper Longman and Daniel G. Reid, *God Is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 16–17.

<sup>6</sup>Torrance observes that “the messianic kingdom came to overarch the covenantal relation of word and pardon, prophet and priest. The Messiah was the king of the kingdom who provided in himself the way, the truth, and the life, and so provided the way of restoration of mankind to the Father.” Thomas F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 46.

<sup>7</sup>Lints comments, “Jesus clearly understood his own mission and ministry in light of David and Solomon. He was the true king, and his kingdom will know no end. There was no more dominant motif in the ministry of Jesus than that of the ‘kingdom of God.’ The original type of this kingdom was most surely the kingdom of David. Christ’s kingdom shall be perfect, though David’s kingdom was not.” Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 308. For more on Jesus as the true Israel of God, see Russell D. Moore, “From the House of Jacob to the Iowa Caucuses: The Future of Israel in Contemporary Evangelical Political Ethics,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 11, no. 4 (2007): 16; Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 233; Russell D. Moore, “Personal and Cosmic Eschatology,” in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 907.

from the enemies of God (Ps 110:1; Heb 1:13). The kingdom of God that was lost by Adam and limited with David is now inaugurated by Christ the warrior king.<sup>8</sup>

Second, continuity in kingdom warfare is typological as it relates to the messianic expectation and fulfillment of the divine warrior motif. While kingdom warfare in the New Testament is no longer pointing forward to a coming warrior king who will put all his enemies under his feet (Ps 110:1), the typological component of Old Testament warfare is fulfilled through the incarnational assault of Christ through his deeds, his discourse, and his death (1 John 3:8).<sup>9</sup> Jesus is the anticipated messianic king who is a new David bringing a new Israel into a new creation through a new Exodus.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Jesus saw himself as the fulfillment of the Old Testament's messianic expectation (Luke 24:27, 44-45; John 5:39).<sup>11</sup> Therefore, Jesus unites the strands of warfare-oriented typological expectation in his person and work.

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<sup>8</sup>Lints observes, "Unless we understand the earlier kingdom (David's and Solomon's), we will not understand the king of kings or the present and future shape of his kingdom." Lints, *The Fabric of Theology*, 308.

<sup>9</sup>Torrance contributes, "The whole historico-redemptive movement in the Old and New Testaments is to be regarded as essentially one. The Old Testament speaks of the coming one, the coming of the kingdom; the New Testament speaks of the one who has come, and of the kingdom as having arrived in Christ Jesus himself." Torrance, *Incarnation*, 44-45.

<sup>10</sup>Alexander adds, "Whereas the Old Testament looks forward to the defeat of God's enemies and the establishment of his reign upon the earth, the New Testament presents Jesus Christ as the one who overthrows Satan. In doing so, considerable use is made of the divine-warrior tradition, drawing especially on the Exodus account of God's defeat of Pharaoh in order to free the enslaved Israelites." Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 112.

<sup>11</sup>Wright points out that Jesus "believed he was Israel's messiah, the one through whom the true God would accomplish his decisive purpose." Marcus J. Borg and N. T. Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 2007), 50. D. A. Carson claims that John 5:39 contends that Scripture provides "a comprehensive hermeneutical key. By predictive prophecy, by type, by revelatory event and by anticipatory statute, what we call the Old Testament is understood to point to Christ, his ministry, his teaching, his death and resurrection." D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 263.



Third, continuity in kingdom warfare is spiritual as it relates to the cosmic conflict between kingdom rivals. Throughout the storyline of Scripture, kingdom conflict always has a spiritual dimension. On the one hand, kingdom warfare in both testaments relies on the Spirit of God to carry out the battles of God (Gal 5:16-18).<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, God's people face a common enemy who uses spiritual forces for his evil purposes (Gen 3:1-6; John 1:5; Eph 6:10-12; 1 Pet 5:8).<sup>13</sup> By understanding the continuities in kingdom warfare throughout biblical theology, it creates a clearer understanding of the nature of the kingdom and the warfare of its king.

### **Christ the Warrior King and Discontinuity**

However, there are significant discontinuities between the nature of kingdom conflict before and after the arrival of Christ the warrior king. These distinctives between the two testaments materialize in the same three dimensional categories as the continuities—national, typological, and spiritual. First, discontinuity in kingdom warfare is national as the ethnic theocracy of Israel gives way to the eschatological Christocracy of Christ.<sup>14</sup> While Israel battled the principalities and powers of Canaan, the church (in Christ) battles the principalities and powers in the heavenly places (Eph 6:11-12).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>For example, Hildebrandt observes that “the active agent in bringing about Israel’s deliverance was the *ruah* that came from Yahweh himself.” Wilf Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 20.

<sup>13</sup>This spiritual conflict with evil is often presented as a battle between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness (see John 1:5; 3:19; 8:12; 1 John 1:5). Köstenberger observes that “light and darkness are no equally matched duality, but in the battle between Jesus and Satan, Jesus, ‘the light,’ is the overwhelming victor.” Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 32.

<sup>14</sup>Eskola writes, “In the New Testament theocracy became Christocracy.” Timo Eskola, *Messiah and the Throne: Jewish Merkabah Mysticism and Early Christian Exaltation Discourse* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 368.

<sup>15</sup>Ladd asserts, “The enemies of God’s kingdom are now seen not as hostile evil nations as in

Because the messianic kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36), followers of the warrior king do not wage military war.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the messianic kingdom of God did not arrive at the culmination of history in the way Israel anticipated.<sup>17</sup> Instead, the messianic king broke into the midpoint of history not garbed in the flowing robes of a prince but cradled in the dirty rags of a peasant. The national blessings promised to Abraham found their fulfillment in the seed of Abraham who is Christ the warrior king (Gal 3:15-16).<sup>18</sup> While the purpose of warfare in the Old Testament was to preserve the messianic seed, the purpose of warfare in the New Testament is to proclaim the messianic kingdom.

Second, discontinuity in kingdom warfare is typological as the Old Testament's messianic expectation of a coming warrior king is transformed by the eschatological kingdom established through the sacrificial life and death of Jesus the servant-shepherd.<sup>19</sup> The messiah still came as a conquering king. Yet, the nature, timing, and purpose of his eschatological assault differed from the common anticipation of the

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the Old Testament but spiritual powers of evil." George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 65.

<sup>16</sup>Clearly, the new Israel of the people of God in Christ contrasts ethnic Israel in this way. However, as will be discussed later, this discontinuity in military strategy does not necessarily imply a "wholesale endorsement of pacifism." Köstenberger, *John*, 529.

<sup>17</sup>This contention is the central argument in Ladd's work *The Presence of the Future*. He explains, "The central thesis of this book is that the Kingdom of God is the redemptive reign of God dynamically active to establish his rule among men, and that this Kingdom, which will appear as an apocalyptic act at the end of the age, has already come into human history in the person and mission of Jesus to overcome evil, to deliver men from its power, and to bring them into the blessings of God's reign." George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 218.

<sup>18</sup>Moises Silva, "Galatians," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 807.

<sup>19</sup>Ladd's comment on Paul is true of the entire New Testament: "Paul's understanding of the messiahship of Jesus involves a transformation of traditional messianic categories, because it is not as an earthly monarch or from a throne of political power that Jesus reigns, but as the resurrected, exalted Lord." Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 451.

time.<sup>20</sup> It is not that Jesus failed to fulfill the typological expectations of a future divine deliverer. Instead, he transformed the nature of this messianic fulfillment as he ushered in the redemptive reign of the kingdom of Christ.<sup>21</sup>

Third, discontinuity in kingdom warfare is spiritual as the New Testament's portrayal of the eschatological warfare of Christ and the church is fundamentally cosmic in nature. The discontinuity between the testaments is not that kingdom warfare becomes spiritual in the New Testament because the military conquests of the Old Testament were inherently spiritual. Instead, the distinction occurs because New Covenant kingdom warfare is exclusively spiritual until the second coming of Christ.<sup>22</sup> Peter learned that the coming of Christ had transformed the military nature of kingdom warfare when Jesus restored the pulsing ear lobe of the high priest's servant after Peter had lopped it off with his sword (Matt 26:52-54).<sup>23</sup> Though kingdom warfare sheds this physical dimension in the New Testament, it sustains its spiritual component as Christ and his church wage war

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<sup>20</sup>France says, "The total picture, no less than the individual figures, makes up a view of Messiahship in striking contrast to what was probably the dominant popular hope at the time, of a Son of David who was to reign in Jerusalem, subduing all other nations, and exalting the Jews to an everlasting earthly dominion." He continues, "Jesus' view has no room for political supremacy, military conquest or earthly power; the only dominion it envisages is a heavenly one, and the position of the Messiah on earth is one of humiliation, not of power. This cannot be less than a deliberate repudiation of the popular conception." R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1971), 149.

<sup>21</sup>For example, Wright observes that Paul saw the messiah as one "who would fight the victorious battle against the ultimate enemy, build the new temple, and inaugurate a worldwide rule of justice, peace and prosperity. Paul, of course, saw all of these as being redefined, granted that the Messiah was Jesus (of all people!); but none of them is lost." N. T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 104.

<sup>22</sup>Eugene H. Merrill, "The Case for Moderate Discontinuity," in *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 91.

<sup>23</sup>Longman exclaims, "When Jesus told Peter to put away the sword, he was telling the church that would follow that physical violence could not be used to further his cause. The object of Christ's warfare is spiritual, not physical, and the weapons used are spiritual, not physical." Tremper Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," in *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 181.

not on the principalities and powers of Canaan but on the principalities and powers of evil (Eph 6:10-12). By recognizing the discontinuities in kingdom warfare throughout the storyline of Scripture, it provides clarity on Christ's transformed fulfillment of the Old Testament's messianic expectation of a future warrior king.

### **Christ the Warrior King and the Incarnation**

The New Testament authors are unwavering in their continuation of the warfare worldview revealed in the Old Testament. Both the Gospels and the epistles confirm Christ's role as divine warrior throughout his earthly life and ministry.<sup>24</sup> Yet, the events surrounding Jesus' incarnation and subsequent ministry are so familiar in contemporary Christianity that their warfare significance can be overlooked.<sup>25</sup> Jesus' earthly ministry centers on the conflict between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light.<sup>26</sup> This section argues that the centrality of kingdom warfare in the life and ministry of Jesus is seen in (1) the conflict of the virgin birth, (2) the conquest of his

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<sup>24</sup>For a treatment of the warfare theme in the synoptic Gospels, see Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 91–135. For a treatment of the warfare theme in the Gospel of John, see Judith L. Kovacs, “‘Now Shall the Ruler of This World Be Driven Out’: Jesus’ Death as Cosmic Battle in John 12:20-36,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114 (1995): 227-47. For a treatment of the warfare theme in the Pauline epistles, see Clinton E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul’s Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992). Though John does not use the warfare-oriented term kingdom of God often (John 3:3, 5; 18:36), Köstenberger notes that the apostle parallels this usage with the term eternal life because “the expressions ‘kingdom of God’ and ‘eternal life’ are essentially equivalent.” Köstenberger, *John*, 123; Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 95, 295.

<sup>25</sup>G. K. Chesterton warns that when it comes to the incarnation of Christ, “we have to react against the heavy bias of fatigue. It is almost impossible to make the facts vivid, because the facts are familiar; and for fallen men it is often true that familiarity is fatigue.” G. K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1974), xxii.

<sup>26</sup>As Gustaf Wingren notes, “All Christ’s activity is therefore a conflict with the Devil (Acts 10:38). God’s Son took flesh and became man that he might overthrow the power of the Devil, and bring his works to naught.” Gustaf Wingren, *The Living Word: A Theological Study of Preaching and the Church*, trans. T. V. Pague (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1960), 53.

wilderness temptations, (3) the conduct of his kingdom works, and (4) the content of his kingdom words.

### **The Birth of the Warrior King**

“The kingdom of God dawns in a peasant Jewish virgin’s uterus,” states Moore.<sup>27</sup> The virgin birth of Christ is a major milestone in the kingdom conflict of redemptive history. It was not a peaceful arrival. Instead, according to the apostle John, it was a violent escalation of the warfare between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Rev 12:1-6). As Torrance explains, “Everything in Christianity centers on the incarnation of the Son of God, an invasion of God among men and women in time.”<sup>28</sup> There are several dimensions of Jesus’ birth narrative that confirm the warfare significance of the incarnation.

First, the genealogies of Christ seem to suggest that Jesus is a second Adam and new David who will reconstitute the kingdom of God and restore shalom to its rule. Luke’s genealogy presents Jesus as a new Adam who comes as the son of God in order to reverse the kingdom collapse that resulted from the sin of the first Adam (Luke 3:23-38).<sup>29</sup> Likewise, Matthew’s genealogy presents Jesus as a warrior king from David’s

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<sup>27</sup>He continues, “The kingdom of God prophecies of the Old Testament find their goal in Jesus of Galilee, who is himself the promised King and the bearer of the kingdom and who inaugurated the kingdom two thousand years ago.” Moore, “Personal and Cosmic Eschatology,” 864.

<sup>28</sup>Torrance, *Incarnation*, 8; Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 531; Thomas F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 31.

<sup>29</sup>Torrance claims, “The whole movement of redemption adumbrated from the start is a movement of God coming to man in order to restore man to God, of God taking man’s place in order to give man God’s place – the principle of substitution and the principle of incarnation.” Torrance, *Incarnation*, 40. Augustine writes, “But God judged it better to take a man to himself from the very race that had been conquered, in order through him to conquer the enemy of the human race; to take one however whose conception from a virgin was inaugurated by the spirit not the flesh, by faith not lust.” Augustine, *The Trinity*, ed. John E. Rotelle, 4th ed. (New York: New City Press, 1991), 361–62.

lineage (Matt 1:6) who is also Immanuel, “God with us” (Matt 1:23).<sup>30</sup> Thus, the genealogies of Jesus show the convergence of three militant motifs of the Old Testament’s messianic expectation in the incarnation—the messiah as second Adam, new David, and Immanuel who fights for the people of God to establish the kingdom of God.<sup>31</sup>

Second, the birth announcements of the angels confirm Christ as an infant warrior king. For example, Gabriel reveals to Mary that Jesus will be great, will be called Son of the Most High, will receive David’s throne, will reign over Jacob’s house, and will have an everlasting kingdom (Luke 1:32-33).<sup>32</sup> John later explains that the reason for the appearance of Jesus that these angels announced was to “destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).<sup>33</sup> The angel who announces Jesus’ birth to the shepherds points out both that this child will be a savior and that he is born in the city of David (Luke 2:11). As the angels announce the identity of Jesus, it captures the kingly dimension of his coming.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Mark J. Boda, *After God’s Own Heart: The Gospel According to David*, The Gospel According to the Old Testament (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2007), 4.

<sup>31</sup>Moore points out, “As Jesus’ march to the kingdom unfolds in the Gospels, we are shown Jesus growing in wisdom and in knowledge (Luke 2:52). God was preparing his human nature to assume Adam’s throne.” Russell D. Moore, *Tempted and Tried: Temptation and the Triumph of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 134.

<sup>32</sup>Pao and Schnabel insist, “These verses unmistakably point back to OT expectations of the renewal of the Davidic dynasty.” David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Luke,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 260.

<sup>33</sup>Boyd connects this verse with the prophecy of Gen 3:15: “The misery and bondage that the serpent first brought about in Eden in principle came to an end when the prophecy given in Eden was fulfilled.” Boyd, *God at War*, 242.

<sup>34</sup>MacLeod notes, “Whether as prophet, priest or king, then, Christ’s authority and competence rest four-square on his identity. He can reveal, reconcile and rule only because first of all he is the Son of God.” Donald MacLeod, *The Person of Christ*, Contours of Christian Theology (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998), 247.

Third, the response of others to the birth of Christ indicates his royal status. As Mary marvels over the birth of Jesus in the Magnificat, she celebrates how this miraculous birth is the means by which God will bring down thrones (Luke 1:52) and fulfill the Abrahamic promise (Luke 1:55).<sup>35</sup> Before Jesus' birth, the prophet Zechariah recognizes the coming child king as a descendant in the line of Abraham (Luke 1:73) and David (Luke 1:69) who will defeat the enemies of God by the power of God (Luke 1:71, 74).<sup>36</sup> After Jesus' birth, the wise men identify him as the "King of the Jews" to Herod (Matt 2:2), which initiates a title repeatedly used of Christ in both delight and derision.<sup>37</sup> Finally, Herod's slaughter of the innocents (Matt 2:13-18) echoes the actions of pharaoh (Exod 1:15-17)—and the Pharaoh behind the pharaoh (Rev 12:17)—in seeking to eliminate the threat of the royal seed of the woman.<sup>38</sup> The genealogies, angelic announcements, and personal responses to the birth of Christ all signal that something significant occurs at the incarnation. It is a seismic step in the kingdom warfare of redemptive history.

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<sup>35</sup>Pao and Schnabel, "Luke," 262.

<sup>36</sup>Zechariah's messianic hope of conquest echoes the necessity of Christ's cosmic conflict to achieve gospel victory. Therefore, Torrance rightly recognizes the essential nature of Jesus' cosmic warfare to the Gospels: "It was into that kingdom of evil that Jesus penetrated in order to do battle with it and to break its power over men and women, to hew a way out of its tyranny and lead them back into the freedom of God's children." He adds, "All this is an essential and an indispensable part of the whole life and ministry of Jesus; it cannot be stripped away or be demythologised without fundamental loss to the gospel. The element is so intertwined in the gospel witness to the person and work of Christ that if it is demythologised or stripped away, the essential substance of the gospel goes with it." Torrance, *Incarnation*, 237.

<sup>37</sup>Torrance recognizes that Jesus "was born to be king, redeemer-king," but those who mocked him did not rightly understand this reality. Torrance, *Atonement*, 62.

<sup>38</sup>Russell D. Moore, "Exodus 13:17-14:31," in *Exit Strategy: The Gospel of Jesus in the Book of Exodus*, forthcoming, 15.

## **The Wilderness Temptations of the Warrior King**

The baptism and wilderness temptations of Jesus signal the inauguration of his public ministry and the launch of his incarnational invasion of the kingdom of darkness. As John baptizes the multitudes, his call to repentance implies that he is expecting a coming divine warrior (Matt 3:1-12).<sup>39</sup> After initially resisting Jesus' request for baptism (Matt 3:13-14), John baptizes Christ and the Holy Spirit descends on him as a dove (Matt 3:15-16).<sup>40</sup> This anointing of the Spirit combined with the Father's affirming words of sonship confirm that Jesus is the anointed Davidic warrior king that Israel had long expected (Matt 3:17; cf. Ps 2:7; Isa 42:1).<sup>41</sup> Just as the first David is anointed by God before battling on behalf of God (1 Sam 16-17), so too this new David receives anointing before launching his conquest toward a new creation.<sup>42</sup> To start his campaign, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness (Matt 4:1; Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1), which was widely regarded as the throne room of Satan's domain of darkness.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Longman remarks, "John expects that the one coming after him will fill the role of the violent warrior who will rid the land of its oppressors." Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," 180.

<sup>40</sup>Schreiner states, "The descent of the Spirit, then, must signify Jesus' anointing for ministry. His public ministry will now commence, and God clothed him with the Spirit to empower him to carry out his task." Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 437.

<sup>41</sup>Moore writes, "The presence of the Spirit before and after the temptation narratives cannot be overemphasized (Luke 4:1, 14). The Spirit, after all, is the sign of anointing, of God's presence with his king." Moore, *Tempted and Tried*, 55-56.

<sup>42</sup>Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 437; G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 171. Moore adds, "The definition of Jesus' messianic identity as the 'anointed one,' the bearer of the Spirit (Luke 4:18-19), is therefore set within this context of the anointed warrior-king." Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 105.

<sup>43</sup>Hawthorne explains, "But the wilderness was also known as the home of Satan, the lodging of demons, the location of deadly dangers, the arena of evil forces, of the powers of darkness, of demonic activity, the habitation of wild beasts, poisonous serpents, etc." Gerald F. Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock,



In the wilderness temptations, Jesus not only demonstrates himself to be qualified as messianic warrior king but also recapitulates the history of Adam and Israel, succeeding as God's regal son where they failed.<sup>44</sup> By resisting temptations toward provision, protection, and possession, Jesus records a personal, yet cosmic, victory in the conflict of kingdom warfare (Matt 4:1-11).<sup>45</sup> By not turning the stone into bread (Matt 4:2-4; Luke 4:3-4), Jesus resists Satan's temptation of provision and demonstrates he has the self-control to be qualified for Davidic kingship (Deut 17:17).<sup>46</sup> By not casting himself down from the temple (Matt 4:5-7; Luke 4:9-12), Jesus rejects Satan's temptation of protection and rebuffs Satan's Christ-centered yet mis-applied interpretation of a messianic psalm (Ps 91:11-12).<sup>47</sup> By not exchanging allegiance to acquire the kingdoms of the earth (Matt 4:8-10; Luke 4:5-8), Jesus revokes Satan's temptation of possession and shows that he understands the inheritance of the kingdom cannot come apart from the cross.<sup>48</sup> As Jesus defeats Satan in this initial conflict of kingdom warfare, it foreshadows

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2003), 137.

<sup>44</sup>Dempster declares, "Thus, when Jesus begins his ministry, he, as the new Adam and the new Israel, succeeds where the old Adam and the old Israel failed (Matt. 4:1-11). Hence he recapitulates in his life the history of Adam and Israel. He triumphs over the satanic enemy and announces the kingdom of God." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 233. The early church fathers emphasize his theme of recapitulation. See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, trans. Dominic J. Unger (New York: Paulist, 1992), 448.

<sup>45</sup>Moore explains, "Satan was not just trying to tempt Jesus; he was attempting to adopt Jesus. Satan, in all three temptations, is assuming the role of a father—first in provision, then in protection, and now in the granting of an inheritance. Satan didn't just want to be Jesus' lord; he wanted to be his father." Moore, *Tempted and Tried*, 137.

<sup>46</sup>Moore points out that "Jesus understood he was a king-in-training. He knew that a qualification for kingship is control over the appetites (Deut. 17:17), a test previous Israelite kings had failed at one point or another." *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>47</sup>According to Moore, Satan "knew to apply this reference to God's ultimate anointed, to Jesus. Satan was, in this instance, a Christ-centered Bible preacher too." *Ibid.*, 100–01.

<sup>48</sup>Torrance claims that Jesus was offered the kingdoms of this world without the cross and "refused it categorically." Torrance, *Atonement*, 31. Moore adds, "Satan was willing to give away his territorial rights to the kingdoms of this world partly because he knew he wouldn't be giving up a kingdom

the decisive victory of the atonement.<sup>49</sup> After the warrior king is anointed in his baptism and tested in the wilderness, he embarks on an incarnational assault of Satan's kingdom through both his works and his words.<sup>50</sup>

### **The Kingdom Works of the Warrior King**

In both his works and his words, Christ reveals that a warfare worldview is central to his understanding of his mission. Boyd claims, "Among the many ways Jesus' warfare conception of the kingdom of God is illustrated is the Gospels' association of Jesus' pronouncements about the kingdom and his demonstrations of the kingdom."<sup>51</sup>

The kingdom works of Christ assault the parasitic kingdom of Satan.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, they demonstrate that Jesus is the long-expected messianic king (John 7:31).<sup>53</sup> Christ's kingdom works mark the dawning of his triumphant reign as seen in (1) the exorcisms and miracles of Christ, (2) the exclamations of the demons, and (3) the empowerment of the disciples.<sup>54</sup>

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but rather would be gaining another subject." Moore, *Tempted and Tried*, 141.

<sup>49</sup>Torrance says, "As he came through the temptations in the wilderness clothed with the power of the Spirit, so he came through the temptation and passion of his self sacrifice on the cross clothed with the power of the resurrection, *Christus Victor*, Christ triumphant, endowed with all power in heaven and earth." Torrance, *Atonement*, 31.

<sup>50</sup>Boyd contends for the centrality of conflict in Christ's life: "It is crucial for us to recognize that Jesus' view about the rule of Satan and the pervasive influence of his army was not simply a marginal piece of first-century apocalyptic thought that he happened to embrace. It is, rather, the driving force behind everything Jesus says and does. Indeed, Jesus' concept of 'the kingdom of God' is centered on these views. For Jesus, the kingdom of God means abolishing the kingdom of Satan." Boyd, *God at War*, 185.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>52</sup>The advancement of Christ's kingdom results from the destruction of Satan's kingdom. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 263.

<sup>53</sup>Köstenberger, *John*, 236–37; Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 270; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 319.

<sup>54</sup>In the Gospel of John, these kingdom works are often referred to as signs, as Köstenberger

First, in a foretaste of Jesus' future victory, the exorcisms of Christ initiate the defeat of his demonic rivals.<sup>55</sup> As Ladd observes, "The meaning of Jesus' exorcism of demons in its relationship to the Kingdom of God is precisely this: that before the eschatological conquest of God's Kingdom over evil and the destruction of Satan, the Kingdom of God has invaded the realm of Satan to deal him a preliminary but decisive defeat."<sup>56</sup> Jesus drives out some demons with the power of his word (Matt 8:16), exorcises others with the power of his prayer (Matt 17:18-20), and is accused of purging them by the power of Beelzebul (Matt 12:24-29).<sup>57</sup> Though the Gospel of John does not detail exorcisms to the extent of the Synoptics, it recognizes the cosmic conflict of Christ's kingdom works as well (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11, 33).<sup>58</sup>

Likewise, the miracles and healings of Christ parallel his exorcisms as kingdom works that not only confirm his messiahship but also signal his impending

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says, "At the heart of Act 1 of John's Gospel drama is the demonstration of Jesus' messiahship by way of seven selected signs." Köstenberger, *John*, 51.

<sup>55</sup>Gathercole notes that Jesus "functions already before Easter as a heavenly intercessor combating Satan." Simon J. Gathercole, *The Pre-Existent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 52–53. Crump adds that Jesus displays "heavenly opposition to the adversary of God's people." D. Crump, "Jesus, the Victorious Scribal Intercessor in Luke's Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 38 (1992): 65. For more on the exorcisms of Christ, see Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994). For more on exorcisms in the New Testament and early church, see Graham H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

<sup>56</sup>Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 151.

<sup>57</sup>Letham notes, "Moreover, Jesus relates the overthrow of demonic powers, seen in the exorcisms he performed, to the presence of the kingdom (Mt. 12:28; Lk. 11:20)." Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ*, *Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 59; Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 64. Erickson comments on the accusations toward Jesus, "That he saw himself as engaged in contest with the forces of evil is clear from his own comment in response to those who accused him of casting out demons by recourse to the strength of the prince of demons, Beelzebub (Matt 12:22-37; Mark 3:22-30; Luke 11:14-23)." Millard J. Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 614.

<sup>58</sup>Ladd writes, "Although John, unlike the Synoptics, does not relate Jesus' struggle with demons, it is clear that his mission involves the same conflict with supernatural powers." Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 264.

conquest (Matt 11:4).<sup>59</sup> Indeed, Peter's summary statement of Jesus' ministry (Acts 10:38) centers on these kingdom works by which the anointed one (messiah) ministers to those oppressed by the devil because "God was with him" (Immanuel).<sup>60</sup> Therefore, the works of Christ were intended to not just substantiate his teachings on the kingdom but also reveal the inauguration of a renewed kingdom warfare.<sup>61</sup> Through his exorcisms and other miracles, Jesus begins to beat back the kingdom of darkness by battling with demonic forces and ushering in the kingdom of light.

Second, in the demons' reactions to Jesus, their exclamations recognize both the anointed authority of Jesus and the impending victory of Jesus. Gathercole captures the horror of Jesus' rivals: "Apparently, even the demons could not shake off the knowledge that Jesus would eventually come to destroy them. There is no escape for them, however hard they might try to persuade him that he is too early."<sup>62</sup> Specifically, demons recognize Jesus as the holy one of God (Mark 1:24), negotiate with Jesus as the authoritative one of God (Matt 8:30), and identify Jesus as the anointed one of God (Luke 4:34).<sup>63</sup> In response to demonic recognition, Jesus repeatedly rebukes them for

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<sup>59</sup>Torrance says, "The words and acts of Jesus the king cast an astonishing light on mankind and the way that the heavenly Father regards humanity in its plight. The miracles are not only acts of emancipating grace (*dynamis*) but signs of the kingdom (*semeia*)." Torrance, *Incarnation*, 240.

<sup>60</sup>Torrance claims, "That is why the Acts of the Apostles can sum up what it has to say about the ministry of Jesus by the words that he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed with the devil." *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup>Early church father Gregory of Nazianzus provides this colorful yet profound depiction of Christ's works: "The demons acknowledge him, and he drives out demons, and sinks in the sea legions of foul spirits, and sees the prince of demons falling like lightning." Gregory of Nazianzus, "The Theological Orations," in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward Rochie Hardy, The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1954), 174.

<sup>62</sup>Gathercole, *The Pre-Existent Son*, 153.

<sup>63</sup>Gathercole points out about the book of Mark that "the recognitions of Jesus' identity by the demons are in line with this divine verdict announced at the opening of the Gospel: Jesus' identity in

announcing his divine identity and messianic mission (Mark 1:25; Luke 4:41). The demons know who Jesus is and what he is doing as he begins their divine defeat.<sup>64</sup>

Third, Jesus also empowers his followers to perform kingdom works. Instead of assaulting the enemy alone, Christ establishes an army of disciples and commissions them to do the same.<sup>65</sup> Just as Jesus' deeds demonstrate the power of the kingdom, he enables his followers to display a similar authority over the enemy (Luke 10:18).<sup>66</sup> Jesus commissions his disciples to have authority over the demons, heal the sick, and proclaim repentance (Mark 6:12-13; Matt 10:1; Luke 9:1). Furthermore, he empowers the seventy to cast out demons, which results in Jesus celebrating the first taste of Satan's fall like lightning (Luke 10:17-20).<sup>67</sup> Yet, Jesus also warns that many will cast out demons in his name but not enter the kingdom (Matt 7:21-23). The deeds of Christ combine with the discourse of Christ to foreshadow the kingdom conquest of Christ that will soon come at the cross.

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relation to the Father is fully seen in the course of his ministry only by other heavenly figures." Ibid., 54. On Jesus' anointing as fulfillment of Old Testament messianic expectation, see Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 77.

<sup>64</sup>Schreiner states, "Jesus' coming to destroy the demons is not an ordinary visit of a human being; rather, it is the visit of one from the heavenly realm who comes to put an end to powers that also transcend the human realm." Ibid., 194.

<sup>65</sup>Longman and Reid note, "As Mark has already implied, Jesus was not alone in his mission. He appointed the Twelve (3:14-15), and later sent them forth (6:6-7), to proclaim the kingdom and drive out demons." Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 103.

<sup>66</sup>Erickson describes this authority: "While Jesus' words and deeds imply much about his person, their actual authority derived from the kingdom of God. In other words, the authority was not that of Jesus in and of himself, but that of the kingdom." Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh*, 101.

<sup>67</sup>Ladd writes, "Therefore, Revelation 12 and Luke 10:18 seem to refer to the same victory over Satan's kingdom accomplished by the Kingdom of God in Jesus. Here is just the point: the victory over Satan which Jewish thought placed altogether at the end of the age has in some sense happened in history in the mission of Jesus." Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 157.

## The Kingdom Words of the Warrior King

The words of Jesus not only announce the actual arrival of the kingdom in Christ but also signal the imminent victory of the kingdom through Christ. Ladd explains the meaning of the kingdom of God in the Gospels and its relation to Jesus' discourse: "The fundamental meaning of the Kingdom of God is God's rule or reign. We have argued that the truly distinctive element in Jesus' teaching is that before God manifests his kingly reign in glory, his reign has invaded human history in advance of the eschatological consummation."<sup>68</sup> How do the words of Christ connect to his messianic fulfillment of the warrior king motif? This section argues that the kingdom words of the warrior king are: (1) marked by the proclamation of the kingdom, (2) delivered in part through the parables of the kingdom, and (3) foreshadow the persecution of the king.

First, Jesus is a warrior king who proclaims the kingdom of God as a central feature of his teachings. From the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus calls for repentance as he announces the good news of the kingdom (Mark 1:15; Matt 4:17; cf. Luke 8:1).<sup>69</sup> Likewise, the presence and proclamation of Jesus signals the presence and progress of the kingdom (Matt 3:2; 12:28; Luke 17:21).<sup>70</sup> In other words, Jesus is the

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 195.

<sup>69</sup>Torrance notes the relationship between Jesus' proclamation of the word of God and his presence as the Word of God: "Jesus not only announces the good news of the kingdom but is himself the good news." Torrance, *Incarnation*, 20. Horton adds, "Jesus not only brings the Word—he is the Word that he brings. As the Word spoken from eternity and spoken into creation, the Son of God as prophet appears in the flesh to speak a new creation out of the darkness and void of human sin." Michael S. Horton, *Lord and Servant: A Covenant Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 214–15.

<sup>70</sup>Ladd explains, "The unique element in Jesus' teaching is that in his person the Kingdom of God has invaded human history, and men are not only placed under the ethical demand of the reign of God, but by virtue of this very experience of God's reign are also enabled to realize a new measure of righteousness." Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 290.

kingdom.<sup>71</sup> Because the kingdom is central to the heart of God, seeking first the kingdom should be central to the heart of his followers (Matt 6:33; Luke 12:31).<sup>72</sup> Indeed, the kingdom of God seems to provide a foundation for Jesus' proclamation of salvation.<sup>73</sup> Jesus' teaching on the kingdom demonstrates his recognition that he fulfills the Old Testament's expectation of a warrior king who culminates the messianic promises (John 5:39; Luke 16:16; 24:27, 44-45), carries out the messianic mission (Luke 4:17-22), and fulfills the messianic longing for a shepherd-king (John 10:10-18).<sup>74</sup> Indeed, summary statements about Jesus' ministry confirm the centrality of kingdom proclamation to his messianic mission (Matt 9:35; Luke 4:43).<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Goldsworthy claims that "Jesus is the kingdom of God that has already come in a representative though potent way." Graeme Goldsworthy, "The Kingdom of God as Hermeneutic Grid," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12, no. 1 (2008): 14.

<sup>72</sup>Lloyd-Jones says, "So we have seen the meaning of 'Seek ye first'; and 'the kingdom of God', what does that mean? It means the rule of God, the reign of God. It means that God, after all, is not only the maker of this world and its controller, He is also its governor. And how vital it is that we should begin to discover something about His rule and His reign." Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 40–41.

<sup>73</sup>Ladd comments, "The Kingdom of God stands as a comprehensive term for all that the messianic salvation included." Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 70.

<sup>74</sup>Regarding John 10, Torrance explains that behind the motif of Jesus as shepherd-king "lies the Old Testament concept of the shepherd king applied to Yahweh in his relation to Israel, and the promise of the messianic shepherd when God will set up his servant David over the forsaken and oppressed sheep of his people." Torrance, *Incarnation*, 130. For more on the warfare significance of Christ as shepherd king, see Timothy Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 216; Köstenberger, *John*, 304–05.

<sup>75</sup>Ladd summarizes, "The heart of Jesus' message is that God has once again become redemptively active in history. But this new divine activity takes on an added dimension in comparison with the prophetic view: the eschatological Kingdom has itself invaded history in advance, bringing to men in the old age of sin and death the blessings of God's rule." He continues, "History has not been abandoned to evil; it has become the scene of the cosmic struggle between the Kingdom of God and the powers of evil." Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 326; Borg and Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus*, 51; Royce G. Gruenler, "Atonement in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological & Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 98.

Second, Jesus is a warrior king who uses parables to detail the nature of the messianic kingdom.<sup>76</sup> Ladd explains, “The Kingdom of God involves two great moments: fulfillment within history, and consummation at the end of history. It is precisely this background which provides the setting for the parables of the Kingdom.”<sup>77</sup> In particular, the parable of the sower (Matt 13:1-9, 18-23; Luke 8:4-8, 11-15) insists spiritual conflict marks the advance of the kingdom as the royal word of God wars against the world (Matt 13:21), the flesh (13:22), and the devil (13:19).<sup>78</sup> Jesus also likens his spiritual assault of Satan to binding and plundering a strong man (Matt 12:28-29; Mark 3:23-30; Luke 11:15-23; cf. Isa 53:12).<sup>79</sup> The parables of Christ were not simply ethical monologues designed to propagate morality. Instead, they were kingdom treatises that sought to convey the nature of the kingdom while placing it in the redemptive context of kingdom conflict (Matt 13:10-17).

Third, Jesus is a divine warrior whose teachings anticipate the persecution of the king. Immediately after Peter identifies Jesus as the messianic king (Matt 16:13-20), Jesus initially predicts his impending suffering, death and resurrection (Matt 16:21-28;

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<sup>76</sup>For more on interpreting the parables, see Robert Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 265–78; Robert H. Stein, *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1981).

<sup>77</sup>Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 218.

<sup>78</sup>Ladd describes the purpose of the parables in Matthew 13: “The mystery of the Kingdom is the coming of the Kingdom into history in advance of its apocalyptic manifestation. It is, in short, ‘fulfillment without consummation.’ This is the single truth illustrated by the several parables of Mark 4 and Matthew 13.” *Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>79</sup>Boyd points out, “Before the chains of death could be broken, the ‘strong man’ who tyrannized us with them had to be ‘tied up’ (Mt 12:29) or ‘destroyed.’ Before those imprisoned in his kingdom could be released, he had to be bound.” Boyd, *God at War*, 260. Longman and Reid state that the strong man “can be none other than Beelzebul—Satan himself. Satan as the strong man controls property that he seems to have acquired by force and now guards by strength. He must be overcome.” Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 110; Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power*, 172. Longman and Reid also note the militaristic characteristics of the strong man parable in Luke 11. Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 111.



Mark 8:31-9:1; Luke 9:22-27).<sup>80</sup> Indeed, Jesus teaches that his upcoming death is warfare-oriented as it will provide a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).<sup>81</sup> What is significant about Jesus' prediction of his own persecution and death is that it demonstrates he not only understood himself to be the expected divine warrior but also redefined the nature of his messianic kingship as one that would be marked by suffering and achieved by death.<sup>82</sup>

Both the discourse and the deeds of Christ demonstrate his role as divine warrior. The demonstration of the power of God in Christ's works confirms the declaration of the kingdom of God in Christ's words.<sup>83</sup> As Torrance points out, "Jesus Christ is one person whose word is wholly involved in his act and whose act is wholly involved in his person. We cannot therefore think of his person apart from his atoning work, or of his atoning work in abstraction from his person."<sup>84</sup> Therefore, to understand

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<sup>80</sup>Commenting on Mark 8:31, Longman and Reid note that "Jesus' thrice-repeated predictions of his death and resurrection (Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34) under divine imperative (*dei*, 8:31), as well as the ransom saying of Mark 10:45, indicate that a divine initiative also leads him toward a climactic conflict in Jerusalem." Ibid., 129. See also Mark E. Dever, "Nothing but the Blood," in *In My Place Condemned He Stood: Celebrating the Glory of the Atonement*, ed. Mark E. Dever (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 107. Other passages in which Jesus comments on his imminent suffering, death and resurrection include Matt 17:12-13; 20:17-19; Mark 8:31-9:1; 9:9, 9:12, 9:31; 10:34, 10:45; 14:21; 14:41; Luke 9:22-27, 43-45; 24:7, 26, 46; John 2:19; 10:11-18; 12:31-33; 15:13.

<sup>81</sup>Dever and Lawrence comment on the connection between the central act of war in the Old Testament, the Exodus, and Jesus' death as ransom in Mark 10:45: "From the Exodus to the sacrifices to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, Jesus understood his own death as a substitutionary ransom for his people, purchasing their freedom from the bondage of sin. So Jesus becomes our ransom." Mark Dever and Michael Lawrence, *It Is Well: Expositions on Substitutionary Atonement* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 72.

<sup>82</sup>France explains how Jesus integrates the non-political and suffering-oriented messianic expectation of Psalm 110:1 and Zechariah 9:9 into his teachings on the need for the messiah to suffer. He notes, "The least majestic and powerful of Old Testament hopes of a royal Messiah is the only one applied by Jesus to himself without qualification." France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 106.

<sup>83</sup>Ladd explains the source of conflict in both Christ's kingdom words and kingdom works: "This background of satanic evil provides the cosmic background for the mission of Jesus and his proclamation of the Kingdom of God." Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 48.

<sup>84</sup>Torrance, *Incarnation*, 37.

how Christ accomplishes the purpose of divine warfare, it is essential to examine both his incarnational ministry and his atoning death.

### **Christ the Warrior King and the Atonement**

The unfolding of kingdom warfare throughout the storyline of Scripture is moving toward the climax of the cross. The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ are the decisive activities of the warrior king through which he accomplishes salvation by not only satisfying the wrath of God but also subduing the enemies of God.<sup>85</sup> Stott recognizes the redemptive historical significance of the cross by declaring that “the victory of Christ, predicted immediately after the Fall and begun during his public ministry, was decisively won at the cross.”<sup>86</sup> This section argues that the vicarious victory of Christ is: (1) anticipated by the Passion Week, (2) accomplished by the crucifixion, (3) announced by the resurrection, and (4) affirmed by the ascension.<sup>87</sup>

### **Christ the Warrior King and the Passion Week**

The Passion Week anticipates the substitutionary victory of the warrior king as it documents the providential events that culminate in the crucifixion of Christ. The fourth Gospel frames the warfare-oriented nature of the Passion Week through the

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<sup>85</sup>Ladd claims that this focus on the defeat of the powers is “something that belongs to the solid content of the New Testament faith. This present evil age and the totality of human existence are under bondage to these evil powers, and the Kingdom of God can be realized only by their defeat and subjugation.” Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 443.

<sup>86</sup>John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 231. Ladd adds, “Jesus is fully conscious that the goal of his mission is his death.” Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 285.

<sup>87</sup>The term vicarious victory emphasizes how the atonement event is simultaneously a vicarious act of penal substitution that satisfies God’s wrath and a victorious act of triumphant conquest that defeats God’s enemies. It will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Christological lens of John 12:31-34 in which John's "lift up" atonement motif centers on Jesus casting out the ruler of the world so that he might draw all men to himself through the victory of the cross.<sup>88</sup> As the Passion Week begins with the triumphal entry (Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:38; John 12:12-19), it seems as if the nation's messianic expectation of a conquering political king would finally find its fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>89</sup> However, even in the triumphal entry, Jesus transforms the nature of messianic kingship (Mark 11:7-11).<sup>90</sup>

Yet, Israel soon turns on its triumphant king and instead seeks to destroy its long awaited deliverer. To begin with, the Pharisees plot how to kill Jesus (Matt 12:14). Then, Satan's activity in opposition to Christ progresses as he not only enters into Judas (Luke 22:3) but also desires to sift Peter like wheat (Luke 22:31).<sup>91</sup> At Jesus' arrest, he rebukes Peter for chopping off the ear of the high priest's servant because Peter does not yet understand how Christ has transformed the nature of kingdom warfare (Matt 26:52-54).<sup>92</sup> During his trial, Jesus affirms his messianic self-recognition as he admits to Pilate

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<sup>88</sup>Judith Kovacs claims, "Coming at the end of the first half of the Gospel, John 12:20-36 is a key transitional text. Scholars are agreed that these verses are an introduction to the passion story." Kovacs, "Now Shall the Ruler of This World Be Driven Out," 228. Ladd unpacks the significance of John 12:31-34: "Somehow, in a way the Evangelist does not try to describe, the death of Jesus is both an act of Satan and an act in which Jesus wins the victory over Satan." Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 192.

<sup>89</sup>Robert Reymond comments on the triumphal entry: "Jesus, quite clearly, intended that this act, in accordance with Zech. 9:9, be regarded as his public announcement that he was Israel's messianic King; and coming as he did—not on a military charger with armies behind him but on a donkey—he came as the Prince of Peace of Is. 9:6." Robert L. Reymond, *Jesus Divine Messiah: The New and Old Testament Witness* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2003), 242; Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John*, 423.

<sup>90</sup>Chester states that "on his entry into Jerusalem, Jesus portrays himself implicitly as a royal messiah, but not according to the obvious paradigm of the one who would bring deliverance to his people." Andrew Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 319; Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 173.

<sup>91</sup>Pao and Schnabel, "Luke," 384–85.

<sup>92</sup>Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," 181. Blomberg observes, "On the possibility of Jesus calling on twelve legions of angels to help him (26:53), compare and contrast 2 Kings 6:17, in

that he is the king of the Jews (Matt 27:11). Then, the soldiers mock Jesus as king of the Jews by crafting a crown of thorns (Matt 27:29; Mark 15:18). With blood trickling from his brow, the king of the universe is crowned with the mark of the curse that he has come to reverse (Gen 3:18).<sup>93</sup> After the triumphant then tragic events of the Passion Week, “any contemporary observer who saw Christ die would have listened with astonished incredulity to the claim that the Crucified was a Conqueror.”<sup>94</sup> But the New Testament affirms that this unlikely conquest is precisely what occurs on the cross.

### **Christ the Warrior King and the Crucifixion**

The crucifixion of the warrior king is the most paradoxical event in redemptive history. Christ becomes a victor only because he has become a victim.<sup>95</sup> He becomes a champion only because he has been condemned.<sup>96</sup> He conquers only because he has been

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which Elijah told the kings to look and see the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around them.” Craig L. Blomberg, “Matthew,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 93.

<sup>93</sup>Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement*, trans. A. G. Hebert (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 115.

<sup>94</sup>Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 223.

<sup>95</sup>Stott states, “Crushed by the ruthless power of Rome, he was himself crushing the serpent’s head (Gen 3:15). The victim was the victor, and the cross is still the throne from which he rules the world.” *Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>96</sup>Packer recognizes the connection between Christ as champion and as substitute by relating it to king David: “Yet, seeing Jesus as our champion, exponents of this view could still properly call him our substitute, just as all the Israelites who declined Goliath’s challenge in 1 Samuel 17:8-11 could properly call David their substitute.” He continues, “Just as a substitute who involves others in the consequences of his action, as if they had done it themselves, is their representative, so a representative discharging the obligations of those whom he represents is their substitute. What this type of account of the cross affirms (though it is not usually put in these terms) is that the conquering Christ, whose victory secured our release, was our representative substitute.” J. I. Packer, “What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution,” in *In My Place Condemned He Stood: Celebrating the Glory of the Atonement*, ed. Mark Dever (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 72.

crushed.<sup>97</sup> He succeeds only because he has been sacrificed.<sup>98</sup> The Scriptures certainly present the atonement of Christ as an act of penal substitution by which he satisfies God's righteous wrath on behalf of sinners.<sup>99</sup> This section focuses, instead, on how the warfare worldview of the New Testament portrays the conquest that results from the warrior king's substitutionary sacrifice.<sup>100</sup>

Royalty and revilement both characterize the crucifixion accounts in the New Testament narratives. As soldiers staple Jesus to a Roman instrument of torture, the sign "King of the Jews," which indicates his crime, speaks better than onlookers realize (Mark 15:26; Matt 27:37; Luke 23:38). Spectators echo Satan's third wilderness temptation as they mock him (Matt 4:8-10). They claim that if he is the messiah and king of Israel, he should save himself by establishing his kingdom apart from the cross (Mark 15:32). From the cross, Jesus offers a final victory shout, "It is finished," before he gives up his spirit (John 19:30).<sup>101</sup> Yet, the apostle Peter makes clear that, though the crucifixion of Christ

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<sup>97</sup>Gruenler explains, "The Gospel of Moses and the Synoptic Gospels share the common theme of the conquest of hostile space by the deliverance figure Moses and Jesus. In Jesus' conquest of demonic space the typological drama of atonement is intensified, as the typology of geopolitical space and salvation so dominant in the Mosaic motif gives way to the deeper action on the stage of redemptive history through Jesus' invasion and binding of demonic forces that hold humanity in spiritual bondage." Gruenler, "Atonement in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts," 98.

<sup>98</sup>Jesus is the sacrificial lamb of God (John 1:29) who also succeeds in conquering Satan (John 12:31-34). Köstenberger, *John*, 68; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 152-53.

<sup>99</sup>For more on the concept of penal substitutionary atonement, see Thomas R. Schreiner, "Penal Substitution View," in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, ed. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 67-98; Packer, "What Did the Cross Achieve?"; Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007).

<sup>100</sup>The emphasis on the atonement's victory motif in this section is not intended to neglect the primacy of penal substitution or the presence of other themes emerging from the cross. Instead, because of space limitations, it focuses on the conquest motif because it is most relevant to this study on the relationship between the divine warrior theme and Christology.

<sup>101</sup>Stott reports, "The middle cry, the loud shout of victory, is in the Gospel text the single word *tetelestai*." Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 84.

was carried out by lawless men, the vicarious victory of the warrior king resulted from the definite plan of God (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28).<sup>102</sup> As the second Adam and faithful Israelite, Jesus dies on a tree to reverse the curse, satisfy the law, and defeat the enemies of God (Acts 5:30; 10:39; cf. Gal 3:13; 6:15).<sup>103</sup> Echoing the descriptions of the divine warrior's cosmic victories in the Old Testament, the conquest of the messianic warrior king on the cross coincides with earthquakes that signal cataclysmic conflict (Matt 27:51).<sup>104</sup>

In the Pauline literature, the apostle affirms the vicarious triumph that Christ achieves on the cross.<sup>105</sup> A warfare worldview characterizes Paul's letters in general and his writing on the atonement in particular.<sup>106</sup> Apart from Christ, humans are under the authority of Satan, the god of this world (2 Cor 4:4).<sup>107</sup> The cross defeats Satan because it

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<sup>102</sup>Longman and Reid point out, "Jesus, by the will and design of God, dies at the climax of eschatological battle, absorbing the piercing darkness of the great tribulation and suffering the wrath of God for many." Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 131. Further discussion of how these verses fit into a Christ-centered approach to providence will occur in the next chapter.

<sup>103</sup>Longman and Reid also note that "Christ absorbed the eschatological judgment of the divine warrior against Israel and so brought redemption for his people. Christ died by hanging on a tree in his own land. The full force of the divine warrior's wrath was unleashed against this representative of Israel." They continue, "Through the cross, the eschatological in-breaking of God's judgment, there emerged a new creation (Gal 6:15). The exile and restoration of Israel were transmogrified into the death and resurrection of Christ." *Ibid.*, 162; Borg and Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus*, 51.

<sup>104</sup>Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 132.

<sup>105</sup>Commenting on the Pauline literature, Ladd states, "Paul says almost as little about the Kingdom of God as he does about the messiahship of Jesus, but both are fundamental doctrines to his thought." Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 450.

<sup>106</sup>Letham writes, "In a narrow sense, Paul's focus on the kingdom theme becomes sharper and clearer, despite the fact that the characteristic phraseology of the synoptics is largely absent." Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 73. Alexander adds that the theme of Jesus' conflict with Satan "also lies at the heart of the apostle Paul's writings." Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 115. See also Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 165; Boyd, *God at War*, 269.

<sup>107</sup>Ferguson states, "Unbelievers are held in the grip of Satan (2 Cor 4:4). Only once delivered from the cavernous maze in which the Evil One imprisons them can they ever be brought out into the light of Christ. Implied, then, in Paul's teaching is the *Christus Victor* motif that he spells out in Colossians 2:14-15. But here, as there, it is the atoning exchange of our guilt for his righteousness as the basis for

shatters his power of accusation by satisfying the wrath of God toward sin (Col 2:13-15).<sup>108</sup> As a result, sinners can be rescued from the kingdom of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of Christ through faith union with him (Col 1:13-14).<sup>109</sup> The atonement inaugurates the eschatological kingdom, but it will not be fully consummated until Christ's return (1 Cor 15:22-28).<sup>110</sup> In light of these texts, it seems as if the apostle Paul sees the significance of the atonement in the context of a kingdom-oriented warfare worldview.

The remainder of the New Testament offers additional insights about the warfare-oriented nature of the crucifixion. As in Colossians 2:13-15, they link the personal propitiation of God's wrath with the cosmic defeat of God's enemies in such a

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reconciliation that simultaneously grounds both forensic justification and spiritual emancipation." Sinclair B. Ferguson, "Preaching the Atonement," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological & Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 436.

<sup>108</sup>Schreiner says that Christ's death is the means by which "the entire universe is pacified and domesticated. He has defeated evil powers through his death, so that they can no longer rise in rebellion against God (Col. 2:15)." Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 365. Colossians 2 confirms what Jesus has already claimed in John 14:30—the ruler of this world has no legal claim on Christ because of his sinlessness. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 585; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 508–9; Köstenberger, *John*, 445.

<sup>109</sup>Russell Moore adds, "Redemption is the transfer from the satanic kingdom to the eschatological Kingdom that God the Father has prepared for His Messiah (Col 1:13), a transfer that is by definition a violent act of subduing 'the god of this age' (2 Cor 4:3-4, NIV) or 'the prince of the power of the air' (Eph 2:1-7)." Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 106; Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 451.

<sup>110</sup>According to N. T. Wright, 1 Corinthians 15 displays the image of "a king establishing his kingdom by subduing all possible enemies. Paul is careful to stress both that Jesus will rule until every single power in the cosmos has been subjected to him and that God the Father is not included in that category." He adds, "Whatever we say about the implied Christology of the passage, Paul is clearly articulating a theology of *new creation*. Every force, every authority in the whole cosmos, will be subjected to the Messiah, and finally death itself will give up its power." N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 99; Roger Nicole, "Postscript on Penal Substitution," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological & Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 449; David E. Garland, "1 Corinthians," in *Theological Interpretation of the New Testament: A Book-by-Book Survey*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 106.

way that penal substitution provides the foundation for victorious conquest.<sup>111</sup> Likewise, Hebrews 2:14-17 points out that the crucifixion of Christ occurs so that the warrior king might destroy the devil and deliver those in captivity to him.<sup>112</sup> The Revelation integrates kingdom warfare imagery throughout its apocalyptic content (Rev 12:1-12).<sup>113</sup> In Revelation 5:9-10, John records the new song in which the redeemed celebrate the lamb because his shed blood has ransomed people from all nations and provided the foundation for his kingdom reign.<sup>114</sup> This victory over the enemies of God is only possible because the warrior king has defeated death through his atonement and resurrection.

### **Christ the Warrior King and the Resurrection**

The resurrection of the warrior king announces his victory as it inaugurates the new creation kingdom of Christ.<sup>115</sup> The New Testament presents the resurrection as a

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<sup>111</sup>Richard Gaffin, "Atonement in the Pauline Corpus," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological & Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 159.

<sup>112</sup>Kistemaker comments, "He underwent death to destroy Satan, who held the power of death, first to liberate those enslaved by the devil (Heb 2:14-15), and second to nullify their spiritual death sentence." Simon J. Kistemaker, "Atonement in Hebrews," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological & Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 173. Green and Baker add, "In Hebrews 2:14-15 the death of Jesus is also positioned against the life-threatening powers of evil. Jesus' death, that is, declares the power of the devil null and void." Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament & Contemporary Contexts* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000), 83.

<sup>113</sup>Green and Baker state, "A further key component of John's interpretation of the death of Jesus is its effectiveness in defeating evil. Revelation places the drama of salvation on the cosmic stage, so that the slaughter of the Lamb wins a cosmic victory. The technology of this warfare goes unidentified; specifically how the cross overcomes evil is not developed." Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 81. While John may not specify the "technology of this warfare" (i.e. penal substitution) in Revelation, it is clear in the Gospel of John and throughout the New Testament. See Köstenberger, *John*, 68.

<sup>114</sup>Green and Baker write, "Jesus is the conquering Messiah, and the manner of his victory is his slaughter. Jesus' death is evil's defeat." Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 81.

<sup>115</sup>Stott asserts that "the resurrection was *the conquest confirmed and announced*. We are not to regard the cross as defeat and the resurrection as victory. Rather, the cross was the victory won, and the



historical event (Matt 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-10) in which the lifeless body of Jesus is revived as the first fruits of God's eschatological new creation (1 Cor 15:20-21).<sup>116</sup> Letham rightly notes that the conquest theme "brings the death and resurrection of Christ into a harmonious unity, an unmistakable theme of the New Testament."<sup>117</sup> Indeed, Jesus regards himself as "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25).<sup>118</sup> Thus, the resurrection is an essential part of the gospel story (1 Cor 15:1-11).<sup>119</sup>

The resurrection carries significant implications for the kingdom warfare motif in general and the messianic fulfillment of the warrior king theme in particular. First, it demonstrates the cosmic nature of God's rescue mission. Christ establishes a new creation kingdom as the firstborn from the dead (Col 1:18-20).<sup>120</sup> Second, it reveals the

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resurrection the victory endorsed, proclaimed and demonstrated." Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 231. By suggesting that the resurrection's role is announcing victory, this does not eliminate the idea that the resurrection contributes to the actual achieving of conquest. Instead, it merely emphasizes that a primary function of the resurrection is to declare to the cosmos that Christ has conquered (Rom 1:3).

<sup>116</sup>For a defense of the historicity of the resurrection, see N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 685–718; William Lane Craig, "Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?," in *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus*, ed. Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 141–76.

<sup>117</sup>Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 151. Though his treatment of the atonement is not theologically sound, C. H. Dodd rightly recognizes the intimate connection between the cross and resurrection, "That which happened, on the historical plane, and by happening changed the setting of human life in this world is not simply the death of Christ, but His death-and-resurrection, as one complete event." C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 439.

<sup>118</sup>Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 412; Köstenberger, *John*, 335.

<sup>119</sup>Specifically, Wright claims, "Without the resurrection, there is no reason to suppose that Jesus' crucifixion dealt with sins, or with sin. But, with the resurrection, the divine victory over sin(s), and hence over death, is assured." Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 320. Referring to 1 Corinthians 15, Ladd claims that "Paul portrays the entire mission of Jesus in terms of his Kingdom or reign, and associates the Kingdom of God with the resurrection and salvation." Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 450.

<sup>120</sup>N. T. Wright comments, "The resurrection thus opens the door to a new world: a new mode of life for the whole cosmos and for all who will dwell in it here and hereafter." Borg and Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus*, 127. He also recognizes the connection between the cosmic and personal implications of the resurrection: "Philippians 3, though it is primarily speaking of human resurrection, indicates that this

inaugurated nature of Christ's kingdom. The eschatological kingdom breaks into the present through the resurrection (1 Cor 15:20-28).<sup>121</sup> Third, it emphasizes the declarative nature of Christ's defeat of death. His rising affirms his messiahship and announces his victory over the enemies of God (Rom 1:3-4).<sup>122</sup> Fourth, it confirms the essential nature of the resurrection. It is a pivotal component of the gospel that is crucial for salvation (Rom 10:9) and necessary in evangelism (1 Cor 15:1-11).<sup>123</sup> It is through the resurrection that Jesus completes the new Exodus.<sup>124</sup> After Jesus rises from the dead as an announcement of his triumph, he then ascends to the Father to receive the exaltation his messianic conquest deserves.

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will take place within the context of God's victorious transformation of the whole cosmos." Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 101.

<sup>121</sup>Bauckham explains that the resurrection "puts the cross in the context of an eschatological story that is not finished until the coming of the kingdom in power." Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 268. Letham adds, "The purpose of Christ's mediatorial reign is therefore to subdue his enemies. Death is the last enemy, already dealt the death blow in Christ's resurrection, but to be eliminated finally when he comes back." Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 73. On the resurrection in 1 Cor 15:20-28 and the inaugurated nature of eschatology, see Garland, "1 Corinthians," 106.

<sup>122</sup>Stott maintains that "Christ's work of sin-bearing was finished on the cross, that the victory over the devil, sin and death was won there, and that the resurrection was to vindicate the Jesus whom men had rejected, to declare with power that he is the Son of God, and publicly to confirm that his sin-bearing death had been effective for the forgiveness of sins." Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 233.

<sup>123</sup>Stott contributes, "To sum up, the gospel includes both the death and the resurrection of Jesus, since nothing would have been accomplished by his death if he had not been raised from it. Yet the gospel emphasizes the cross, since it was there that the victory was accomplished. The resurrection did not achieve our deliverance from sin and death, but has brought us an assurance of both." *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>124</sup>Wright comments, "Jesus' death and resurrection, in other words, function as the moment of the new Exodus, of the 'return' from the long exile of sin and death, of the overthrow of all the powers that enslaved the world, and those who do not belong to the Messiah share the benefits of all this." Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 239.

## Christ the Warrior King and the Ascension

Though the ascension is often neglected in discussions of the atonement event, it affirms the transition from Christ's humiliation and resurrection to his position of exaltation as the reigning warrior king.<sup>125</sup> Torrance claims, "The ascension is the inauguration of the kingdom of Christ and of his heavenly rule over all the powers in the universe."<sup>126</sup> Jesus predicts it by declaring that he will ascend to "my Father and your Father" (John 20:17)—a statement that indicates he will share the inheritance he has rightly received from God with his followers.<sup>127</sup> The warfare significance of the ascension is evident in both Christ's pre-ascension commission to his followers and his exaltation to the right hand of the Father.<sup>128</sup>

There is a close link between the ascension and the great commission. The divine warrior equips his followers with a battle plan before his departure.<sup>129</sup> According

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<sup>125</sup>John recognizes exaltation not only in the ascension but also in the crucifixion itself, as Schreiner notes: "John particularly emphasizes that the cross is the pathway to victory, for he describes it as a lifting up, as Jesus' glorification, and as his going to the Father. The cross, in other words, cannot be separated from Jesus' exaltation." He then ties this theme to warfare: "Indeed, the cross is the very means by which Jesus is exalted and victorious over all. The cross leads to the crown." Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 288.

<sup>126</sup>Robert T. Walker, "Editor's Introduction," in *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), liii.

<sup>127</sup>This inheritance includes a global fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise of land in which "the inheritance promised to Abraham is nothing less than possession of the entire world (Rom. 4:13)." Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 376. For more on how believers receive this inheritance in Christ, see Russell D. Moore, *Adopted for Life: The Priority of Adoption for Christian Families & Churches* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 46–48.

<sup>128</sup>Kovacs comments on John's understanding of the ascension by stating that "the Fourth Evangelist sees the death, resurrection, and ascent of Jesus as the turning point in the conflict between God and the forces of evil." Kovacs, "'Now Shall the Ruler of This World Be Driven Out,'" 231.

<sup>129</sup>Chapter 5 will briefly discuss the significance of the great commission for the church. Longman and Reid note, "Matthew's use of the divine-warrior motif culminates in a scene suggesting the enthronement of the victorious Christ. Jesus is exalted to the position of universal sovereign (Mt 28:18b), the heralds are sent forth to proclaim his kingship (28:19-20a), and the security of his enthronement is

to Matthew 28:18, all authority “in heaven and earth” has been given to Christ, such that his rulership includes power over both the spiritual realm and the nations because of the victory he has inaugurated.<sup>130</sup> Based on the authority he has asserted and transferred to the church in Matthew 28:18, the great commission documents the command of the warrior king as he instructs his people on how to carry out his mission (28:19-20).<sup>131</sup> Finally, it promises the presence of the ascended Christ who will fight on behalf of his missional community until victory is finally consummated.<sup>132</sup>

The ascension is the event at which the divine warrior commemorates the decisive defeat of his kingdom rivals by assuming the position of exaltation at the right hand of the Father. Before his ascension, the disciples’ final question is about the nature of the kingdom (Acts 1:6). His final charge is a kingly commission (Acts 1:8).<sup>133</sup> Then, Christ is lifted up on the clouds in triumph (Acts 1:9) and ascends to the right hand of the Father (Luke 24:51; Mark 16:19).<sup>134</sup> Later commentary on the event indicates that the warrior king was exalted at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33), taken up in glory (1

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assured to the end of the age (28:20b). The ancient pattern of the divine warrior’s triumph and enthronement has shaped the turning of the ages.” Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 134.

<sup>130</sup>As Dempster says, the Great Commission reveals that the “suffering Davidic Messiah has been exalted and given authority over not just an Israelite kingdom but the globe.” Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 233.

<sup>131</sup>Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Jesus and the Twelve* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 1:348–67.

<sup>132</sup>Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 97.

<sup>133</sup>Longman and Reid point out, “In Acts, the account of the ascension is retold as the climactic event of the story of Jesus (Ac 1:1-11).” Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 134.

<sup>134</sup>Longman and Reid comment that “the two steps in Jesus’ victory—resurrection and ascension—are bound together in Luke’s narrative. In fact, the goal of Jesus’ ministry appears to be his victorious ascent into glory (an event referred to earlier in Luke as an *Exodus* [Gk *Exodus*], cf. 9:31, 51).” Ibid.

Tim 3:16), and passed through the heavens as the great high priest (Heb 4:14).<sup>135</sup> As the ascension event concludes, it closes with an angelic promise that Christ will return in the same way he departed (Acts 1:11).<sup>136</sup> As a result of the exaltation that occurs at the ascension, Peter proclaims the messianic kingship of Jesus as “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).<sup>137</sup> After achieving victory in the atonement, announcing victory in the resurrection, and affirming victory in the ascension, the divine warrior continues to fight for his people through the spiritual warfare of the church.

### **Christ the Warrior King and the Church**

The church age does not signal the end of Christ’s warfare. Instead, it launches a new phase of Christ-centered conflict. Christ the warrior king continues to battle through his church against the forces of evil. This section argues that the characteristics of Christ the warrior king’s conquest through the church include: (1) the foundation of the church by Christ, (2) the rivals of the church against Christ, (3) the unity of the church in Christ, and (4) the warfare of the church through Christ.

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<sup>135</sup>Reymond explains that his ascension was “the means to his climactic exaltation and enthronement (*sessio*) at the Father’s right hand as Holy One, Lord, Christ, Prince, and Savior of the world (Acts 2:27, 33-36; 5:31; Rom 8:34; Col 3:1; Phil 2:9-11; Heb 1:3).” Reymond, *Jesus Divine Messiah*, 397.

<sup>136</sup>Reymond adds, “With respect to Christ himself, the Scriptures virtually exhaust available ‘triumphalist’ language, images, and metaphors, to describe the significance of Christ’s ascension for him.” Ibid.

<sup>137</sup>Ladd expresses, “The exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of God means nothing less than his enthronement as messianic King.” Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 372.

## **Christ the Warrior King and the Church's Foundation**

The church's one foundation is Christ the warrior king. He anticipates the kingdom community of the church, establishes the kingdom community of the church, and relates the kingdom community of the church to the kingdom itself. Jesus foretells of the church after questioning the disciples about his messianic identity (Matt 16:13-20).<sup>138</sup> Peter identifies Jesus as the messianic son of God who the Old Testament anticipated (Matt 16:16; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20; cf. 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7). Responding to Peter's confession, Jesus asserts two things about the foundation of the church in Matthew 16:18.<sup>139</sup> (1) It will be built upon "this rock," which seems to be best understood as referring to Peter as a representative of the apostles and prophets. (2) With significant kingdom warfare implications, Jesus expects that the church will persevere against the assaults of the enemy because of Christ's impending victory (Matt 16:18).<sup>140</sup>

The warrior king not only anticipates the church but also establishes this kingdom community at Pentecost. Beginning at Pentecost, Christ as divine warrior now initiates the church to advance the kingdom by carrying out his militant mission by the power of the Spirit.<sup>141</sup> The risen messiah first clarifies the nature of the kingdom to his

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<sup>138</sup>Boyd says that Jesus "used Peter's confession of faith to give his disciples an important lesson about the future church." Boyd, *God at War*, 216.

<sup>139</sup>Dever asserts, "Jesus Christ founded his own assembly, his own church. According to the Gospels, Christ first names his people 'my church' in Matthew 16:18. As Adam named his bride, so Christ named the church." Mark E. Dever, "The Church," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 771.

<sup>140</sup>Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 41.

<sup>141</sup>Torrance points out the relationship between the ascension and Pentecost: "Through the ascension of Christ to reign, through the pouring out of his Spirit, God delivers the church not only from the powers of darkness but translates it into the kingdom of his dear Son." Torrance, *Atonement*, 279.

disciples (Acts 1:6-7) and then gives them a global kingdom mission (Acts 1:8).<sup>142</sup> Next, as the first act of warfare after his ascension (Acts 1:9-11), Christ pours out his Spirit upon the church at Pentecost as an initial taste of the spoils of victory (Acts 2:33).<sup>143</sup> Just as Moses ascended to receive the gift of God's law in order to give it to his people (Exod 31:18), Jesus as the prophet greater than Moses ascends to receive the gift of God's Spirit in order to give it to his people (Acts 2:33; Eph 4:8).<sup>144</sup> In light of these developments at Pentecost, it seems as if the victory gift of the Spirit is not only the fundamental sign of Christ's conquest but also the foundational source of the church's ongoing triumph.<sup>145</sup>

The church is the eschatological community of the kingdom that is founded by the warrior king. But what is the relationship between the church and the kingdom?<sup>146</sup> Answering this question has tremendous bearing on how the divine warrior implements

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<sup>142</sup>John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26, New American Commentary (Nashville: B & H, 1992), 84–85.

<sup>143</sup>Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 59. Lints comments on the connection between the ascension and Pentecost, "The inauguration of Christ's kingdom occurred at Pentecost in Acts as a result of the ascension of Jesus recorded in Acts 1 and as predicted in John 14-16. When Jesus ascended to heaven, he ascended to be crowned king. His kingdom was established now in the hearts of those whom he called and calls to himself and will later be established in the new heavens and the new earth." Lints, *The Fabric of Theology*, 308.

<sup>144</sup>Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, *Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 162.

<sup>145</sup>Moore declares, "Israel is indeed anointed with the messianic Spirit, but only one Israelite receives the Spirit—and pours the promise out then upon all who are 'in Him.'" Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 119.

<sup>146</sup>Ladd summarizes the position that this chapter embraces: "If the dynamic concept of the Kingdom is correct, it is never to be identified with the church. The Kingdom is primarily the dynamic reign or kingly rule of God, and derivatively, the sphere in which the rule is experienced. In biblical idiom, the Kingdom is not identified with its subjects. They are the people of God's rule who enter it, live under it, and are governed by it." He continues, "The church is the community of the Kingdom but never the Kingdom itself. Jesus' disciples belong to the Kingdom as the Kingdom belongs to them; but they are not the Kingdom. The Kingdom is the rule of God; the church is a society of men." Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 262.

kingdom warfare during this point in the storyline of Scripture.<sup>147</sup> Ladd identifies multiple aspects of the relationship between the church and the kingdom.<sup>148</sup> Though the church and the kingdom are mutually dependent, they are also distinct.<sup>149</sup> The present reign of Christ is currently exercised over the church.<sup>150</sup> As a result, while the church is not the full embodiment of the kingdom, it is indispensable to the advancement of the kingdom.<sup>151</sup> Functioning as the eschatological outpost of the kingdom, the church wages war against the enemies of Christ the warrior king.

### **Christ the Warrior King and the Church's Rivals**

Christ the warrior king continues to battle on behalf of the church against his rivals. These enemies are not new. Instead, the same kingdom rivals that have opposed the rulership of God throughout redemptive history continue to war against the church—

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<sup>147</sup>Longman and Reid state, “But in the meantime, the people of the Messiah stand between two episodes—climax and resolution—in the eschatological warfare, enjoying the benefits and advantage of Christ’s defeat of the enemy at the cross (Ro 8:37).” Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 137.

<sup>148</sup>Ladd suggests five components of the connection between the church and the kingdom: (1) the church is not the kingdom, (2) the kingdom creates the church, (3) the church as witness of the kingdom, (4) the church as instrument of the kingdom, and (5) the church as custodian of the kingdom. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 111-19; idem, *The Presence of the Future*, 262-77.

<sup>149</sup>Ladd remarks, “There can be no Kingdom without a church—those who have acknowledged God’s rule—and there can be no church without God’s Kingdom; but they remain two distinguishable concepts: the rule of God and the fellowship of men and women.” Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 117; idem, *The Presence of the Future*, 277.

<sup>150</sup>Moore discloses, “The reign of Christ is focused in this age solely on His reign as Messiah over the people called into the Kingdom, namely, those who make up the church.” Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 152. Letham adds, “His kingdom is the reality in which the church functions here and now.” Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 73.

<sup>151</sup>Ladd observes, “The Kingdom of God necessarily involves the church. The church is the people of the Kingdom, those who have accepted the redemptive rule of God. The rule of a King must have a people, and the church consists of those who have received the Kingdom of God (Mark 10:15), i.e., who have bowed before God’s rule in Christ and have been brought thereby into that sphere of life over which Christ reigns.” George Eldon Ladd, “The Kingdom of God and the Church,” *Foundations* 4 (1961): 168.



the world, the flesh, and the devil.<sup>152</sup> Those who are enemies of the divine warrior are also rivals of the eschatological community of the kingdom.<sup>153</sup> First, the world comprises those kingdom rivals including possessions, popularity, and pleasures, which lure the church's soldiers toward an idolatrous pursuit of earthly pleasures apart from Christ.<sup>154</sup> Also, the persecution of the world exposes false faith and causes it to wither because it is not rooted in the gospel (Matt 13:20-21). Though the world hates believers (John 15:19) because they are not of the world (John 17:14), the church finds comfort in the warrior king who has overcome the world (John 16:33) and has prayed that they are protected from the evil one (John 17:15).<sup>155</sup> Because believers are united to this world-subduing messiah, they are more than conquerors over all opposition (Rom 8:31-39).<sup>156</sup>

Second, while the world constitutes an external threat to the church, the flesh provides an internal threat to followers of the warrior king. Worries and wants, cares and

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<sup>152</sup>Barnhouse explains the origin of this threefold distinction: "The oldest usage of this triple division of the field of attack is to be found in *The Book of Common Prayer* in a prayer for an infant, 'Grant that he may have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph, against the devil, the world, and the flesh.'" Donald Grey Barnhouse, *The Invisible War: The Panorama of the Continuing Conflict between Good and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 172.

<sup>153</sup>Tidball writes, "The world, the flesh, and the devil combine to form a strong three-stranded opposition to Christian believers, aimed at preventing our progress in holiness." Derek Tidball, *The Message of Holiness, The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 258.

<sup>154</sup>Tidball asserts that the world is the "organized system of values that are opposed to God, which are adopted and supported by people who are under the influence of the evil one." *Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>155</sup>Christ overcomes the world comes through his substitutionary victory: "Even the language of warfare and victory (John 16:33; Col. 2:15) is imbued with substitutionary overtones. These passages recognize the reality of the spiritual struggle that we are involved in and present Christ's death on our behalf as a crucial element in God's victory." Dever, "Nothing but the Blood," 107; Köstenberger, *John*, 480-81.

<sup>156</sup>Commenting on this passage, MacLaren declares, "Mark how the Apostle, in his lofty and enthusiastic way, is not content here with simply saying that he and his fellows conquer. It would be a poor thing, he seems to think, if the balance barely inclined to our side, if the victory were but just won by a hair's breadth and triumph were snatched, as it were, out of the very jaws of defeat." He then connects the conquering to believers' union with Christ: "There must be something more than that to correspond to the power of the victorious Christ that is in us." Alexander MacLaren, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Expositions of Holy Scripture* (New York: Armstrong, 1909), 204.

covetousness wage guerilla warfare against the church to distract believers from seeing and savoring Christ above all that the world has to offer. For those who are not grounded in the gospel, the cares of the flesh choke out the word (Matt 13:22). Christians should replace the worries and wants that drive those apart from Christ (Matt 6:25-32; 13:21-22) with a militant pursuit of the kingdom and its righteousness (Matt 6:33-34).<sup>157</sup> Though Christ has already rescued believers from the kingdom of darkness through his vicarious victory (Col 1:13-14), they continue to war against fleshly desires by the power of the Spirit until that victory is fully consummated (Rom 8:13; 2 Cor 10:3-5).<sup>158</sup>

Third, the chief adversary of the divine warrior and his kingdom community is the devil himself. The storyline of Scripture describes Satan as a fallen angel (2 Pet 2:4; cf. Isa 14:12-15), a cunning serpent (Gen 3:1-6), a prowling lion (1 Pet 5:8), and a devouring dragon (Rev 12:3).<sup>159</sup> He is the “god of this world” (2 Cor 4:4), the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2), and the father of lies (John 8:44) who is the strong man (Luke 11:22) that has usurped the authority invested to God’s viceregents so that he has authority over the kingdoms of this world (Matt 4:8; 1 John 5:19).<sup>160</sup> Boyd states, “The

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<sup>157</sup>Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 290. Tidball adds that “when the flesh wins a temporary skirmish, we must realize that whatever Satan, the accuser, says, we are not defeated. In repentance and faith our unbroken union with Christ is renewed.” Tidball, *The Message of Holiness*, 256.

<sup>158</sup>Ladd says that “if Jesus is the Messiah and has brought to his people the messianic salvation, something has changed. The Kingdom of Christ must already be a present reality into which people have been brought, even if the world cannot see it (Col. 1:13).” Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 407; Longman, “The Case for Spiritual Continuity,” 186.

<sup>159</sup>Arnold asserts, “The devil is an intelligent, powerful spirit-being that is thoroughly evil and is directly involved in perpetrating evil in the lives of individuals as well as on a much larger scale.” Clinton E. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 35.

<sup>160</sup>Boyd, *God at War*, 181–82. Jesus contrasts each of these depictions of the devil. For example, Köstenberger comments on Satan as the father of lies by noting that “Jesus and the devil are presented as complete opposites.” Köstenberger, *John*, 267; Ben Witherington III, *John’s Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 178.

‘kingdom of God,’ as Jesus uses the term, refers to nothing other than his ministry, and the ministry he gave to his disciples, of setting up God’s rule where previously there had been Satan’s rule.”<sup>161</sup> Therefore, Christ the warrior king continues to carry out this mission through the church against his arch-rival Satan.

Scripture makes clear that Satan staffs an army of demonic forces who join him in his efforts to subvert the kingdom of Christ. However, various contemporary scholars have interpreted the nature of the principalities and powers in an assortment of manners.<sup>162</sup> Some proponents, following the lead of C. Peter Wagner, focus on the strategic-level spiritual warfare of the church as it battles against territorial spirits through intercessory prayer.<sup>163</sup> Other advocates, following the direction of Walter Wink, mythologize the church’s warfare and see its enemies as impersonal, social structures.<sup>164</sup> Still others, as characterized by Clinton Arnold, center on the church’s conflict with

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<sup>161</sup>He continues, “If ‘the kingdom of God’ was the central concept of Jesus’ ministry and teaching, as all scholars recognize, then the ‘kingdom of Satan’ was, as a corollary concept, central as well.” Boyd, *God at War*, 185.

<sup>162</sup>For a biblical and historical analysis of the divergent approaches to the principalities and powers in contemporary literature, see Landon Coleman, “Principalities and Powers: A Historical and Biblical Study with Strategic Application in North American Churches” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010).

<sup>163</sup>C. Peter Wagner, ed., *Territorial Spirits: Insights into Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare* (Chichester: Sovereign Word, 1992); C. Peter Wagner, *Confronting the Powers: How the New Testament Church Experienced the Power of Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1996).

<sup>164</sup>Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986). For a critique of Wink’s mythologization, see Boyd, *God at War*, 274–75. However, Boyd elsewhere discusses the “demonic dimension of all fallen social structures.” Gregory A. Boyd, “Christus Victor View,” in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, ed. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 48. For a precursor to the approach that Wink later popularized, see G. B. Caird, *Principalities and Powers: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956).

personal, spiritual forces, especially as understood in its first century context.<sup>165</sup> Passages that deal with this vast demonic army seem to indicate that they are personal, spiritual forces of evil who rival against the kingdom of Christ to preserve their parasitic reign (Eph 6:10-12).<sup>166</sup> They battle against the church by sending false teachers (1 Tim 4:1; 2 Pet 2:1), sowing false converts (1 John 2:19), and supporting false faith (Jas 2:14-22). Despite these kingdom rivals, the church demonstrates that it is the community of the divine warrior through its unity.

### **Christ the Warrior King and the Church's Unity**

Christ the warrior king's vicarious victory over his kingdom rivals reveals itself in the unity of the church. The eschatological community experiences the unity of the kingdom because believers have been united to the divine warrior by faith.<sup>167</sup> As those who have been adopted into the family of God through spiritual warfare (Eph 1:5; Rom 8:15), the church is a band of brothers rooted in Christ that assaults the kingdom of darkness.<sup>168</sup> United to Christ, the church experiences a unity of position—the warrior

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<sup>165</sup>Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians, Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians in Light of Its Historical Setting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*. While Arnold's examination of the powers within the first century context of Ephesians is helpful, he seems to over-emphasize issues related to magic and astrology occurring in Ephesus, especially because he fails to account for the circular nature of Ephesians. For example, see Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 149. Despite this weakness, Arnold is the most helpful resource on the powers in Ephesians.

<sup>166</sup>Boyd claims that "this demonic alien army is vast in number and global in influence." Boyd, *God at War*, 182.

<sup>167</sup>Letham contributes, "We have died; sin and death can extract nothing more from us since the full penalty has been paid. In union with us, Christ has finally and ultimately blunted the edge of their weaponry. God in Christ has accomplished the reconciliation and we now await the full realization of what he has done." Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 155.

<sup>168</sup>Clowney, *The Church*, 44. For more on adoption as warfare, see Moore, *Adopted for Life*.

king forms its identity (2 Cor 6:18).<sup>169</sup> United to Christ, the church experiences a unity of possession—the warrior king secures its inheritance (Rom 8:15-17).<sup>170</sup> United to Christ, the church experiences a unity of purpose—the warrior king directs its activity (Rev 1:5-6).<sup>171</sup>

In Scripture, the unity of the church is an act of war that manifests itself on several fronts. First, the church demonstrates unity as the shed blood of the servant king destroys the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:11-22).<sup>172</sup> Though Israel warred against the Gentiles in the Old Testament to preserve the messianic seed, faith in the warrior king now unifies these former rivals in a way that manifests God’s wisdom to his rivals (Eph 3:10).<sup>173</sup> Second, the church exemplifies unity as kingdom citizens resist the demonic pull toward self-preservation and instead demonstrate others-oriented love by doing good to one another (Gal 6:10).<sup>174</sup> Third, the church demonstrates unity through the reconciliation of racial and socio-economic divisions in the kingdom community and

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<sup>169</sup>Boda describes the church’s identity as “in the line of David as vice-regents of God on earth.” Boda, *After God’s Own Heart*, 4.

<sup>170</sup>Stott asserts, “If God has placed all things under Christ’s feet, they must be under ours too, if we are in him.” Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 235.

<sup>171</sup>Letham notes, “We simply are enabled to share in Christ’s own priesthood just as, being a kingdom, we share in his rule over the kings of the earth (verse 5). Moreover, our priestly role is a corporate one, as a kingdom, or, as Peter puts it, ‘a royal priesthood’. The church is given to share in what Christ does because of its union with him.” Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 122.

<sup>172</sup>Moore and Sagers contend that this unity is an act of spiritual warfare: “The unity between Jew and Gentile within the church declares to the outside watching world, including to the demonic powers, that Jesus Christ has torn down the dividing wall of judgment in his death, burial and resurrection.” Russell D. Moore and Robert E. Sagers, “The Kingdom of God and the Church: A Baptist Reassessment,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12, no. 1 (2008): 82.

<sup>173</sup>Because unity exhibits the eschatological victory of the king, “part of the task of the church is to make known the wisdom of God to the rulers and authorities (Eph 3:10).” Lois Barrett, “Missional Witness: The Church as Apostle to the World,” in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, ed. Darrell L. Guder and Lois Barrett (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 118–19.

<sup>174</sup>Through love, the church reflects Jesus, for whom “every aspect of his life was an act of

beyond (Gal 3:28-29).<sup>175</sup> In these ways, the unity of the church is “the sign to the principalities and powers that their time is up.”<sup>176</sup> The warrior king not only establishes the church’s unity but also empowers the church’s warfare.

### **Christ the Warrior King and the Church’s Warfare**

Christ the warrior king’s victory currently manifests itself in the spiritual warfare of the church. As Stott points out, “The victory of Christians, therefore, consists of entering into the victory of Christ and of enjoying its benefits.”<sup>177</sup> But what is the nature of the church’s conflict? The warfare worldview of the New Testament presents a three dimensional approach in which the church’s warfare is Christ-centered, corporate, and personal.

First, the church’s warfare is Christocentric. It primarily focuses on Christ the warrior king, not the principalities and powers.<sup>178</sup> Many contemporary treatments of spiritual warfare focus on the deceptive strategies for destruction used by the powers.<sup>179</sup> Instead, the warfare worldview of the Bible is far more concerned with what Christ has

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warfare, for every aspect of his life reflects Calvary-like love.” Boyd, “Christus Victor View,” 39.

<sup>175</sup>For more on the implications of the church’s unity in Christ for racial reconciliation, see Jarvis Williams, *One New Man: The Cross and Racial Reconciliation in Pauline Theology* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2010), 9–61.

<sup>176</sup>Wright, *Justification*, 173.

<sup>177</sup>Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 235.

<sup>178</sup>For example, Clinton Arnold’s work, though highly focused on the demonic, seeks to balance this with an emphasis on the centrality of Christ for spiritual warfare. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 100–09.

<sup>179</sup>Examples of works on spiritual warfare that emphasize the demonic to the neglect of the centrality of Christ include Dennis McCallum, *Satan and His Kingdom: What the Bible Says and How It Matters to You* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2009); Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology: A Study of Spiritual Forces at Work Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1994).

done than what the powers are doing.<sup>180</sup> For the church to carry out its mission, it must recognize that Christ calls it to warfare and battles on its behalf (Eph 6:10-20).<sup>181</sup>

Because Christ stands victorious at the right hand of the Father and pours out his Spirit upon his people (Eph 1:20-23; Acts 2:33), Christians can stand firm in the midst of spiritual warfare (Eph 6:10-13).<sup>182</sup> The reason believers can stand in spiritual warfare is because they are united to the one who stood on their behalf at the cross (Heb 2:14-17).<sup>183</sup> If believers recognize that God has furnished them with Christ as their armor (Eph 6:13-18), then it enables them to maintain a gospel-rootedness in their approach to battling the world, the flesh, and the devil in the pursuit of the church's mission.<sup>184</sup>

Second, the church's warfare is corporate. It primarily focuses on the eschatological community of the church before it focuses on the individual believers in the church. Most contemporary treatments of spiritual warfare center on the battles faced

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<sup>180</sup>Gary Badcock notes, "By the Spirit we are made spiritually alive in this way, so that by union with Christ we become victorious over sin and death." Gary D. Badcock, *Light of Truth & Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 103. For more on how believers should battle with sin in a Christ-centered manner, see Wayne A. Mack and Joshua Mack, *A Fight to the Death: Taking Aim at Sin Within* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2006).

<sup>181</sup>Stott adds, "Victory, conquest, triumph, overcoming—this was the vocabulary of those first followers of the risen Lord. For it they spoke of victory, they knew they owed it to the victorious Jesus." Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 223.

<sup>182</sup>Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1990), 443; Chuck Lawless, *Disciplined Warriors: Growing Healthy Churches That Are Equipped for Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 53.

<sup>183</sup>MacLeod declares, "He is an ever-present one, the great freedom fighter who has already destroyed the powers and who, following his death and resurrection, continues to bring liberation to the world's spiritual slaves. Our hope for the world rests not with the great stream of Christian pilgrims following in the footsteps of Jesus, but with the living Jesus himself: still able to conquer every potentate and still able to open every heart." MacLeod, *The Person of Christ*, 260.

<sup>184</sup>Donna R. Reinhard, "Ephesians 6:10-18: A Call to Personal Piety or Another Way of Describing Union with Christ?," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no. 3 (2005): 521.

by individual believers.<sup>185</sup> The individualization of spiritual warfare is not a new shortcoming. Instead, it is also seen in John Bunyan's well known allegory *The Holy War*.<sup>186</sup> Yet, this individualization fails to account for the way Satan uses isolation in his battle against God's people.<sup>187</sup> Satan demonstrates a pattern of seeking to isolate individuals to bring spiritual destruction by the power of his deception, from Eden (Gen 3:1-6) to the temptations of Christ (Matt 4:1-11).<sup>188</sup> Because Christ has poured out the Spirit as the spoils of victory (Eph 4:8), he not only brings unity to the church (Eph 4:1-6, 13) but also calls it to face the principalities and powers together (Eph 6:10-17).<sup>189</sup> By the Spirit, he pours out spiritual gifts for the building up of the body and the defeat of the enemy.<sup>190</sup> Warfare against the principalities and powers, therefore, does not begin with

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<sup>185</sup>For example, see Chip Ingram, *The Invisible War: What Every Believer Needs to Know about Satan, Demons, and Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

<sup>186</sup>John Bunyan, *The Holy War* (London: Dorman Newman, 1682; reprint, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

<sup>187</sup>Furthermore, it fails to recognize the pattern of God primarily fighting for the entire community of his people, rather than individuals, throughout redemptive history. Waltke notes the corporate pattern of God's deliverance: "Abraham's Exodus from Babylon and Egypt, Jacob's Exodus from Laban's harsh labor in Aram, Israel's Exodus from Egypt at the beginning of their national history, and their Exodus from Babylon after they cease to exist as an independent political state typify the church's spiritual Exodus from a world of sin and death under Satan's tyranny." Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 392.

<sup>188</sup>Stephen Dempster comments on the insurrection in Eden, "The flagrant rebellion against the divine word by the pinnacle of creation, which has just been invested with the divine rule, is a heinous crime against the cosmos and its Creator." Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 66.

<sup>189</sup>On the community-rooted, church-oriented nature of spiritual warfare, especially as seen in Eph. 6:10-20, see Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, "Put on the Armour of God": *The Divine Warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 140 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 109.

<sup>190</sup>In his unpublished writings, Moore asserts that spiritual gifts are "a 'spoil of war' demonstrating that Jesus is 'staffing up' his coming kingdom now, even as a presidential transition team starts establishing a shadow government readying itself to take the reins of power." See also Lawless, *Disciplined Warriors*, 131.



individuals but with the church.<sup>191</sup> Recognizing the corporate nature of spiritual warfare can help the church to embrace the missional nature of its eschatological commission.

Third, the church's warfare is personal. Though its primary orientation is Christ-centered and community-rooted, the individual dimension flows from both. The personal nature of the church's warfare demonstrates itself in several ways. (1) The enemies in spiritual warfare are themselves personal beings (Eph 6:10-12). They use their parasitic power to thwart the advance of the kingdom of Christ.<sup>192</sup> (2) The rivals in spiritual warfare usually assault individuals.<sup>193</sup> For example, they successfully defeat individuals like Adam (Gen 3:1-6) and Judas (Luke 22:3), but they are unable to overcome Peter (Luke 22:31-32) or Jesus (Matt 4:1-11).<sup>194</sup> (3) The rescue of sinners through evangelism in spiritual warfare is often personal. As ambassadors of Christ, believers make their evangelistic appeal to individuals, calling them to be reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:20).<sup>195</sup> (4) The pursuit of personal holiness in spiritual warfare includes an individual component. While righteousness is pursued in the context of the church and by

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<sup>191</sup>Boyd claims, "The church as the body of Christ has been called to be a decisive means by which this final overthrow is to be carried out." Boyd, *God at War*, 19; Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 453. The corporate warfare of the church also includes putting to death the desires that cause inter-personal conflict among people (Jas 4:1-2).

<sup>192</sup>Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 100-09.

<sup>193</sup>Hawthorne notes, "It follows that just as Jesus remained master of his will and consciousness yet nevertheless deliberately chose to subject himself to the guiding influence of the Spirit throughout his life and thus lived powerfully and triumphantly, so his followers must do as he did if they would experience the same power and triumph in their own personal experiences." Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power*, 236.

<sup>194</sup>Stott adds, "For Christians as for Christ, life spells conflict. For Christians as for Christ it should also spell victory. We are to be victorious like the victorious Christ." Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 234.

<sup>195</sup>Clowney asserts, "Kingdom evangelism is therefore holistic as it transmits by word and deed the promise of Christ for body and soul as well as the demand of Christ for body and soul." Edmund P. Clowney, "Kingdom Evangelism," in *The Pastor-Evangelist*, ed. Roger S. Greenway (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1987), 22.

the power of the Spirit, individual believers are called to the battlefield of the mind to wage war against the enemy for personal holiness (2 Cor 10:3-5).<sup>196</sup> The Christ-centered, corporate, and personal nature of the church's warfare characterizes the church's militant mission. The church's Christ-centered conflict continues until the eschatological consummation of his kingdom.

### **Christ the Warrior King and the Last Things**

Christ the warrior king's conquest of the cosmos culminates in an eschatological victory that ushers in a new creation kingdom. A biblical theology of warfare is incomplete unless it considers its eschatological fulfillment in Christ.<sup>197</sup> By looking at the conflict-oriented nature of the end times, it sets this biblical theology of warfare in its full redemptive-historical context. While the previous section focused on the inaugurated nature of eschatology in the warfare of the church, this section centers on the consummated nature of eschatology in the warfare of the last days. Cosmic conflict continues, as Longman and Reid observe, until "divine warfare has achieved its goal in the peace of the new heaven and new earth."<sup>198</sup> This section argues that the culmination of the divine warrior theme in Christology includes: (1) the eschatological expectation of the warrior king's future conquest, (2) the eschatological realization of the warrior king's messianic identity, (3) the eschatological achievement of the warrior king's victory, and (4) the eschatological consummation of the warrior king's new creation.

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<sup>196</sup>Longman observes, "Interestingly, war language is associated with the spiritual struggle that goes on within our own hearts and minds." Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," 186.

<sup>197</sup>Surprisingly, Boyd's *God at War* does not offer a sustained reflection on warfare and future eschatology. This absence is perhaps a result of his open theism.

<sup>198</sup>Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 192.

## Christ the Warrior King and Eschatological Expectation

The warfare worldview of the New Testament anticipates an eschatological fulfillment of the divine warrior's universal reign. Christ the warrior king grounds the future hope of Christians in such a way that it protects this eschatological expectation from devolving into either utopia or dystopia.<sup>199</sup> Though Christ transforms the fulfillment of the Old Testament's messianic expectation, his own eschatological expectation parallels this original messianism in its warfare orientation.<sup>200</sup> Specifically, Jesus offers an apocalyptic discourse just before his crucifixion in which he anticipates his eschatological conquest (Matt 24:1-51; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:5-38).<sup>201</sup> In this passage, Jesus expects eschatological conflict to include several warfare-oriented features: wars and rumors of wars (Matt 24:6), the gospel of the kingdom proclaimed to all nations (24:14), the rise of false messiahs (24:23-24), and the Son of Man coming on the clouds (24:30).<sup>202</sup> After coming on the clouds, the eschatological warrior will be seated at the

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<sup>199</sup>Wright contrasts Christian eschatology with the utopian view active throughout history, such as during the Roman empire: "This utopian dream is in fact a parody of the Christian vision. The kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the world come together to produce a vision of history moving forward toward its goal, a goal that will emerge from within rather than being a new gift from elsewhere." Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 82.

<sup>200</sup>For example, Longman and Reid recognize that the language in Matt 24 and parallel texts "echoes passages from Isaiah and Joel that describe events accompanying the appearance of the divine warrior on the Day of the Lord (Isa 13:10; 34:4; Joel 3:15-16 [=MT 4:15-16])." Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 127.

<sup>201</sup>Boyd states, "All three Synoptic Gospels record a discourse that Jesus gave concerning the end of the world (Mk 13:1-17; Mt 24:1-51; Lk 21:5-36)." Boyd, *God at War*, 226.

<sup>202</sup>Longman and Reid explain, "Jesus' words regarding his future coming as the heavenly Son of Man also demonstrate an awareness of the divine-warrior tradition lying behind the title." They continue, "This event would be preceded by a cosmic disturbance that is described in the traditional language of the coming of the divine warrior on the Day of the Lord." Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 126.

right hand of the Father in the place of honor on the throne of glory (Mark 14:62; Matt 25:31, 64).<sup>203</sup>

The apostolic authors maintain this eschatological expectation of Christ the warrior king's future conquest. First, they anticipate an eschatological enemy who will war against Jesus (2 Thess 2:1-12; 1 John 2:8-15).<sup>204</sup> From the degeneration of the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:1-6) to the generation of the garden of the new creation (Rev 21-22), this same Enemy revolts against the kingdom of Christ.<sup>205</sup> Second, the apostles maintain an eschatological hope in which the final conquest of this cosmic enemy will soon come. Echoing the mother promise of Genesis 3:15, Romans 16:20 anticipates this imminence by declaring that the "God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet."<sup>206</sup>

Third, the New Testament preserves an expectation of eschatological progress in which the divine warrior actively advances his kingdom.<sup>207</sup> As a result, "the

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<sup>203</sup>Longman and Reid point out, "The significance of this saying for our understanding of Jesus as the divine warrior is found in the Son of Man 'seated' and 'coming.' In a divine reversal of events, Jesus the victim will be vindicated and exalted to a position of regal glory and honor." *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>204</sup>Marshall says, "The belief in the coming of a final adversary of God, an anti-Messiah, before the End (and the second coming of the true Messiah), as reflected in 2 Thess. 2:8-12 and Revelation, is here picked up, with the claim that anybody who denies that Jesus is the Messiah is in effect a manifestation or anticipation of this final foe." I. Howard Marshall, "Johannine Epistles," in *Theological Interpretation of the New Testament: A Book-by-Book Survey*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 224–25.

<sup>205</sup>Yet, the New Testament is clear that the reign of this enemy is short-lived: "The time of triumph for the lawless one will be short-lived, for the Lord Jesus will destroy him by his word (2 Thess 2:8)." Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 820. Hoekema connects the mother promise of Genesis with the eschatological expectation of the new creation by noting that "the expectation of a new earth was already implicit in the promise of Genesis 3:15." Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 277.

<sup>206</sup>Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 160. Surprisingly, Boyd's *God at War* makes no reference to this noteworthy verse.

<sup>207</sup>Morris contends that 1 Cor 15:25-28 "shows that God is not regarded as passive in opposition to His enemies." Leon Morris, *Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 222.

mediatorial kingdom of Christ is therefore a progressively advancing tide of conquest.”<sup>208</sup>

Fourth, the warfare worldview of the New Testament expects a final, eschatological victory by the warrior king in which holy war resumes with both a physical and spiritual dimension to its conquest (Rev 19:11-21).<sup>209</sup> Another aspect of the New Testament’s messianic expectation is its explanation of the warrior king’s eschatological identity.

### **Christ the Warrior King and Eschatological Identity**

The warfare worldview of the New Testament describes Jesus’ eschatological identity as a new Davidic king who, as the ancient lamb who was slain, reigns as the exalted Lord. First, the New Testament confirms the eschatological fulfillment of the Old Testament’s expectation of the messiah as a new David. In particular, the book of Revelation captures the essence of a triumphant Davidic king.<sup>210</sup> The apostle John’s first vision of Christ describes him as a divine warrior including the recognition that “from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword (Rev 1:16).<sup>211</sup> The eschatological Christ is a shepherd-king who leads his church to victory because he has the messianic “key of

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<sup>208</sup>Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 222. This progressively advancing conquest does not imply a postmillennial perspective of unyielding progress prior to the second coming. Instead, it simply affirms Jesus’ promise to Peter that the gates of hell will not prevail against the church in its kingdom activity (Matt 16:18).

<sup>209</sup>Merrill asserts, “The eschatological texts of the New Testament, however, as well as those of the Old, provide clear evidence for a resumption of Yahweh war in the end times, war to be understood in physical as well as spiritual terms.” Merrill, “The Case for Moderate Discontinuity,” 91.

<sup>210</sup>Longman and Reid point out, “The book of Revelation presents the divine warrior tradition more boldly than any other New Testament writing.” Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 180. Stott adds, “No book of the New Testament bears a clearer or stronger testimony to Christ’s victory than the Christian apocalypse which we know as the book of Revelation or the Revelation of John.” Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 241.

<sup>211</sup>John’s description of Christ the warrior king having bronze feet (Rev 1:15; 2:18), a two-edged sword from his mouth (1:16), and riding a white horse (19:11-21) confirm that he is the “divine warrior.” Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 425.

David” (Rev 3:7).<sup>212</sup> Revelation 5:5 unites the fulfillment of the messianic expectations of a ruler from Judah (Gen 49) and a king from David (2 Sam 7) by describing the eschatological Christ as “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, [who] has conquered.”<sup>213</sup> Finally, in the storyline of Scripture’s final chapter, Jesus portrays himself as “the root and descendant of David” who has led a new Israel into a new creation through a new Exodus (Rev 22:16).

Second, in contrast to much of the conquering imagery in the Old Testament’s messianic expectation, the New Testament presents the eschatological Christ as the ancient lamb who was slain.<sup>214</sup> The eschatological Christ conquers his kingdom rivals not just as the lion of Judah but as the lamb of slaughter (Rev 5:5-6).<sup>215</sup> Victory comes through sacrifice.<sup>216</sup> Furthermore, the people of God in heaven celebrate the slain lamb by bursting forth in a new war hymn that is reminiscent of those sung by the nation of

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<sup>212</sup>Stott writes, “More than half the occurrences of the ‘victory’ word group (*nikao*, to overcome and *nike*, victory) are to be found in this book.” Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 241.

<sup>213</sup>Stott correctly identifies Satan as the one who this new David has conquered: “The message of the book of Revelation is that Jesus Christ has defeated Satan and will one day destroy him altogether.” Ibid., 245. As eschatological ruler, Jesus is the imperial Lord, as Wright points out: “Jesus succeeded where Adam failed; he completed the task assigned to Israel; and he is the reality of which Caesar is a parody.” Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 228.

<sup>214</sup>Thus, John juxtaposes the images of lion and lamb to show that Christ the warrior king’s victory comes through his death. See Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 179–81; Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 429.

<sup>215</sup>MacLeod asserts, “The Lamb sits in the very center of the throne (Rev 5:6), exactly where we would expect to see God the Father. He is the center-piece, with whom every other form of existence is enthralled; the Lord of history, not only revealing but executing God’s plan.” MacLeod, *The Person of Christ*, 88.

<sup>216</sup>Schreiner states, “The key to all history and the outworking of God’s promises is the death of the Lamb. Victory over evil comes not through a military triumph but rather through the suffering of the Lamb. However, the slain Lamb is also the one who achieves victory and conquers, and so here John merges the Jewish traditions of the slain lamb and the conquering lamb.” Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 429; G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 351.

Israel for the divine warrior in the Old Testament (Rev 5:9-14).<sup>217</sup> John also unites the head crushing imagery of Genesis 3:15 with the lamb slaying imagery of Revelation when he describes the throwing down of Satan by the blood of the lamb (Rev 12:7-12).<sup>218</sup> The celebration of Christ's eschatological victory climaxes at the marriage supper of the lamb as the people of God celebrate the conquest of God through a final victory feast (Rev 19:6-10).<sup>219</sup> Finally, the eschatological picture of Christ's new creation kingdom presents him reigning as the lamb (Rev 22:1).<sup>220</sup>

Third, the warfare worldview of the New Testament depicts the eschatological Christ as the exalted Lord who has put all his enemies under his feet.<sup>221</sup> The humiliation of the incarnation is the means by which Christ the warrior king achieves this exaltation. Christ has defeated death through substitutionary victory (Heb 2:14-17) and now has been resurrected and ascended to the exalted place at the right hand of the Father as our great high priest (Heb 4:14).<sup>222</sup> As a result, the apostle Paul declares that the exaltation of

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<sup>217</sup>MacLeod further comments, "And, equally with the Father, the slaughtered Lamb is the object of the great paeons of praise uttered by the ransomed church, by the angels and by the very universe itself." MacLeod, *The Person of Christ*, 88.

<sup>218</sup>Moore declares, "The defeat of Satan by the man Christ Jesus is pictured by the apostle John as the establishment of the Kingdom." Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 106.

<sup>219</sup>Moore observes, "The fellowship we have now around the Lord's table should point us to the inexpressible joy of eating bread and drinking wine with our triumphant King Jesus." Moore, "Personal and Cosmic Eschatology," 916.

<sup>220</sup>The lamb will reign over a new Eden in which the "consummated garden will exist on an escalated scale in comparison to the first." G. K. Beale and Sean M. McDonough, "Revelation," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 1154.

<sup>221</sup>Ladd notes the relationship between Lordship and messiahship: "It is clear that Lordship and messiahship are very similar categories, two ways of expressing the same reality." Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 457.

<sup>222</sup>Bauckham declares, "In Hebrews, as elsewhere in the New Testament, the traditional expectation of the Davidic Messiah ruling Israel and the nations on earth is subsumed into the cosmic role of the exalted Lord who, seated on God's heavenly throne, brings the whole of creation to the

the warrior king will one day result in the submission of everyone in the cosmos as they bow and confess Jesus Christ as Lord (Phil 2:9-11).<sup>223</sup> Indeed, Revelation's Christology "portrays Christ almost singularly from the perspective of his state of exaltation."<sup>224</sup> For example, As Revelation 12 captures the conflict of redemptive history (Rev 12:1-12), it presents Christ as one who would rule the nations from a position of exaltation as he is "caught up to God and to his throne" (Rev 12:5; cf. 12:11-12).<sup>225</sup> The cause of the warrior king's eschatological exaltation is his eschatological victory.

### **Christ the Warrior King and Eschatological Victory**

Christ the warrior king achieves eschatological victory through his triumphant return. The warfare worldview of the New Testament describes this triumphant return as the fulfillment of Scripture's Day of the Lord and conquest motifs. Messianic expectation anticipated a cataclysmic Day of the Lord in which the divine warrior would subdue his enemies. Though the Old Testament prophets expected this event to happen at the arrival of the messiah, the New Testament transforms the nature of its initial fulfillment while

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acknowledgement of God's lordship." Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 237. In contrast to this dissertation, Bauckham contends for eschatological non-violence. Despite these differences, he is correct to note the importance of the eschatological messianic king's exalted, victorious Lordship.

<sup>223</sup>As Torrance points out, if Christ is "no more than God's vicar and ambassador: then all such worship is idolatrous. When our knees bow we need a confession that is ontological: Jesus Christ is Lord." Torrance, *Incarnation*, 248. See also Russell D. Moore, "Theology Bleeds: Why Theological Vision Matters for the Great Commission, and Vice-Versa," in *The Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God's Mandate in Our Time*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Adam Greenway (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 113.

<sup>224</sup>Reymond, *Jesus Divine Messiah*, 524.

<sup>225</sup>When discussing the divine warrior theme in Revelation, It is important to focus on "the vision of Revelation 12, which in some ways seems to be the center of the book." Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 243.



still expecting a final eschatological realization.<sup>226</sup> The divine warrior theme prominently appears in the eschatological expectation of Christ's return.<sup>227</sup> The return of the warrior king unites the Day of the Lord motif (Acts 2:20) with the expectation from Psalm 110 that God would put all his enemies under the messiah's feet (Acts 2:35).<sup>228</sup> Specifically, "The picture is that of the Lord coming to earth as the cloud-riding divine warrior," claim Longman and Reid (1 Thess 4:15-17).<sup>229</sup> In this way, the Old Testament's expected Day of the Lord now finds its escalated fulfillment in the return of Christ the warrior king (1 Cor 5:5; 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2).<sup>230</sup>

In addition to fulfilling the Day of the Lord theme, the second coming of Christ also culminates the conquest motif. The second Joshua leads a final conquest of the Promised Land against the enemies of God and completely destroys them in an eschatological act of *herem* warfare (Rev 19:11-21).<sup>231</sup> Though the cross of Christ

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<sup>226</sup>Schreiner affirms, "The coming of the kingdom that Jesus proclaimed designated something new, a time when God's enemies would be demonstrably defeated and the righteous would be visibly blessed. The future coming of the kingdom relates to the realization of God's promises of salvation." Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 53–54.

<sup>227</sup>For example, Longman and Reid state, "When Paul speaks of the Day of the Lord, particularly in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, the imagery of the divine warrior is unmistakable." Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 171.

<sup>228</sup>Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 828.

<sup>229</sup>They continue, "Like those who welcome the arrival of a deliverer to a city held under siege, the saints are taken up, not to depart to heaven, but—it seems—to meet him and escort him on his victorious 'march' to earth." Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 173–74; Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 214–15. It is outside the scope of this chapter to address how these warfare-oriented verses relate to the eschatological possibility of a rapture.

<sup>230</sup>Longman and Reid write, "There is clear evidence that when Paul spoke of the Parousia, he had in mind the Old Testament's Day of the Lord, now seen as a Christ event." Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 172.

<sup>231</sup>Ladd states, "The second coming of Christ, pictured in 19:11-16, has as its primary purpose the destruction of evil. His coming is pictured in terms of ancient warfare." Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 678.

achieved this victory in principle, the return of Christ makes it reality.<sup>232</sup> Though the anti-messiah attempts his own eschatological counterfeit coup, the warrior king's return vanquishes this final insurgency (2 Thess 2:1-12).<sup>233</sup> The New Testament often describes the return of Christ with *παρουσία*, which goes beyond simply meaning a return or coming; instead, it pictures the royal presence of a reigning king.<sup>234</sup> As has always been the case throughout the warfare of redemptive history, the divine warrior is present among his people as he fights for them in this eschatological kingdom conquest.

How does Christ accomplish eschatological victory in his second coming? It is mostly clearly described in Revelation 19:11-20:10.<sup>235</sup> After the eschatological victory feast of the marriage supper of the Lamb (19:6-10), John describes the return of Christ as a messianic warrior king clothed in a robe dipped in blood (19:11-16).<sup>236</sup> Then, the divine

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<sup>232</sup>Letham points out, "In the context of biblical eschatology, however, the consummation of this victory awaits the *parousia*. In principle, it has been achieved. In practice, we wait in expectant assurance." Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 152.

<sup>233</sup>Longman and Reid note the contrast of the Christ and the anti-Christ: "This figure will one day present himself in God's temple (2:4) in a counterfeit Parousia, accompanied by Satanic signs and wonders that will lead many astray (2:9-10). But in the Parousia of the Lord Jesus, the enemy will be overthrown and destroyed (2:8)." Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 176. They add that Christ's eschatological victory, which comes by the breath of his mouth, "recalls the messianic conqueror's victory depicted in Isaiah 11:4." *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>234</sup>While explaining the definition of *παρουσία*, Wright observes, "The second meaning emerges when a person of high rank makes a visit to a subject state, particularly when a king or emperor visits a colony or province. The word for such a visit is *royal presence*; in Greek, *parousia*." Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 129; Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 217.

<sup>235</sup>Longman and Reid claim, "The most transparent use of the divine-warrior motif in the book of Revelation is 19:11-21." Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 186; Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 815.

<sup>236</sup>There is debate over the nature and source of the blood on the warrior king's robe. Some argue that it is the blood of Christ's atoning sacrifice. See Leon Morris, *The Book of Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 224. Others believe it is the blood of the martyrs. See G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, Black's New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 243-44. A more accurate assessment seems to be that the blood on the warrior king's robe signals the defeat of God's enemies, which picks up on the allusions to Isa 63:1-6 in the passage. See Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 682-83; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*,

warrior, who is armed with a sword from his mouth, leads his army as they defeat the Satanic insurrection (19:17-21).<sup>237</sup> Next, Revelation 20:1-6 depicts a millennial reign of peace on earth in which the warrior king rules in the presence of his enemies before a final judgment upon his kingdom rivals (20:7-10).<sup>238</sup> Through this eschatological victory, Christ the warrior king restores shalom and ushers in a new creation kingdom.

### **Christ the Warrior King and the New Creation**

Christ the warrior king finally fulfills the messianic expectation of a new David leading a new Israel through a new Exodus as he establishes his new creation kingdom. The death and resurrection of Christ inaugurate the new creation that will be consummated at the return of Christ.<sup>239</sup> When Christ returns to accomplish in full the victory that he has already achieved in principle, it will carry cosmic significance.<sup>240</sup> First, it will demonstrate that Christ the warrior king is a second Adam who restores rulership over the new creation (Rev 21:1-8). The second Adam will also restore the

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958–59; Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 429.

<sup>237</sup>Longman and Reid contribute, “On the Day of the Lord’s appearing, he will descend from heaven as an approaching deliverer. The people of God—both the dead and the living—will rush forth to meet him and escort him to earth, where in awesome power and splendor, the divine warrior will conquer his enemy and retake his temple throne. The parousia of the enemy will be shattered in the Parousia of Christ.” Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 179.

<sup>238</sup>Blaising and Bock explain, “When Revelation is read *canonically-systematically*, its message refracts back on Old Testament kingdom texts to show that the promised kingdom is fulfilled in part within the Millennium and the new heaven and new earth.” Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 102.

<sup>239</sup>This inaugurated new creation is already manifested in the kingdom community of the church, as Wright points out: “The clue to it all is that in the death and resurrection of Jesus the creator God has defeated the power of death, so that the life of his new world, the new creation, the dawning new day, is already anticipated in the lives of those who have been grasped by the word of the gospel, and will be completed at the return of the Messiah.” Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 219.

<sup>240</sup>Boyd, *God at War*, 288.

Edenic shalom forfeited by the first Adam (Rev 21:3-4). The peace that the first Adam abandoned when he suffered the initial defeat of kingdom warfare is now restored by the second Adam who places all of his enemies under his feet at last (Rev 22:1-5).<sup>241</sup> This new earth will also include a restoration of rulership for humans as viceregents of God's reign (Rev 21:7).<sup>242</sup> With Christ's return, the new Eden that Israel failed to bring about in Canaan (Num 13:21-27) will then be established in the new earth by the new Israel—Jesus himself.<sup>243</sup>

Second, the culmination of Christ the warrior king's new creation victory will demonstrate that he is a new David who leads a new Israel into a New Jerusalem (Rev 21:9-27).<sup>244</sup> The new earth, therefore, is the culmination of the new creation conquest that has already begun through Jesus himself.<sup>245</sup> As such, this new creation conquest will establish a new promised land in which the entire cosmos is now a land flowing with milk and honey (Rev 22:1-5). Furthermore, it brings about the final union between divine and Davidic kingship in such a way that the divine warrior king now has an unrivaled

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<sup>241</sup>As Longman and Reid conclude, "Divine warfare has achieved its goal in the peace of the new heaven and new earth." Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 192.

<sup>242</sup>Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 320; idem, *Is God to Blame? Moving Beyond Pat Answers to the Problem of Evil* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 163; idem, *God at War*, 227.

<sup>243</sup>Gregory A. Boyd, *The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power Is Destroying the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 152. For more on Canaan as a type of the new earth, see Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 31–32.

<sup>244</sup>Beale and McDonough claim, "The last vision of Revelation is a magnificent view of the new creation, which is, we will argue, portrayed as equivalent to the new Jerusalem, the eschatological cubic temple, and to end-time Eden, the eternal home of God's people." Beale and McDonough, "Revelation," 1150.

<sup>245</sup>Scripture makes clear that Jesus himself is that new creation, as N. T. Wright declares: "The resurrection constitutes Jesus as the world's true sovereign, the 'son of god' who claims absolute allegiance from everyone and everything within creation. He is the start of the creator's new world: its pilot project, indeed its pilot." Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 731.

reign over this new world order (Rev 22:3).<sup>246</sup> The once and future king will also secure final salvation for his people who are united to him by faith (Rev 22:3-4).<sup>247</sup>

### **Summary: Christ the Warrior King and New Testament Themes**

In summary, a biblical analysis of the divine warrior theme in the messianic fulfillment of the New Testament uncovers several important themes. First, a crucial component of the divine warrior theme in the New Testament's messianic fulfillment is the centrality of the kingdom of Christ.<sup>248</sup> As Schreiner points out, "When we speak of the kingdom, inevitably we are introduced to Christology, for Jesus does not merely speak abstractly about the coming kingdom. He invariably considers his own role as paramount in the eschatological kingdom. The most remarkable feature of the kingdom is the role of Jesus Christ himself."<sup>249</sup> While the kingdom of God motif is prominent in the

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<sup>246</sup>Klooster claims, "Then all God's promises from creation and the fall onward will be completely fulfilled. There will be but one kingdom, the kingdom of God restored, consummated. God will be its king through the victory of his son. A new heaven and a new earth will be its realm. And all those redeemed by the blood of Christ will be its citizens." Fred H. Klooster, "The Biblical Method of Salvation: A Case for Continuity," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 160.

<sup>247</sup>Letham writes, "The relation between Christology, soteriology and ecclesiology is fully evident when we look to the future and to the resurrection. Our resurrection at the end of the world will mark the completion of the church's salvation. It is grounded on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus, Christ's own resurrection marks the commencement of his reign as mediatorial king, a reign which is to culminate in the total vanquishing of death and the resurrection of his church in the power of the Spirit." Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 220.

<sup>248</sup>Throughout this chapter, the terms "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of Christ" have been used interchangeably. This summarizing point on the importance of the kingdom uses the term kingdom of Christ because it not only allows for greater specificity about the nature of the kingdom but also captures the centrality of Christ in the kingdom. McCartney says that "the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ are the same entity (Eph 5:5, 21), not only because Christ is God, for as God Christ has always reigned with the Father. It is because Christ is now a *man*, and as a man rules as human viceregent." Dan G. McCartney, "Ecce Homo: The Coming of the Kingdom as the Restoration of Human Viceregency," *Westminster Theological Journal* 56 (1994): 16.

<sup>249</sup>Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 51.

synoptic Gospels, the rest of the canon further focuses this concept of kingship on the messianic reign of Christ.<sup>250</sup> As the divine warrior establishes the kingdom of Christ, he achieves it through the defeat of the kingdom of Satan.<sup>251</sup> As a result, the church orients its mission around this inaugurated kingdom as it waits for its final consummation.<sup>252</sup>

Second, the victory of the kingdom comes through the sacrifice of the king. What had been foreshadowed in the prophets has now been made clear in the New Testament—the path to messianic victory comes through the conquest of the cross. As Stott declares, “Jesus Christ has not only dethroned the devil but dealt with sin. In fact, it is by dealing with sin that he has dealt with death.”<sup>253</sup> Triumph comes through torture. Success comes through substitution. Conquest comes through crucifixion. Thus, Scripture presents the atonement as the defining act of redemptive history in which the substitutionary sacrifice of the messianic warrior king not only satisfies the wrath of God but also defeats the enemies of God.<sup>254</sup>

Third, the arrival of the kingdom has already been inaugurated but not yet consummated. Christ the warrior king begins to restore his new creation kingdom

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<sup>250</sup>Letham claims that “the synoptics’ stress on the kingdom of God is absent from the other New Testament writers’ references to the post-resurrection Christ. In its place we find the mediatorial kingdom of Christ. He is the one who is seen to exercise the royal prerogatives of God, and he does so as our mediator, as the one who was slain on the cross for our sins.” Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 197.

<sup>251</sup>Ladd insists that “the theology of the Kingdom of God is essentially one of conflict and conquest over the kingdom of Satan.” Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 48.

<sup>252</sup>Wright notes, “The early Christians told the story of Jesus as the story of the kingdom arriving – a theme so firmly woven into the gospel traditions that one could only remove it by deconstructing those traditions entirely – and proceeded to reorder their lives on the basis that it had, in one sense, already happened, while knowing that in another sense it was still in the future.” Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 567.

<sup>253</sup>Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 238–39.

<sup>254</sup>Dever states, “A Christ who wins victory over the powers of evil, whose death changes us, and whose death propitiates God is not only conceivable, but he seems to be the Bible’s composite

through the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection.<sup>255</sup> Yet, his rivals still rage in opposition to his rulership and his people, the church.<sup>256</sup> In this time between the times, soldiers of Christ in the kingdom outpost of the church await the return of the warrior king who will consummate the kingdom conquest already achieved at the cross.<sup>257</sup> Therefore, as Ladd points out, “To receive the Kingdom of God, to submit oneself to God’s reign meant to receive the gift of the Kingdom and to enter into the enjoyment of its blessings. The age of fulfillment is present, but the time of consummation still awaits the age to come.”<sup>258</sup> Though Christ has crushed the serpent under his heel, believers do not yet see all things under his feet.

What Wright declares about the Gospels is true of how the entire New Testament reveals the inaugurated nature of eschatology. The Gospels tell the story of

God’s kingdom being launched on earth as in heaven, generating a new state of affairs in which the power of evil has been decisively defeated, the new creation has been decisively launched, and Jesus’s followers have been commissioned and equipped to put that victory and that inaugurated new world into practice. Atonement, redemption, and salvation are what happen on the way because engaging in this work demands that people themselves be rescued from the powers that enslave the world in order that they can in turn be rescuers. To put it another

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presentation.” Dever, “Nothing but the Blood,” 109.

<sup>255</sup>Bauckham’s explanation of how these themes appear in the book of Mark parallels how they are found elsewhere in the New Testament: “The Gospel of Mark is both a narrative account of the divine identity of Jesus and, at the same time, a narrative account of his inauguration of the kingdom of God. He is the beloved Son of God who participates in his Father’s own divine identity, and he is the messianic king who brings about God’s rule. Who he is and what he does are, in the Gospel, inseparable. What he does reveals who he is, and who he is entails what he does.” Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 262.

<sup>256</sup>Stott states, “The devil has been defeated and dethroned. Far from this bringing his activities to an end, however, the rage he feels in the knowledge of his approaching doom leads him to redouble them.” Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 243.

<sup>257</sup>Letham considers the broad and narrow dimensions of Christ’s current kingdom rule: “In summary, the reign of Christ as king extends over the entire universe. In a narrower sense, it is focused on his church and the individuals within it.” Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 222.

<sup>258</sup>Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 217.

way, if you want to help inaugurate God's kingdom, you must follow in the way of the cross, and if you want to benefit from Jesus's saving death, you must become part of his kingdom project.<sup>259</sup>

How can the messianic expectation and fulfillment of the divine warrior king presented in biblical theology, and recognized throughout historical theology shape systematic theology? What impact does this concept seen in the Bible and affirmed in history have on the understanding of important doctrines for the Christian faith? How can it shed new light on key issues in contemporary theology? While this chapter has evaluated the divine warrior motif in the messianic fulfillment of the New Testament, the following chapter will examine the implications of this messianic divine warrior theme for the subject of systematic theology.

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<sup>259</sup>Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 204–05.



## CHAPTER 5

### CHRIST THE WARRIOR KING AND SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

If a central theme in the storyline of Scripture is its presentation of Christ the warrior king, then this feature should carry significant implications for systematic theology. However, Boyd laments, “Next to nothing has been done systematically to integrate the warfare motif with a doctrine of God, theological anthropology, soteriology, angelology and, for our purposes most importantly, theodicy.”<sup>1</sup> Because Christ informs every doctrine of systematic theology, a reappropriation of the nature of Christology (such as what this dissertation seeks to accomplish) should, by necessity, include a reconsideration of related doctrinal areas. Leahy correctly suggests that “Christ’s victory—the victory of the cross—has a direct and crucial bearing on the doctrine of the atonement, on the Lordship of Christ, on the doctrine of salvation, on the mission of the church, and on the destiny of mankind and the future of this earth.”<sup>2</sup> Moreover, a Christobellic approach to systematic theology not only transforms the way key doctrines of the faith are understood but also reshapes the way key doctrines of the faith are

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<sup>1</sup>Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 66.

<sup>2</sup>Frederick S. Leahy, *The Victory of the Lamb: Christ’s Triumph over Sin, Death and Satan* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2001), ix.

presented.<sup>3</sup> They are best comprehended when presented as flowing from the storyline of the Christ-centered warfare worldview of Scripture.

This chapter argues that the theme of Christ as warrior king in biblical theology yields beneficial insights into contemporary issues in systematic theology. To accomplish this task, it will examine how the Christobelllic warfare worldview of Scripture enhances an evangelical understanding of the atonement, salvation, eschatology, and providence.<sup>4</sup> Each section will address the biblical data related to the topic and apply the warfare motif to contemporary issues in the doctrine. After each doctrine is evaluated, a conclusion will summarize the findings of the chapter.

### **Christ the Warrior King and the Atonement**

While the kingdom of Christ is the central theme in Scripture, the atonement of Christ is the central act in Scripture. But what is the relationship between the two? How should Christians make sense of the connection between the kingdom and the cross? The purpose of this section is to provide a biblical and theological analysis of the relationship between the atonement and kingdom warfare. It argues that the atonement is the central act of redemptive history in which God achieves victory over his enemies through penal substitution. To accomplish this task, it will begin by interacting with Gustaf Aulén's work *Christus Victor*, which re-ignited the discussion of the cross as conquest in

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<sup>3</sup>Lints contends, "The Bible, in its form and its content, records the dramatic story of God reaching into human history and redeeming a people for himself. The form and content of our theology must reflect this." Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 64. Vos adds, "The Bible is not a dogmatic handbook but a historical book full of dramatic interest." Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975), 17.

<sup>4</sup>Of course, this chapter could have evaluated other doctrinal areas, but it focuses on these four because of both their prominence and the significant amount of impact the Christobelllic motif has on them.

contemporary theology.<sup>5</sup> Then, it will focus on key biblical texts that demonstrate the unity between the *Christus Victor* and penal substitution models of the atonement. Last, it closes with systematic theological reflections on the relationship between these two approaches.

### **Christ the Warrior King's Atonement and Aulén's Theology**

As Aulén takes his readers on a guided tour of atonement theology throughout church history, he also reveals his own perspective on Christ the warrior king's death along the way. This section evaluates the positive and negative aspects of his personal appraisal of the cross and Christian warfare. The strengths of his personal presentation mirror the four categories through which the earlier chapter evaluated the views of others in historical theology. To begin with, Aulén contends that the "classic idea of the Atonement finds anticipations in some of the greatest passages of the Old Testament."<sup>6</sup> He also realizes the close connection between the incarnation and atonement in bringing about the divine warrior's victory.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, "the actual outlook of Jesus on His life-work"

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<sup>5</sup>Boersma adds that, in addition to Aulén's work, the last few decades "have witnessed a renewed interest in the *Christus Victor* theme, particularly within evangelicalism." Hans Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 194. The second chapter has already provided the framework of historical theology that sets this biblical and theological analysis in context. So, further historical evaluation will be limited in this section.

<sup>6</sup>Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement*, trans. A. G. Hebert (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 79.

<sup>7</sup>Aulén states, "The conflict and triumph of Christ is God's own conflict and triumph; it is God who in Christ reconciles the world to Himself. The Incarnation is the necessary presupposition of the Atonement, and the Atonement the completion of the Incarnation." Ibid., 151, 19. Evangelicals have claimed that "Aulén ends up attacking not merely a particular view of the atonement, but the place of the incarnation!" Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 134. Though Aulén may understand the incarnation differently than evangelicals, it seems unwarranted from a closer reading of his work, however, to suggest that he is "attacking . . . the place of the incarnation." Ibid.

is seen to “be altogether involved with the idea of conflict and victory.”<sup>8</sup> Therefore, in the atonement, “Christ—*Christus Victor*—fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world, the ‘tyrants’ under which mankind is in bondage and suffering, and in Him God reconciles the world to Himself.”<sup>9</sup> The *Christus Victor* perspective on the cross, then, shapes the mission and history of the church, beginning with the apostolic period until today.<sup>10</sup> In each of these ways, Aulén provides helpful insights.

However, Aulén’s treatment of the divine warrior theme and Christology has a number of deficiencies. First, there is the problem of Aulén’s historical analysis in which his theological agenda often seems to overshadow the historical facts.<sup>11</sup> As a result, Letham points out that Aulén “almost certainly overreached himself in his vigorous support of the idea.”<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the combination of his focus on the classic view and diminishment of the Latin view means that Aulén fails to recognize the presence of penal substitution among major theologians, which could have helped him to unify the two theories.<sup>13</sup> Second, there is the problem of Aulén’s practical application in which he fails

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<sup>8</sup>Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 76.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>11</sup>Ferguson notes, “Aulén stated that his only interest in this question was historical and not apologetic. But it seems clear enough from the theological construction in his later systematic study *The Faith of the Christian Church* that he operated within his own theological agenda.” Sinclair B. Ferguson, “Christus Victor et Propitiator: The Death of Christ, Substitute and Conqueror,” in *For the Fame of God’s Name: Essays in Honor of John Piper*, ed. Sam Storms and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 175.

<sup>12</sup>Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ*, Contours of Christian Theology (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 162.

<sup>13</sup>Bloesch observes, “Aulén has done the Christian world a signal service by recapturing the vision of the church fathers in describing the atonement as God’s act of deliverance in Jesus Christ. Yet he did not do justice to the concepts of penal redemption and satisfaction, which are certainly found in Luther, Calvin and Barth. The classic view as he has delineated it needs to be united with certain aspects of the Latin view particularly as found in Thomas Aquinas and Calvin.” Donald G. Bloesch, *Jesus Christ: Savior*

to evaluate how the common understanding of Christ as warrior king throughout the history of the church has shaped the mission of the church over the centuries.<sup>14</sup> Third, there is the problem of Aulén’s theological isolationism in which he denies the possibility of interconnectivity between the satisfaction and classic models.<sup>15</sup> Stott critiques Aulén for treating the two as “mutually incompatible alternatives.”<sup>16</sup> Aulén demonstrates this problem by not only claiming a dichotomy between the classic and Latin models but also neglecting significant biblical passages addressing the issue (Col 2:13-15; Heb 2:14-17).<sup>17</sup> Jeffery, Ovey and Sach effectively summarize these critiques of Aulén:

In summary, Aulén was right that the Bible depicts the cross as God’s victory over evil. However, in order to see that victory in its biblical fullness and richness we must take account of its relationship to God’s justice. Penal substitution is at the heart of this, for it was as Christ bore in our place the penal suffering due to us for our sin that he removed Satan’s power of accusation; thereby disarming him. Penal substitution recognizes that God must *punish* evil in order for his defeat of Satan to be fully consistent with his righteousness. It is ironic that this biblical theme, which Aulén criticized so strongly, is in fact necessary for a full appreciation of the victory

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& *Lord* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 157.

<sup>14</sup>Horton says, “One of the problems with Aulén’s approach to *Christus Victor* is a disconnect between how Christ’s defeat of the powers on the cross practically applies to the spiritual warfare of believers.” Michael S. Horton, *Lord and Servant: A Covenant Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 243.

<sup>15</sup>Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach declare, “While Aulén is right to draw attention to the biblical theme of conquest (e.g., Eph. 4:8-10; Col. 2:15), he fails to explain adequately *how* the victory is won. This leads to a number of serious deficiencies in his work, not least an obscuring of the close biblical connection between victory and penal substitution.” Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 139.

<sup>16</sup>Stott asserts, “Another just criticism of Aulén’s thesis is that he made too sharp a contrast between the satisfaction and the victory motifs, as if they are mutually incompatible alternatives. But the New Testament does not oblige us to choose between them, for it includes them both. Thus, God took the initiative and won the victory through Christ, but one of the tyrants from whom he liberated us was the very guilt which, according to Anselm, he died to atone for.” John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 225–26; Timothy George, “The Atonement in Martin Luther’s Theology,” in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological & Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 275.

<sup>17</sup>Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 91. Of course, because Aulén’s book is a work of historical theology, his failure to address these key passages cannot be considered a major weakness. However, his oversight of them here and in other works creates cumulative concern.

motif he was so concerned to emphasize.<sup>18</sup>

As stated in the conclusion of the previous chapter, Aulén was largely correct in what he affirmed about the *Christus Victor* model but mistaken in what he denied. This section evaluating his perspective paves the way to a closer look at the treatment of Christ the warrior king's atonement in biblical theology and its application to systematic theology.

### **Christ the Warrior King's Atonement and Biblical Theology**

What does the warfare worldview of the Bible teach about the nature of the atonement? This section seeks to show that biblical theology presents Christ the warrior king's crucifixion both as a wrath-bearing satisfaction of God's holiness and a war-making conquest of God's enemies. After summarizing how the unified storyline of Scripture portrays the atonement as vicarious victory, it will then focus on key passages that develop the penal and polemical nature of the atonement.<sup>19</sup>

First, the unfolding of redemptive history points to the atonement as an act of holy war carried out by the conquering warrior messiah. On the one hand, the atonement is *holy war* because Christ satisfies the wrath of God (Rom 3:24-26), brings about reconciliation with the divine warrior (2 Cor 5:15-19), and imputes righteousness to those who are united to him by faith (2 Cor 5:20-21). On the other hand, the atonement is *holy war* because it is a cosmic conquest that defeats Satan (1 John 3:8), overcomes the "principalities and powers" (Eph 6:10; Col 2:15), abolishes death (2 Tim 1:10),<sup>20</sup> and

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<sup>18</sup>Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 142.

<sup>19</sup>Because of space limitations, it focuses only on the most prominent passages on the issue.

<sup>20</sup>George Eldon Ladd, *The Last Things: An Eschatology for Laymen* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 115–16.

transfers believers from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of Christ (Col 1:13).<sup>21</sup> The cross as conquest over God's enemies is predicted in the Old Testament (Gen 3:15; Isa 59:16-17), is initiated in the incarnational ministry of Jesus (Luke 11:21-22; John 12:31-33), is achieved in the Cross (Col 2:13-15; Heb 2:14-15), is confirmed in the resurrection (Acts 2:24; Eph 1:20-23), and is consummated in the second coming (1 Cor 15:24-28; Phil 2:9-11).<sup>22</sup>

Second, Colossians 2:13-15 declares that the cross's conquest comes through cancellation—triumph over Christ's enemies results from the satisfaction of sin's debt.<sup>23</sup> Schreiner states, "Perhaps the most important text on Christ's victory over evil powers is Col. 2:15."<sup>24</sup> Specifically, this Pauline passage addresses both the means and ends of the warrior king's vicarious victory.<sup>25</sup> This passage builds on what Paul has already stated earlier in the epistle (Col 1:13-22)—Jesus is the image of God who rescues sinners from

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<sup>21</sup>Moore adds, "Redemption is the transfer from the satanic kingdom to the eschatological Kingdom that God the Father has prepared for His Messiah (Col 1:13), a transfer that is by definition a violent act of subduing 'the god of this age' (2 Cor 4:3-4, NIV) or 'the prince of the power of the air' (Eph 2:1-7)." Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 106.

<sup>22</sup>Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 231–39.

<sup>23</sup>Gaffin asserts, "Colossians 2:13-15 is particularly instructive for showing how the themes of penal substitution and Christ as victor are inseparable and mutually conditioning." Richard Gaffin, "Atonement in the Pauline Corpus," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological & Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 159.

<sup>24</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 370. "A key passage relating to the manner in which Christ overcame Satan and delivered his people is Colossians 2:13-15," Leahy observes. "We are shown that when Christ dealt with sin, thus satisfying divine justice, Satan's chief weapon was struck from his grasp and his forces were despoiled." Leahy, *The Victory of the Lamb*, 75.

<sup>25</sup>Colossians 2:14-15 "connects his triumph to the cross and precisely to the cancellation of the bond of our debt (as defined by the ordinances of the law) when Jesus was crucified," notes Blocher. "Then and there were the principalities and powers, the chief of whom is called Satan, 'disarmed.' The action concerns judicial claims. Since God can be expected to uphold the rules he has set, we can also expect that the cancellation was obtained through the payment of the legal debt." Henri Blocher, "Agnus Victor: The Atonement as Victory and Vicarious Punishment," in *What Does It Mean to Be Saved? Broadening Evangelical Horizons of Salvation*, ed. John G. Stackhouse (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 86.

Satan's captivity and reconciles all things to himself as he ushers in a new creation.<sup>26</sup> Paul contends in Colossians 2:13 that, though sinners are dead in their sins (see Eph 2:1; Rom 6:23), they receive forgiveness and new life as they are united to the Resurrected One by faith.<sup>27</sup> Then, 2:14 makes clear that the foundational means by which the gospel's ends are accomplished is the satisfaction of God's wrath that results from canceling the legal demands of sin through the atonement.<sup>28</sup> As a result, 2:15 indicates that the warrior king's substitutionary sacrifice enables God to triumph over his kingdom rivals in Christ.<sup>29</sup>

Third, Hebrews 2:14-17 contends that the atonement's defeat of death depends on the propitiation made by the messianic priest-king. This passage shows that Christ the warrior king's atonement embraces a common humanity, defeats a common enemy, achieves a common victory through a common propitiation. According to Hebrews 2:11-13, Christ "shares in humanity" so that "they can participate in the victory over death

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<sup>26</sup>Commenting on Col 1:13-14, Ferguson points out, "In Christ the saints are rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into Christ's kingdom; in Christ we have redemption through the forgiveness of sins." Ferguson, "Christus Victor et Propitiator," 183.

<sup>27</sup>Stott points out that "Christ's work of sin-bearing was finished on the cross, that the victory over the devil, sin and death was won there, and that the resurrection was to vindicate the Jesus whom men had rejected, to declare with power that he is the Son of God, and publicly to confirm that his sin-bearing death had been effective for the forgiveness of sins." Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 233; Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 371.

<sup>28</sup>Stott says that "it is surely significant that Paul brackets what Christ did to the *cheirographon* (canceling and removing it) with what he did to the principalities and powers (disarming and conquering them). The bond he nailed to the cross; the powers he defeated by the cross. . . . The important point is that both happened together." Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 230; Sinclair B. Ferguson, "Preaching the Atonement," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological & Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 436; Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 104.

<sup>29</sup>Torrance describes how Christ makes an "open show of all the powers of evil and darkness in manifesting that even their ultimate assaults against him in death itself could not avail." Thomas F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 78-79; Robert L. Reymond, *Jesus Divine Messiah: The New and Old Testament Witness* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2003), 383; Leahy, *The Victory of the Lamb*, 75.



with him.”<sup>30</sup> Taking on this “common humanity” was essential for Christ to be able to defeat mankind’s common enemy, death.<sup>31</sup> The incarnation and atonement defeat a common enemy—not just death but the one who holds the power of death, the devil himself (Heb 2:14).<sup>32</sup> As the last Adam, Jesus takes on the common enemy of death,<sup>33</sup> which entered the world when Satan defeated the first Adam.<sup>34</sup>

The most common type of death for a criminal (crucifixion) achieves the most uncommon type of victory over God’s enemies (conquest).<sup>35</sup> The experience of death by Christ shatters the power of death for Satan.<sup>36</sup> Through the unified work of the incarnation, atonement, and resurrection, Christ conquers death and frees humanity from its power.<sup>37</sup> This common victory comes through a common propitiation. How does this

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<sup>30</sup>Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 389.

<sup>31</sup>Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 113.

<sup>32</sup>O’Brien observes, “But in Hebrews death is an instrument of the devil which has been overcome by Christ, not welcomed as a release. Men and women are still subject to death itself, but Christ by his death has removed its terrors. His exaltation confirms his victory and opens up the way of access to God that renders death and the fear it inspires irrelevant (Heb. 10:19-20; 13:20-21).” *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>33</sup>Maximus the Confessor asserts, “Human will, out of cowardice, tends away from suffering, and humankind, against its own will, remains utterly dominated by the fear of death, and in the desire to live, clings to its slavery to pleasure.” As cited in Mark J. Edwards, ed., *We Believe in the Crucified and Risen Lord*, Ancient Christian Doctrine (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 132.

<sup>34</sup>William Lane points out that Satan did not “possess control over death inherently but gained his power when he seduced humankind to rebel against God.” William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, vol. 47A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1991), 61.

<sup>35</sup>O’Brien writes, “If ever death appeared to be triumphant, it was when Jesus was executed by the imperial might of Rome and breathed his last on the cross.” He continues, “But he did not remain in its clutches, and within a short time his followers were joyfully proclaiming the crucified Jesus to be the conqueror of death.” O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 115.

<sup>36</sup>Ladd asserts, “Through his death he has destroyed him who has the power of death, i.e., the devil, that he might deliver men and women who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage (2:14-15).” George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 630.

<sup>37</sup>O’Brien says, “The purpose of Christ’s incarnation, according to vv. 14b-15, is twofold: first,

occur? Hebrews 2:17 indicates that Jesus makes propitiation for the sins of the people as their merciful and faithful high priest.<sup>38</sup> Again, penal substitution achieves victorious conquest.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, peace with God brings about peace over God's enemies.

Fourth, the writings of John demonstrate that Christ the warrior king is the lion who conquers because he is the lamb who was slain.<sup>40</sup> In 1 John 3:8, the apostle confirms that the purpose of the Son of God's incarnational assault on the kingdom of darkness was "to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).<sup>41</sup> Yet, elsewhere in the letter, it not only describes Jesus as our propitiation (1 John 2:2) but also notes the purpose for which God sent his Son was "to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).<sup>42</sup> So, if John claims God's atonement purposes included both the devil's destruction and sin's propitiation, then it seems reasonable to conclude that victory through vicarious satisfaction was the objective of the cross.<sup>43</sup>

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that by his death Jesus might break the power of the evil tyrant who held sway over death; and, second, that through this same death he might rescue those who had been enslaved." O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 114; Derek Tidball, *The Message of Holiness*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 241.

<sup>38</sup>O'Brien observes that the author of Hebrews "assumes that divine wrath threatened his listeners, just as it threatened Moses' generation (3:7-4:13; 10:26-31; 12:29). Christ's sacrifice not only sets aside sin (9:26) and purifies people (1:3; 9:13-14); it also delivers men and women from judgment (10:26-31; 12:29) because wrath is averted." O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 122.

<sup>39</sup>Morris explains, "Since the meaning 'expiate' cannot be demonstrated anywhere we should understand the verb in Hebrews 2 as elsewhere in the sense 'to make propitiation', 'to turn away anger'." Leon L. Morris, *The Atonement: Its Meaning and Significance* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1984), 171.

<sup>40</sup>Because the atonement in the Gospel of John was already discussed in chapter four, this section will focus on 1 John and Revelation.

<sup>41</sup>Boyd suggests that "in the understanding of the New Testament, Christ came to earth primarily to accomplish what this interpretation of Genesis 3:15 proclaims: 'to destroy the works of the devil' (1 Jn 3:8)." Boyd, *God at War*, 242.

<sup>42</sup>Ferguson, "Christus Victor et Propitiator," 181.

<sup>43</sup>Ferguson posits, "For John, then, the work of Christ has these two aspects: it is a propitiatory sacrifice made by the sinless one; in addition, in that same act, the Devil's work is destroyed by the one in whom he could find no foothold. The altar of propitiation of God is at one and the same time the arena of

This conclusion is further warranted by John's portrayal of Jesus in Revelation as the conquering lion of Judah (Rev 5:5; 12:10)<sup>44</sup> who is worthy of praise as divine warrior king (Rev 5:12-14)<sup>45</sup> because he is the lamb who was slain (Rev 5:6)<sup>46</sup> and satisfied God through the sacrificial ransom of his shed blood (Rev 5:9-10; 12:11).<sup>47</sup> He ascends to the royal throne of the warrior king in exaltation because he descended to the execution tree of the imperial authorities in humiliation (Rev 7:15-17). Combining John's insights in the epistle and the apocalypse reveals that the reason the warrior lion is worthy of praise as messianic king is because he achieved victory as the substitutionary, sacrificial lamb.<sup>48</sup> How does this biblical data fit together to clarify the nature of the cross? How does Scripture inform the connection between these key atonement theories. Now that the major texts on the relationship between *Christus Victor* and penal substitution have been evaluated, it is possible to reflect on the systematic relationship between these two atonement models.

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conflict against and victory over Satan." Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Longman and Reid state that Jesus, as lion of Judah, is worthy to open the scroll precisely because he is "the Davidic warrior Messiah." Tremper Longman and Daniel G. Reid, *God Is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 181. See also Ferguson, "Christus Victor et Propitiator," 184.

<sup>45</sup>Longman and Reid write, "The slain Lamb will emerge in Revelation as a figure of strength and warfare," adding that "the exaltation of the Lamb to the throne (5:6) is reinforced by the acclamation of song (5:12-13)." Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 182.

<sup>46</sup>Longman and Reid point out, "When the seer looks, he sees not a lion but a Lamb with seven horns, looking as if it had been slain (Rev 5:6). The paradox of the triumph of Christ in the cross is thus summed up in visual images." Ibid., 181.

<sup>47</sup>Commenting on Rev 12:11, Boyd states, "Our freedom and our victory, we again see, are predicated on Christ's shed blood and hence his victory over our former ruler, Satan." Boyd, *God at War*, 260, 227.

<sup>48</sup>Ferguson summarizes, "In essence then, for John, since it is by the cross that Satan is defeated, it is through the propitiatory character of Christ's sacrifice that it is accomplished." Ferguson, "Christus Victor et Propitiator," 181.

## Christ the Warrior King's Atonement And Systematic Theology

What is the relationship between *Christus Victor* and penal substitution?

Several theologians have attempted to resolve this question.<sup>49</sup> First, theologians like Aulén have seen a major dichotomy between the two models.<sup>50</sup> Second, thinkers including Boyd have contended for the primacy of *Christus Victor*, leaving little room for penal substitution on the cross.<sup>51</sup> Third, many evangelicals have elevated penal substitution above all other theories and relegated *Christus Victor* to one of many ancillary implications of the atonement.<sup>52</sup> This dissertation suggests a fourth way, which has been previously developed in limited scope by other theologians.<sup>53</sup> This section argues for an organic relationship between penal substitution and *Christus Victor* that (1) affirms the primacy of penal substitution, (2) recognizes the necessity of *Christus Victor*, and (3) contends for the centrality of Christ the warrior king's vicarious victory in the warfare worldview of Scripture.

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<sup>49</sup>Blocher briefly surveys the options for the relationship between *Christus Victor* and penal substitution. Blocher, "Agnus Victor," 69.

<sup>50</sup>Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 91.

<sup>51</sup>Boersma explains, "There is a sense, therefore, in which the *Christus Victor* theme is the ultimate metaphor. Moral influence and penal representation are subordinate to *Christus Victor* inasmuch as they are the means toward an end." Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 182; Gregory A. Boyd, "Christus Victor View," in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, ed. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 23-49.

<sup>52</sup>Jeffery, Ovey and Sach comment on these secondary models: "Far from being viable alternatives to penal substitution, they are outworkings of it. As the hub from which all of these other doctrines fan out, penal substitution is surely central." Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 211.

<sup>53</sup>For example, Horton suggests that a "covenantal approach" would seek the integration of "sacrifice and conquest." Horton, *Lord and Servant*, 243. Others who recognize the need for integration include Moore and Ferguson.

**The primacy of penal substitution.** This dissertation has centered on the cross as conflict, evaluating the theme of Christ as warrior king from a biblical, historical, and theological perspective. However, it is rooted in the recognition of the primacy of penal substitution. What is penal substitution? Schreiner defines it: “The Father, because of his love for human beings, sent his Son (who offered himself willingly and gladly) to satisfy God’s justice, so that Christ took the place of sinners. The punishment and penalty we deserved was laid on Jesus Christ instead of us, so that in the cross both God’s holiness and love are manifested.”<sup>54</sup> The atonement is penal in the sense that Christ took on the punishment of sin (Rom 3:23-26), and the cross is substitutionary in the sense that Christ vicariously stands in our place to take the penalty we deserve (2 Cor 5:15-21).<sup>55</sup>

Why is penal substitution primary? Penal substitution is the primary model of the atonement because God is the primary figure in the atonement.<sup>56</sup> From the warfare worldview of Scripture, several reasons for its primacy stand out.<sup>57</sup> First, penal substitution remains the only path to victory. As the biblical passages in the previous section repeatedly show, the means of Christ’s warfare-making victory was through his wrath-satisfying propitiation on the cross (Col 2:13-15; Heb 2:14-17).<sup>58</sup> Second, penal

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<sup>54</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner, “Penal Substitution View,” in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, ed. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 67.

<sup>55</sup>Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 80–85.

<sup>56</sup>For further support of the primacy of penal substitution, see Schreiner, “Penal Substitution View,” 93–94.

<sup>57</sup>Rather than re-conceptualize other arguments for the primacy of penal substitution, this paragraph seeks to make a new contribution to the literature by discussing how the Bible’s warfare-orientation lends itself to the centrality of penal substitutionary atonement.

<sup>58</sup>Dever and Lawrence assert that “the idea of ransom is not a theory that stands in opposition to the idea of substitution. Substitutionary atonement is the reality of how God has brought reconciliation through Christ, and ransom, understood rightly, is one image, one metaphor that the Bible uses to describe that. Penal substitution itself, though, is no metaphor. It is the reality.” Mark Dever and Michael Lawrence,

substitution retains the primacy of holiness for victory in holy war.<sup>59</sup> The storyline of Scripture shows that God fights for his people in their covenant faithfulness (cf. Josh 6).<sup>60</sup> But it also reveals that no one has covenantal holiness but Christ (Rom 3:10-11).<sup>61</sup> Therefore, this priest-king (Ps 110) can conquer the enemies of God because he alone embodies the righteousness of God (Rev 5:1-12).<sup>62</sup> Third, penal substitution reflects the covenantal character of the kingdom community. Throughout Scripture, God's people must reflect God's righteousness to be a part of his covenantal kingdom.<sup>63</sup> The only way sinners who have rejected the rulership of the divine warrior can be restored as rightful citizens of his kingdom is through the imputation of Christ the warrior king's righteousness by faith union with him.<sup>64</sup>

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*It Is Well: Expositions on Substitutionary Atonement* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 73.

<sup>59</sup>Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 37.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 31–61.

<sup>61</sup>Vanhoozer suggests a connection between the covenantal obedience of Christ and the saving significance of the cross by noting that “the biblical framework for interpreting the saving significance of Jesus’ death is *covenantal* rather than merely legal.” Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “The Atonement in Postmodernity,” in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological & Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 380.

<sup>62</sup>Throughout Old Testament warfare, priests actively engaged in kingdom conflict. Why? They were involved because holiness was the key to victory in holy war. This reality carries two key implications: (1) It explains why the Old Testament’s messianic expectation anticipated a coming priest-king who would wage holy war through holiness, and (2) it points to the way that Christ’s righteousness as priest-king would uniquely qualify him to crush his enemies through the crucial conflict of the cross. Therefore, the biblical imagery of Christ as warrior king is not just tied to his kingly office. Instead, it also includes his priestly (and prophetic) activity.

<sup>63</sup>Therefore, as Packer points out, the storyline of holiness that shapes penal substitution is intertwined with the storyline of kingdom warfare that shapes *Christus Victor*: “If we wish to speak of the ‘doctrine’ of penal substitution, we should remember that this model is a dramatic, kerygmatic picturing of divine action, much more like Aulén’s ‘classic idea’ of divine victory (though Aulén never saw this) than it is like the defensive formula-models that we call the Nicene ‘doctrine’ of the Trinity and the Chalcedonian ‘doctrine’ of the person of Christ.” J. I. Packer, “What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution,” in *In My Place Condemned He Stood: Celebrating the Glory of the Atonement*, ed. Mark Dever (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 68.

<sup>64</sup>As Klooster notes, “Christ is the ascended king ruling the kingdom in the name of the Father.

Though penal substitution is the primary foundation of the atonement, this primacy does not put it at odds with other models of the atonement like *Christus Victor*.<sup>65</sup> Instead, it is compatible with other atonement theories.<sup>66</sup> Though some might think that the primacy of penal substitution necessitates the neglect of *Christus Victor*, the opposite is actually the case. Penal substitution “sheds light on Christ’s victory over evil powers, explaining in particular how the devil is stripped of his power to accuse.”<sup>67</sup> As a result, though penal substitution is “the essence of the atonement,” it “does not exhaust its meaning, whether on the individual, corporate or cosmic levels.”<sup>68</sup> If penal substitution is primary to the atonement, then what does it mean to suggest that *Christus Victor* is necessary for a proper understanding of the cross?

**The necessity of *Christus Victor*.** “Aulén has reminded us that an account of the atonement that does not include the theme of cosmic conquest is inadequate,” Horton declares.<sup>69</sup> If the kingdom of God is the fundamental theme of redemptive history, then it is reasonable to expect that the atonement is of necessity an act of kingdom warfare. If

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All believers are citizens of that kingdom.” Fred H. Klooster, “The Biblical Method of Salvation: A Case for Continuity,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 159.

<sup>65</sup>Horton maintains, “Neither recapitulation nor a *Christus Victor* model can establish the vicarious-substitutionary formula, but the third provides the basis for the other two.” Horton, *Lord and Servant*, 252.

<sup>66</sup>Letham explains that “the idea of satisfaction or penal substitution does not exclude other theories. It is compatible with the conquest theory and can also see subjective change occurring in human beings as a consequence of what Christ did on the cross.” Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 174–75.

<sup>67</sup>Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 147.

<sup>68</sup>Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 174–75.

<sup>69</sup>Horton, *Lord and Servant*, 243. Ferguson adds, “Any adequate understanding of the atonement must include within it this aspect of Christ’s disarming of the powers of darkness.” Ferguson, “*Christus Victor et Propitiator*,” 185.

the divine warrior's messianic mission hinges on the defeat of his kingdom rivals (1 Jn 3:8), then it is a necessity that the cross is the point of this decisive victory. Put simply, the centrality of the kingdom requires the necessity of *Christus Victor*.

The necessity of the *Christus Victor* theory is realized whenever the warfare-orientation of the cross is recognized as (1) all-important, (2) all-encompassing, but (3) not all-inclusive. First, the conquest of the cross is all-important because it resonates with the central theme of Scripture, the kingdom.<sup>70</sup> In other words, Christ the warrior king's defeat of his rivals through his death and resurrection inaugurates the Christocentric kingdom that is the focal point of all of Scripture. Moreover, *Christus Victor*'s prominence throughout historical theology reaffirms its importance as a necessary component of the cross.<sup>71</sup> Because *Christus Victor* is all-important to the storyline of Scripture and the storyline of church history, it is a necessity for a biblical treatment of the atonement.

Second, the *Christus Victor* model is all-encompassing as it unites the warfare-oriented nature of the kingdom with the wrath-satisfying nature of penal substitution.<sup>72</sup> *Christus Victor* encompasses the kingdom-centered warfare worldview of Scripture.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Boyd says, "This model centers on the truth that through the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Christ, God defeated the devil." Boyd, "Christus Victor View," 24.

<sup>71</sup>Beilby and Eddy point out that its essential nature is confirmed by historical theology as "this view seems to have dominated the atonement theology of the early church for the first millennium (thus the label 'classic view')." James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, eds., *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 12.

<sup>72</sup>Yet, *Christus Victor* is still largely neglected or minimized in most evangelical appropriations. N. T. Wright posits an explanation for this absence: "The larger story concerns the victory over evil as a whole that was won, according to the New Testament, on the cross." He continues, "It quickly becomes clear, of course, why this theme is regularly ignored: there is an obvious credibility gap between such a claim and the realities of the world." Marcus J. Borg and N. T. Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 2007), 105.

<sup>73</sup>For example, Boyd contends, "The *Christus Victor* model is the only model that does full



Boyd takes this argument one step further by suggesting that *Christus Victor* alone can embody the storyline of Scripture.<sup>74</sup> In contrast, the next section will argue that the unification of *Christus Victor* with penal substitution (in an approach termed vicarious victory) is the best way to view the cross as encompassing the warfare worldview of Scripture.<sup>75</sup> *Christus Victor* encompasses the warfare-oriented scope of Christ's life and ministry. Ferguson asserts that "the whole of Christ's ministry is seen as a conflict with Satan."<sup>76</sup> As the next section will demonstrate, this kingdom conquest culminates in the triumph that results from Christ's substitutionary sacrifice.

*Christus Victor* encompasses the primacy of penal substitution. Christ's victory over his rivals is fundamentally a covenantal conflict, containing moral and legal components. It is a moral issue because the kingdom rivalry emerged with the inception of sin at the fall (Gen 3:1-7).<sup>77</sup> It is a legal issue because Satan's parasitic power comes from his accusations against guilty kingdom insurgents who violate the law (Rev 12:10). Therefore, *Christus Victor* encompasses the primacy of penal substitution because it is

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justice to the centrality of the motif of Christ's victory over Satan in the New Testament." Boyd, "Christus Victor View," 46. This section's forthcoming argument contests Boyd's claim.

<sup>74</sup>Boyd says, "The *Christus Victor* model is arguably able to encompass within a single coherent framework the elements of truth expressed in other models of the atonement, but so far as I can see, the converse is not true." Ibid., 47.

<sup>75</sup>Though Marcus Borg does not hold to the *Christus Victor* approach, he insightfully notes that it is "the story of Pharaoh and the Exodus projected onto a cosmic screen." Borg and Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus*, 138.

<sup>76</sup>Ferguson, "Christus Victor et Propitiator," 176. According to Boyd, *Christus Victor* "sees every aspect of Christ's life—from his incarnation to his resurrection—as being most fundamentally *about one thing*: victoriously manifesting the loving kingdom of God over and against the destructive, oppressive kingdom of Satan." Boyd, "Christus Victor View," 40, 42.

<sup>77</sup>Jeffery, Ovey and Sach state, "Indeed to exclude the idea of justice from God's victory would be to represent God as immoral. It would be impossible to see God's victory as anything other than a naked exercise of power – God was able to conquer the devil because he is stronger." Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 142.

only through the satisfaction of sin's debt and the dissolution of Satan's power of accusation that the cross can achieve lasting victory (Col 2:14-15).<sup>78</sup> Because *Christus Victor* encompasses the storyline of Scripture, the scope of Christ's ministry, and the primacy of penal substitution, it is a necessary component of any biblical analysis of the atonement.

Third, *Christus Victor* is not all-inclusive, even if it is a necessity. In particular, it is not all-inclusive because any appropriation of the *Christus Victor* model on its own is unable to explain why the cross was necessary for victory.<sup>79</sup> In other words, what is it about the cross that requires it to be the means through which the divine warrior achieves victory? It is not enough simply to assert that the cross brings conquest.<sup>80</sup> Instead, it must explain how. Proponents struggle to give an answer, with Boyd conceding that "at the end of the day we must humbly acknowledge that our understanding is severely limited."<sup>81</sup> If *Christus Victor* cannot explain why the atonement was necessary to defeat evil, then it cannot stand alone as the primary model of the atonement.<sup>82</sup> An atonement

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<sup>78</sup>Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach add, "Satan's defeat cannot be seen as a good thing unless he *deserved* it, unless *justice* required it. The Bible presents it in exactly these moral categories." Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Leahy comments, "While Aulén has much of value to say on the subject, it must be remembered that 'victory' depicts the result, rather than the method, of Christ's redemptive work. But Scripture also tells us clearly and repeatedly of the way in which Satan was disarmed and defeated. There is no conflict between viewing the cross as a mighty victory, yet also a sacrifice to satisfy a holy God. Indeed, it was that very satisfaction achieved through Christ's substitutionary death that resulted in victory." Leahy, *The Victory of the Lamb*, 75.

<sup>80</sup>Moore writes, "Many of these proposals, such as that of Boyd, argue that this '*Christus Victor*' model is more appropriate to the Kingdom motif of Scripture, especially in light of the insights of inaugurated eschatology regarding the present kingdom of Christ and in relation to a cosmic, holistic view of redemption." Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 114.

<sup>81</sup>Boyd, "Christus Victor View," 37.

<sup>82</sup>Bruce Reichenbach notes that "it does seem puzzling that we have little idea of how the atonement works on the *Christus Victor* view, especially if this view is the essential and central understanding of the atonement. Indeed, describing how the atonement is accomplished has been a major

approach that merges penal substitution and *Christus Victor*, however, is able to explain how “the New Testament’s Kingdom-oriented view of salvation” unites with “a view of the atonement that is pictured repeatedly in Scripture as both penal and substitutionary.”<sup>83</sup> If *Christus Victor* is indeed a necessary part of the nature of the atonement, how should evangelicals understand its relation to penal substitution?

**The integration of penal substitution and *Christus Victor*.** Christ the warrior king is both dragon slayer and divine satisfier. The polemic and propitiatory atonement themes must stand together.<sup>84</sup> As Moore declares, “Sometimes Christians have debated whether we are saved from the Devil or from the wrath of God. Clearly, in Scripture the answer is both.”<sup>85</sup> The problem with an isolated *Christus Victor* model is that, though it is warfare-oriented in its focus, it is not warfare-oriented enough.<sup>86</sup> It cannot fully explain the means of conquest apart from a connection to penal substitution.<sup>87</sup> The problem with an isolated penal substitution model is that, though it reflects the Godward-oriented

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stumbling block for accepting the *Christus Victor* model.” Bruce R. Reichenbach, “Healing Response,” in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, ed. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 59.

<sup>83</sup>Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 114.

<sup>84</sup>Smeaton states that, when it comes to misunderstandings of the *Christus Victor* model, “all the mistakes have arisen from not perceiving with sufficient clearness *how* the triumph could be celebrated on His cross.” George Smeaton, *The Apostles’ Doctrine of the Atonement* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1870), 308.

<sup>85</sup>Russell D. Moore, *Tempted and Tried: Temptation and the Triumph of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 54.

<sup>86</sup>Ferguson posits, “A comprehensively biblical exposition of the work of Christ recognizes that the atonement, which terminates on God (in propitiation) and on man (in forgiveness), also terminates on Satan (in the destruction of his sway over believers). And it does this last precisely because of the first two.” Ferguson, “Christus Victor et Propitiator,” 185.

<sup>87</sup>Packer comments, “Christ’s death had its effect first on God, who was hereby *propitiated* (or, better, who hereby propitiated himself), and only because it had this effect did it become an overthrowing of the powers of darkness.” Packer, “What Did the Cross Achieve?,” 72.

storyline of Scripture, it is not reflective of this drama enough.<sup>88</sup> It cannot fully explain how the satisfaction of wrath relates to the story of kingdom warfare that permeates the narrative of the Bible apart from a connection to *Christus Victor*.<sup>89</sup>

But how do these two models of the atonement relate to one another?<sup>90</sup> So far, prior sections have argued for the primacy of penal substitution and the necessity of *Christus Victor*. Perhaps another way to put it is that penal substitution is the first among equals, with *Christus Victor* in a necessary but subordinate position.<sup>91</sup> This section will show that the atonement unites penal substitution and *Christus Victor* in such a way that covenantal vindication leads to victorious conquest.<sup>92</sup> In the process, it will suggest a new term for this unified atonement theory—vicarious victory—that embodies the propitiatory and polemic nature of the cross. The atonement is *vicarious* victory because

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<sup>88</sup>Cole levels this criticism specifically at Vanhoozer: “There is a weakness in Vanhoozer (2005) on this point. The idea of drama that he magnificently works with assumes conflict. However, there are no references in his subject index to ‘Satan’, ‘devil’ or ‘demons’. The *Christus Victor* theme, while present in the work, is muted.” Graham Cole, *God the Peacemaker: How Atonement Brings Shalom* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 130. In other words, recognizing the drama of kingdom conflict throughout Scripture can only help efforts to highlight penal substitution.

<sup>89</sup>As Horton points out, a covenantal approach to the cross gives “more concrete form to the cosmic conquest by orienting it to the progress of redemption in history, rather than leaving it hanging in the air.” Horton, *Lord and Servant*, 243.

<sup>90</sup>Blocher phrases the question another way: “The main query is basic indeed: *How* is the battle fought and the victory gained? If the metaphor is to bear doctrinal fruit, it should yield at least some intelligence of the mode and process.” Blocher, “Agnus Victor,” 78.

<sup>91</sup>Many articulations of penal substitution relegate *Christus Victor* to a peripheral implication of the cross on par with other effects such as moral example or reconciliation. Therefore, in many cases, the connection between penal substitution and warfare is marginalized instead of fully developed. This section’s appropriation suggests that, though *Christus Victor* is subordinate to and derivative of penal substitution, the storyline of Scripture presents these two models as two sides of the same coin that are inseparably linked and produce the implications highlighted in other theories. Their mutual distinctiveness enhances rather than diminishes the importance of both approaches.

<sup>92</sup>To suggest that penal substitution brings about Christ’s victory is not a novel concept. What is unique about the forthcoming section is (1) its new terminology for this interrelationship (vicarious victory), (2) its specificity about the three ways propitiation actually achieves liberation, and (3) its integration of these concepts with the unfolding kingdom narrative of Scripture.

it is substitutionary and penal. It is vicarious *victory* because it is a conquest of all God's enemies. Vicarious victory demonstrates the synthesis of penal substitution and *Christus Victor* in three categories: (1) recapitulation as the restoration of dominion, (2) redemption as the rescue from sin, and (3) resolution as the triumph of holy war.

First, the vicarious victory of Christ the warrior king recapitulates the redemptive history of the kingdom through the restoration of dominion. The atonement does this as the Second Adam, Jesus, succeeds where all others failed (Luke 4:1-13). He shatters the curse of sin by disarming the power of Satan's deception (Gal 3:13).<sup>93</sup> Throughout the storyline of Scripture, dominion depends on holiness—only the righteous are fit to reign.<sup>94</sup> This righteous reign was lost in the fall when “Satan had gained mastery of the human race,” states Leithart, “by defeating a man in holy war.”<sup>95</sup> The chief weapon by which the serpent usurped Adam's authority was deception (Gen 3:1-7). To restore this forsaken rulership, the divine warrior's first messianic promise is about waging war against God's enemies, not assuaging the wrath of God's holiness (Gen 3:15).<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>Leithart observes, “By paying the debt that Adam's children owed to the Father, Jesus, the Last Adam, has delivered them from slavery to Satan. He is the propitiation for sin, Jesus delivers His people from the covenant curse.” Peter J. Leithart, *The Kingdom and the Power: Rediscovering the Centrality of the Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1993), 39. As previously discussed in the chapter on the New Testament, however, Satan continues to wield the power of deception in diminished form during this overlap of the ages, despite being disarmed through the cross.

<sup>94</sup>Christopher Wright comments on this connection between righteous character and rulership: “With this word, God is passing on to human hands a delegated from of God's own kingly authority over the whole of his creation.” He adds, “We are given the mission of ruling over creation, but we are to do it in ways that are modeled on the character and values of God's own kingship.” Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 50–51.

<sup>95</sup>Leithart, *The Kingdom and the Power*, 36.

<sup>96</sup>Jonathan Edwards notes the messianic nature of this warfare promise: “So this author supposes the promise concerning the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head, while the serpent should bruise his heel, is to be understood of the Messiah destroying the power and sovereignty of the devil, and receiving some slight hurt from him.” Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Edward Hickman (London: Ball Arnold, 1840), 1:182.

What the broken world needed (and what the Old Testament anticipated) was a faithful messiah who would resist the serpent-king's deception and defeat him in a cataclysmic clash of the kingdoms. Christ the warrior king fulfills this longing. He recapitulates the life of Adam and Israel, succeeding in kingdom conflict where God's chosen ones had previously failed (Matt 4:1-11).<sup>97</sup> Through his active obedience, his entire life and ministry repel Satan's deceptive devices.<sup>98</sup> Yet, he is stapled to the cross as a rebellious insurrectionist by a mob that mocks him as the "King of the Jews" (Matt 27:27-44).<sup>99</sup> But they speak better than they know. This faithful warrior king crushes Satan's power of deception not just by proving it has no sway over him during his life of obedience.<sup>100</sup> He also conquers it through his substitutionary death, which enables the righteousness of his faithful obedience to be applied to those who have fallen under the devil's dominion of deception (2 Cor 5:21).<sup>101</sup> The dominion lost by the first Adam's

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<sup>97</sup>Blocher ties Christ's active obedience in his wilderness warfare to his achievement on the cross: "The entire burden of biblical teaching ties the devil's defeat to the supreme event of Christ's death and resurrection. Matt 4:1-11 (and parallels) demonstrates that Jesus was fit for the fight." Blocher, "Agnus Victor," 85.

<sup>98</sup>Blocher contends, "He *exemplifies* total obedience to the Word of the Father, from beginning to end, to the death of crucifixion, and he thus opens the way for his disciples to follow him." *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>99</sup>Commenting on the sign above the cross that read "King of the Jews," Horton points out: "Christ is king on the cross, as the inscription rightly read." He adds that "Jesus embraced the cross precisely as a king embraces a scepter. Or, to change the metaphor slightly, Jesus is *enthroned* on a cross." Horton, *Lord and Servant*, 254.

<sup>100</sup>Cole explains, "In contrast to both Adam and Israel, Jesus comes before us in the New Testament as God's faithful son. In his humanity he is all that Adam should have been and the embodiment of all that Israel's covenant faithfulness should have been." Cole, *God the Peacemaker*, 107.

<sup>101</sup>Cole explains the connection between covenant faithfulness and the imputation of Christ's righteousness: "Christ's faithfulness issued in obedience. His obedience constituted his righteousness. His righteousness is put to our account, if we are believers, as the traditional doctrine of imputation maintains. It is put to our account not because of a mere reckoning so by God, but because we are really united to Christ by the Spirit. We are in Christ." *Ibid.*, 118.

unrighteous sin is restored by the last Adam's righteous satisfaction.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, the first reason that penal substitution brings about *Christus Victor* is that Christ the warrior king's faithful obedience triumphs over Satan the serpent-king's faithless deception.<sup>103</sup>

Second, the vicarious victory of Christ the warrior king redeems citizens for the kingdom through the rescue from sin. The atonement does this as a second Exodus that delivers Christians from the power of Satan's accusation.<sup>104</sup> In the Old Testament, the exodus is the pinnacle of kingdom warfare (Exod 14-15). It points ahead to the rescue from slavery to sin that the divine warrior would accomplish against the pharaoh-like reign of Satan.<sup>105</sup> What cannot be overlooked is the close link between the Passover and the Exodus, both of which are acts of divine warfare.<sup>106</sup> The Exodus-Passover event is a unified act of war in which the divine warrior delivers his people from slavery to their enemies through the shedding of blood (Exod 13-15).<sup>107</sup> Through this typological

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<sup>102</sup>Leithart maintains, "Jesus' death was a victory over Satan. Let that sink in a bit." He continues, "Jesus defeated His enemy not by killing him but by letting Himself be killed. He slaughtered His enemy by offering Himself for slaughter. He crushed the Serpent's head by letting His heel be bruised. He trampled down death by death." Leithart, *The Kingdom and the Power*, 38-39.

<sup>103</sup>Leithart rightly connects this triumph also to the resurrection: "Because Jesus has offered the perfect and final sacrifice for sin, and because He has been raised, He has triumphed over Satan." *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>104</sup>Christopher Wright sustains, "The New Testament presents the redeeming death of Jesus through the lens of the exodus." Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 103.

<sup>105</sup>Wright says, "It is hard to imagine a sequence of events more comprehensive in effect than the story of the exodus presented to us in the book of that name." *Ibid.*, 99. He elsewhere writes that the Exodus is "the Old Testament model *par excellence* of Yahweh's acting in redemption to put things right." Christopher J. H. Wright, "Atonement in the Old Testament," in *The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement*, ed. Derek Tidball, David Hilborn, and Justin Thacker (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 73.

<sup>106</sup>Payne notes, "The Passover is the pinnacle battle waged between Yahweh and the gods of Egypt." Brian K. Payne, "The Summing Up of All Things in Christ and the Restoration of Human Viceregency: Implications for Ecclesiology" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 123-24; Thomas F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 29.

<sup>107</sup>Alexander explains the connection between purity and victory demonstrated in the Passover-Exodus event: "The process of transferring the Israelites from the satanic power of the king of Egypt to the

kingdom conflict, the divine warrior rescues his people Israel from a domain of darkness (Egypt) and transfers them into a kingdom as beloved sons.<sup>108</sup> It is a messianic anticipation of the new Exodus into a new kingdom that Jesus would accomplish as the new Israel.<sup>109</sup>

The New Testament presents Christ the warrior king as the Passover lamb who brings about a new Exodus that rescues captives from slavery to sin. This slavery to sin derives from Satan's power of accusation (Rev 12:10).<sup>110</sup> Because all humanity falls short of God's covenantal law, the serpent's parasitic power condemns sinners through accusations that appeal to the justice of God.<sup>111</sup> Yet, Satan can bring no charge against the sinless warrior king. Instead, he achieves victorious liberation for the captives through his legal vindication.<sup>112</sup> Through his substitutionary sacrifice as the Passover lamb, Jesus shatters the fear of death that gripped those in slavery to sin's accusation (Heb 2:14-

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kingdom of God requires more than merely rescuing them from Egypt. If they are to live in the presence of God, they must regain the holy status humanity had prior to the disobedience of Adam and Eve. The Passover ritual performs this function in the historical context of the Israelites coming out of Egypt and becoming God's people at Mount Sinai." T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 129.

<sup>108</sup>Commenting on the Exodus, Cole points out, "When God acts to set things right, there is both liberation and judgment (liberation for Israel and judgment for Egypt)." He adds that "the cross of Christ has a similar double effect." Cole, *God the Peacemaker*, 96.

<sup>109</sup>Vanhoozer explains, "But what does Jesus' exodus accomplish? To what new Promised Land does it lead us? It leads, I submit, to the kingdom of God: to the reign of God in human hearts." Vanhoozer, "The Atonement in Postmodernity," 399.

<sup>110</sup>Blocher says, "The other title of Satan is the *Accuser*, as he is called in the most polemic passage, Revelation 12:10." Blocher, "Agnus Victor," 82. He later adds, "Satan's major weapon, as he enforces his rule, is thus divine law and justice. He is the relentless Accuser, day and night." *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>111</sup>Blocher notes this subversive reality and the cross's reversal of it by saying that God's "justice became in a way the enemy's weapon—until the divine wisdom (and love) provided the way for God to be both just and the one who justifies sinners through faith in Jesus (Rom 3:26)." *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>112</sup>Blocher sustains, "Satan was the Accuser, and he prevailed as long as he could point to their sins. But the blood of the Lamb was the price paid for the cancellation of their debt. The blood of the Lamb wiped out the guilt of their sins forever, and the devil was disarmed." *Ibid.*



15).<sup>113</sup> Therefore, the second reason that penal substitution brings about *Christus Victor* is that Christ the warrior king's new Exodus liberates captives from Satan's power of accusation through the redemption of sin.

Third, the vicarious victory of Christ the warrior king resolves the kingdom conflict of holy war through the climax of conquest. The atonement does this as the new Davidic messiah devotes all his enemies to destruction in the culmination of *herem* warfare.<sup>114</sup> The storyline of Scripture reveals a pattern of *herem* warfare that begins with the promise of the serpent's total destruction in the garden of Eden (Gen 3:15) and culminates with the elimination of the serpent's presence from the garden of the new creation.<sup>115</sup> In the Old Testament, *herem* warfare includes both how the divine warrior fights for his people in their faithful obedience and against his unfaithful people in their sinful rebellion.<sup>116</sup> It escalates in Joshua's conquest of the promised land and climaxes in David's expansion of the kingdom. It also features king David, as the anointed one of

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<sup>113</sup>Blocher makes this comment about Satan: "Using the force of law, he demands successfully that they die. In the last analysis, the fear of death, the means of human bondage (Heb. 2:15), is the fear of condemnation." Ibid., 83.

<sup>114</sup>Moore says, "Thus, the '*Christus Victor*' outcome envisioned by the New Testament is, in fact, accomplished through a substitutionary atonement and a resurrection from the dead, acts that the New Testament links directly to the Davidic covenant fulfillment and Kingdom prerogatives of Jesus (2 Tim. 2:8-13; Rev. 5:5, 9-10)." Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 115.

<sup>115</sup>Longman explains the typological significance of Israel's *herem* warfare in this way: "The God of the Old Testament is not a different God from the God we encounter in the New Testament. Nor did God change his mind. The war against the Canaanites was simply an earlier phase of the battle that comes to its climax on the cross and its completion in the final judgment." Tremper Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," in *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 184–85; Eugene H. Merrill, "The Case for Moderate Discontinuity," in *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 82.

<sup>116</sup>Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 31–61.

God, fighting on behalf of the people of God to crush the head of the enemy of God, Goliath (1 Sam 17:1-58).<sup>117</sup>

Christ the warrior king emerges as a new David who at last fulfills the purpose of canonical *herem* warfare—the total destruction of the divine warrior’s kingdom rivals. He is the new and better Adam who delivers a head crushing blow to the serpent.<sup>118</sup> He is the new and better Joshua who drives out all his enemies from the promised land.<sup>119</sup> He is the new and better David who establishes a global, eschatological kingdom.<sup>120</sup> The Old Testament anticipated the messianic king’s victory to be an act of violent liberation rooted in hostility. Yet, the New Testament explains Christ the warrior king’s triumph to be an act of virtuous love rooted in humility (Phil 2:5-11).<sup>121</sup>

Christ the warrior king’s conquest on the cross fulfills the positive dimension of *herem* warfare—that God fights for his people in their faithful obedience—because

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<sup>117</sup>Boda contends, “For David the power of the warrior and the quality of his weaponry were irrelevant to war in God’s economy. The key was faith in the Lord in whose name he came to battle.” Mark J. Boda, *After God’s Own Heart: The Gospel According to David*, The Gospel According to the Old Testament (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2007), 70; Moore, *Tempted and Tried*, 118.

<sup>118</sup>Leithart, *The Kingdom and the Power*, 69.

<sup>119</sup>Goldsworthy comments on how Joshua and other key Old Testament figures foreshadow Christ in their role as representative leaders of conquest: “The king or leader represents the people and his personal holiness affects the life of the nation. Viewing this from the theological angle, we see that God’s rule over his people in the place that he gives them is mediated through a human ruler who must reflect the character of God to the people.” He adds, “This theme, which develops into even greater prominence in the Old Testament, is important for understanding the kingdom of God in the New Testament. The promises of God are fulfilled by a human, kingly figure who is worthy to lead God’s people into the Promised Land.” Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 157.

<sup>120</sup>Calvin declares that “Our Heavenly Father willed that we perceive in David and his descendants the living image of Christ.” John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 1:343.

<sup>121</sup>Boyd emphasizes this contrast between expectation and fulfillment by noting that “every aspect of his life was an act of warfare, for every aspect of his life reflects Calvary-like love.” Boyd, “Christus Victor View,” 39.

Christ is the new Israel who is fully faithful.<sup>122</sup> Yet, it also fulfills the negative dimension of *herem* warfare—that God fights against his people in their sinful rebellion—because Christ takes on the sins of the world.<sup>123</sup> Thus, Christ the warrior king’s conquest on the cross fulfills both aspects of *herem* warfare; the messiah is both the faithful one who wins the holy war of God and the forsaken one who bears the holy wrath of God.<sup>124</sup> This line of argument is not a novel way of presenting the mechanics of the atonement. Instead, it simply aligns the fundamental dimensions of penal substitution with the warfare-orientation of the storyline of Scripture.

The New Testament, however, reveals that, though the atonement has already accomplished this total conquest, its impact has not yet been fully realized. Yes, Christ has struck Satan with the decisive blow by which he disarms his power of deception and destroys his power of accusation.<sup>125</sup> Christ defeats his enemies, leading these captives in

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<sup>122</sup>Longman explains who Christ defeats in his *herem* warfare: “The object of warfare moves from the Canaanites, who are the object of God’s wrath for their sin, to the spiritual powers and principalities, and then finally to the utter destruction of all evil, human and spiritual.” Longman, “The Case for Spiritual Continuity,” 185. McCartney explains how Christ defeats his enemies through his representative role in conquest: “Just as the battle between Philistines and Israel was on one occasion decided by a representative combat (Goliath and David), so the defeat of the powers of 1 Pet 3:22 is decisive for those whom Christ so represents.” He adds that “the representative activity of Christ in spiritual warfare is exemplary and thus entails the active warriorship of those he represents.” Dan G. McCartney, “Atonement in James, Peter and Jude,” in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological & Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 188.

<sup>123</sup>Commenting on Gal 3:13, Reid explains that “Paul speaks of Christ absorbing the curse, or *herem*, of the divine warrior against Israel, and so bringing redemption for his people and in turn for the world.” Daniel G. Reid, “Triumph,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 951.

<sup>124</sup>The divine warrior’s judgment in the Old Testament against his unfaithful people was carried out by men with no allegiance to his righteous reign when he fought against unfaithful Israel (Josh 7). In a similar way, the divine warrior’s judgment in the New Testament against the One who takes on the unfaithfulness of the world was carried out by men with no allegiance to his righteous reign (Acts 2:33).

<sup>125</sup>Boyd notes that “Jesus died as our substitute and bore our sin and guilt by voluntarily experiencing the full force of the rebel kingdom we have allowed to reign on the earth.” Boyd, “Christus Victor View,” 43. Though Boyd rejects penal substitutionary atonement, these comments on substitution can be nicely integrated into this proposed holistic view of the atonement that includes the centrality of

triumphant procession (Col 2:14-15).<sup>126</sup> Yet, his kingdom citizens await his eschatological return for this complete conquest to be fully realized.<sup>127</sup> Though Christ has already accomplished the D-Day invasion of the serpent king's lair through the surgical strike of the cross, the world awaits the eschatological V-Day of his final triumph.<sup>128</sup> The corrupted world still awaits the restoration of cosmic shalom.<sup>129</sup> Therefore, the third reason that penal substitution brings about *Christus Victor* is that Christ the warrior king's holy war on the cross achieves total victory over his enemies only because he satisfies God's holy wrath.

### Conclusion

If Christ the warrior king is the central figure of the Scriptures, and if the atonement is the defining event in the redemptive history of the kingdom, then it is essential to consider the warfare implications of the cross. Moore summarizes the argument of this section:

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both penal substitution and *Christus Victor*.

<sup>126</sup>Bruce comments on the source of this triumphant victory march. Christ has not only "blotted out the record of their indebtedness but he has subjugated those powers whose possession of the damning indictment was a means of controlling them." F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 110.

<sup>127</sup>Bloesch expresses, "All things are now subject to Christ, but not all things are subject to Christ willingly. The powers of the world still continue their hostile defiance of Christ's lordship even while they remain under his authority." Bloesch, *Jesus Christ*, 224.

<sup>128</sup>Hoekema explains the significance of this D-Day/V-Day analogy coined by Cullmann: "We may sum up the significance of Cullmann's contribution to biblical eschatology as follows: Since the great midpoint of history occurred at the time of Christ's first coming, there is a very real sense in which believers today are living in the new age." He adds, "Hence the era in which we now live is characterized by tension—between the midpoint and the end, the present and the future, the already and the not yet." Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 306.

<sup>129</sup>Cole connects shalom with the sacrifice of Christ: "For in our broken world no shalom can come without sacrifice." Cole, *God the Peacemaker*, 122.

The historic Protestant understanding of the cross as essentially propitiatory and substitutionary ironically serves as the only way to make sense of the cosmic implications of both redemption and the fall since, in both, the destiny of the created order is tied to the mandate given to the human viceregents responsible for creation. . . . Indeed, it is the only way to make sense of the ‘*Christus Victor*’ model itself. Thus, the defeat of the powers of darkness in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus means that the ancient serpent is indeed defeated, but his defeat comes through reversing human slavery to sin and death (John 8:31-47; 12:31-33; 2 Tim. 2:25; Heb. 2:14-15) by bearing the punishment due to a humanity justly accused by the satanic powers (Col. 2:14-15; Rev. 12:10-12), and thereby restoring humanity as king of the cosmos in the person of the Second Adam (Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:21-28; Heb. 2:5-18).<sup>130</sup>

Christ the warrior king’s vicarious victory achieves the restoration of dominion, redemption from sin, and the resolution of holy war. His conquest is a total triumph because it delivers captives from both the guilt and guile of sin. If the messiah accomplishes all of this through the atonement, how are these realities applied to believers through a warfare-oriented soteriology?

### **Christ the Warrior King and Soteriology**

One of the most important, yet unexplored, implications of the divine warrior theme in Christology is how it integrates with soteriology. Indeed, Russell Moore contends, “A significant advance in the evangelical theology of the Kingdom is possible if the rest of the movement is prompted by Boyd to think through the warfare implications of a Kingdom soteriology.”<sup>131</sup> This section argues that a warfare soteriology integrates the doctrine of salvation with the Christ-centered storyline of Scripture in a way that sheds new light on both the cosmic and personal aspects of salvation.

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<sup>130</sup>Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 114–15.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., 107.

To accomplish this task, this section first briefly considers the Christ-centered and kingdom-oriented nature of salvation throughout redemptive history. Then, it discusses the cosmic nature and implications of a warfare soteriology, especially as it relates to redemption, restoration, and regeneration. Last, it reflects on how the warfare worldview of Scripture informs areas of personal salvation. This personal component includes both positional dimensions of personal soteriology such as union, adoption and justification as well as progressive aspects like sanctification and perseverance.<sup>132</sup> In the end, a reexamination of soteriology in light of the kingdom warfare that characterizes the storyline of salvation will result in fresh insights across the spectrum of soteriology.<sup>133</sup>

### **Christ the Warrior King and Christ-Centered Soteriology**

As the previous chapters in this dissertation have demonstrated, Christ the warrior king is central to the storyline of salvation in Scripture. A Christocentric warfare soteriology recognizes the centrality of the person and work of Christ in the kingdom-oriented salvation conflict that unfolds in Scripture.<sup>134</sup> “A Kingdom-oriented soteriology,” Moore notes, focuses the “evangelical doctrine of salvation on a

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<sup>132</sup>Horton notes the relationship between the positional (justification) and progressive (sanctification) aspects of salvation: “Justification is the future verdict rendered in the present, sanctification the future reality of glorification begun in the present; the church the future kingdom experienced embryonically in this age.” Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 224.

<sup>133</sup>Rather than focus on just a few aspects of salvation in an in-depth fashion, this section is intentionally designed to consider the relation between the warfare theme and a wide swath of soteriology for several reasons. First, because little work has been done in this area, it is helpful to establish a broad framework for further study. Second, it allows multiple features of kingdom warfare to illuminate the doctrine of salvation. Finally, it functions as an effective case study for the relationship between biblical and systematic theology.

<sup>134</sup>Moore states that the key to understanding “Kingdom-oriented salvation” is a “developed Christology that takes into account the unity of Christ’s person and work along with an eschatology that sees both a present and a future element to the reign of Christ.” Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 128–29.

Christocentric vision of the Kingdom, informed by inaugurated eschatology.”<sup>135</sup> The biblical storyline reveals that salvation centers on Christ the warrior king for several reasons. First, Christ the warrior king is the focus of the storyline of salvation. At every stage of redemptive history, God’s appointed means of salvation is unwaveringly the same—his people receive salvation by grace through faith in the shed blood of the divine warrior.<sup>136</sup>

Second, Christ the warrior king accomplishes salvation. He achieves vicarious victory through his substitutionary sacrifice on the cross.<sup>137</sup> Third, Christ the warrior king applies salvation. As Wright points out, the messiah is the one “in whom God’s people are summed up, so that what is true of him is true of them.”<sup>138</sup> Fourth, Christ the warrior king glorifies God through salvation.<sup>139</sup> The militant mission of Christ pleases the divine warrior as the culmination of his providential purposes. Throughout the Bible, kingdom warfare occurs in each epoch in such a way that it elucidates the pattern of redemption that God culminates in Christ. Therefore, a Christocentric soteriology encapsulates the canonical conflict of Scripture by revealing how God’s way of deliverance centers on

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<sup>135</sup>Ibid., 103.

<sup>136</sup>For example, Miller notes the prominence of the relationship between the divine warrior theme and salvation in the Old Testament: “So at the center of Israel’s elaborated poetic and theological statements about God the warrior was the salvation theme.” Patrick D. Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 173. For more on the continuity of regeneration between the testaments, see James M. Hamilton, *God’s Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2006).

<sup>137</sup>Leahy declares, “There is no conflict between viewing the cross as a mighty victory, yet also a sacrifice to satisfy a holy God. Indeed, it was that very satisfaction achieved through Christ’s substitutionary death that resulted in victory.” Leahy, *The Victory of the Lamb*, 75.

<sup>138</sup>N. T. Wright, *Justification: God’s Plan & Paul’s Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 104.

<sup>139</sup>Moore states, “This Christological, Kingdom focus guards the New Testament emphasis on the glory of God in salvation, a glory that cannot be understood apart from the identity and mission of

Christ the warrior king. The Christ-centered nature of salvation has cosmic significance.<sup>140</sup>

### **Christ the Warrior King and Cosmic Soteriology**

How “big” is the Gospel? Debates in contemporary theology rage in answer to this question.<sup>141</sup> On one side, scholars are concerned that some evangelicals have a Gospel that is too small because it reduces soteriology to issues only related to individual salvation.<sup>142</sup> On the other side, other scholars suggest that their counterparts have a Gospel that is too big because it neglects the centrality of individual salvation in its quest to articulate a holistic soteriology.<sup>143</sup> But what if the dilemma is just an adventure in missing the point? A warfare soteriology recognizes that salvation includes both cosmic and personal dimensions.<sup>144</sup> The personal nature of salvation is cosmic – personal salvation is the gateway to experiencing the cosmic aspect of soteriology.<sup>145</sup> The cosmic

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Christ in establishing His Kingdom.” Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 104.

<sup>140</sup>Moore observes, “It is the Christocentric focus of salvation that ties the salvation of human beings to the motif of the Kingdom of God and to the broader aspects of cosmic salvation.” *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>141</sup>Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 102–09.

<sup>142</sup>Brian D. McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 105.

<sup>143</sup>For example, John Piper argues against this overshadowing in the writings of N. T. Wright: “But if the gospel has an answer, it would have to be a message about how the rebel against God can *be saved* — indeed, how he can be right with God and become part of the covenant people. I do not think Wright needs to marginalize these essential and glorious aspects of the gospel in order to strengthen his case that the gospel has larger global implications.” John Piper, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 89.

<sup>144</sup>As Ladd explains, “Salvation is not a matter that concerns only the destiny of the individual soul. It includes the entire course of human history and humankind as a whole.” He adds that salvation “includes the transformation of the entire physical order.” Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 602.

<sup>145</sup>Moltmann writes, “It is therefore more appropriate to present the salvation which Christ brings in ever-widening circles, beginning with the personal experience of reconciliation and ending with



nature of salvation is personal – cosmic soteriology functions as the grand narrative in which personal salvation fits. Thus, Ladd rightly balances the two components, “Salvation is not a matter that concerns only the destiny of the individual soul. It includes the entire course of human history and humankind as a whole.”<sup>146</sup> This section recognizes that salvation is cosmic not only in how Christ the warrior king achieves redemption but also in how he applies it holistically in restoration and regeneration.

First, Christ the warrior king accomplishes cosmic redemption in which he defeats his spiritual enemies through the propitiatory power of the cross. Throughout canonical cosmic warfare, there is a consistent connection between battles that unfold on the historical plane and the cosmic conflict that rages between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light.<sup>147</sup> From the mother promise of Genesis 3:15, it becomes clear that the cosmic hope for the world stems from personal kingdom warfare as the seed of the woman crushes the head of the serpent.<sup>148</sup> In the Old Testament, the cosmic scope of redemption is evident in the Exodus because the divine warrior fights for his people against his enemies in a way that advances the progress of his promise-plan.<sup>149</sup>

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the reconciliation of the cosmos, heaven, and earth.” Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 45.

<sup>146</sup>Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 602.

<sup>147</sup>Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 79.

<sup>148</sup>Leithart explains the significance of Gen 3:15 for kingdom warfare: “The conflict is *comprehensive*. At every point and at every moment, the seed of the Serpent contends with the seed of the woman. At every point, the two are in a state of cold or hot warfare.” Leithart, *The Kingdom and the Power*, 147.

<sup>149</sup>Jeffery, Ovey and Sach surmise that “the exodus is a paradigm for God’s deliverance of his people from hostile powers. Just as the Lord set his people free from slavery to Pharaoh, their oppressor, so also the Lord Jesus Christ has set us free from slavery to sin, the world and the devil, those hostile powers that once held us in bondage (cf. Eph. 2:1-3; Col. 2:14-15; Heb. 2:14-15; Rev. 12).” Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 36.

The cosmic nature of the divine warrior's battle against his enemies is most clear at the cross. At the place where justice and mercy meet, Jesus accomplishes the rescue of the universe through the satisfaction of God's wrath (1 John 2:2) and the destruction of the devil (1 John 3:8).<sup>150</sup> Therefore, the first component of the cosmic nature of salvation is how God fights against his cosmic enemies to achieve cosmic redemption.

Second, when Christ the warrior king achieves redemption on the cross, it ushers in the restoration of the cosmos through the inauguration of a new creation kingdom. Though Israel's warfare was designed to bring about a new Eden through cosmic conflict (Num 13:21-27), this goal is not realized until Christ comes.<sup>151</sup> Indeed, Jesus himself is that new creation, as N. T. Wright declares: "He is the start of the creator's new world: its pilot project, indeed its pilot."<sup>152</sup> The cosmos has groaned in futility for ages (Rom 8:18-22). But the restoration of the resurrection means that Christ the warrior king has shattered the cosmic curse of sin.<sup>153</sup> The resurrection not only inaugurates Christ as the king of a new creation but also inaugurates the restoration of

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<sup>150</sup>Murray says, "Redemption from sin cannot be adequately conceived or formulated except as it comprehends the victory which Christ secured once for all over him who is the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air." John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 50.

<sup>151</sup>Jeffrey Niehaus draws this distinction first by noting the new creation themes in Israel's conflict: "God's theocratic rule is an act of creation/re-creation. Israel in its promised land is an emblem of humanity in the Garden, and Canaan is compared to Eden (Joel 2:3; in restoration prophecy, Isa. 51:3; Ezek. 36:35). So (symbolically) God recreates Eden by his theocratic rule." Then, he shows the new creation's full development in Christ: "Christ is also Creator or Re-creator. He creates a 'new heaven and a new earth,' with a temple presence that recalls Eden with its river and tree of life (Rev 21:1-2; 22:1-2; cf. Gen 2:9-10; Ezek 47:1-12)." Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 31–32.

<sup>152</sup>N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 576.

<sup>153</sup>As Leithart declares, "The establishment of the new world order of the kingdom was not a rescue operation, but the beginning of a cosmic construction project." Leithart, *The Kingdom and the Power*, 170.

this fallen world.<sup>154</sup> The resurrection of the messiah confirms the cosmic function of the atonement as Jesus ushers in a new creation through vicarious victory.

Third, a warfare soteriology recognizes that the cross not only brings about cosmic restoration but also personal regeneration.<sup>155</sup> Just as the entire universe is made a new creation, every believer is born again by the Spirit and made a new creation (2 Cor 5:17).<sup>156</sup> Scripture makes clear that through the victory of the resurrection, Jesus himself is the new creation (Matt 19:28; Rev 21:5). In other words, he is the regenerate One. Thus, biblical theologian Graeme Goldsworthy declares that “the locus of regeneration is not in us, but in Christ.”<sup>157</sup> The apostle Peter directly connects regeneration with Christ’s resurrection (1 Pet 1:3). Because Jesus has received new life in the resurrection, believers can receive new life in regeneration. Therefore, as with every other aspect of salvation, it is only in union with Christ the warrior king reigning in the new creation, that we are regenerate (2 Cor 5:17).<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>154</sup>Wright adds, “The resurrection constitutes Jesus as the world’s true sovereign, the ‘son of god’ who claims absolute allegiance from everyone and everything within creation.” Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 576.

<sup>155</sup>Moore notes, “It is within this cosmic framework of salvation, Ladd asserted, that one is able to understand the biblical meaning of personal regeneration as the individual appropriation of the coming regeneration of the created order.” Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 87, 107.

<sup>156</sup>In this way, as Moore points out, the Spirit links the cosmic and personal dimensions of salvation: “Pneumatology therefore is the key to linking the personal salvation of believers to the Kingdom purposes of God in Christ.” He continues, “The onset of the Spirit means the salvation of believers is ultimately about the purposes of God in glorifying Christ and establishing His Kingdom, not about transporting individual souls from earth to heaven.” *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>157</sup>Graeme Goldsworthy, “Regeneration,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. Brian S. Rosner et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 722.

<sup>158</sup>Goldsworthy also adds, “By virtue of our faith-union with Christ, what belongs to his actual experience is putatively ours.” *Ibid.* Could Recognizing the warfare-oriented nature of regeneration contribute to the contemporary discussion over its causal connection to faith? For those who argue that faith precedes regeneration, see Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation*, ed. John S. Feinberg, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 289; Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 941. For those who argue that

The problem with a soteriology that neglects the significance of the cosmic nature of salvation is not that it is too man-centered. Instead, the problem is that it is not centered on the right man—Christ the warrior king.<sup>159</sup> The warfare worldview of the biblical authors is not coincidental but is central to their understanding of the redemptive work of Christ.<sup>160</sup> When the centrality of Christ is seen throughout redemptive history, the kingdom-oriented nature of cosmic conflict becomes evident. Because the church consists of those ripped from the clutches of Satan and brought into the cosmic colony of the kingdom (Col 1:13-14), the cosmic nature of a warfare soteriology is intimately related to the personal nature of salvation.<sup>161</sup>

### **Christ the Warrior King and Personal Soteriology**

The salvation achieved by Christ the warrior king also carries personal implications as he rescues sinners from the domain of darkness and transfers them to the

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regeneration precedes faith, see Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Effectual Call or Causal Effect? Summons, Sovereignty and Supervenient Grace,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 49, no. 2 (1998): 213-51. Though it is outside the scope of this section to provide further analysis, it seems that the warfare soteriology articulated here could enhance the argument that faith causally precedes regeneration.

<sup>159</sup>Moore comments, “Salvation may then be seen in anthropocentric fashion, but only in consideration of one particular *anthropos*, the man Jesus who represents humanity as God-appointed Mediator between the fallen race and its Creator (1 Tim. 2:5).” Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 104.

<sup>160</sup>Greg Boyd correctly contends that “this warfare worldview is in one form or another the basic worldview of biblical authors, both in the Old Testament and even more so in the New.” Boyd, *God at War*, 13. Moore notes, “Though radically differing with postwar evangelical theology on many issues, Boyd agrees with Henry and Ladd that salvation is related to the overthrow of satanic rule, that it is cosmic in its scope, that it is to be seen in the restoration of the created order (including human viceregency over the earth) and that it is to be placed within the context of the inbreaking of the eschatological Kingdom in the person and work of Jesus as both the incarnate God and the head of a new humanity.” Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 90.

<sup>161</sup>Clowney remarks, “The biblical category that joins the salvation of the individual and of society is the category of the kingdom of God.” Edmund P. Clowney, “The Politics of the Kingdom,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 41 (1972): 292; Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 106.

kingdom of Christ. Jesus applies the benefits of his vicarious victory to believers by the Spirit as they are united to him by faith.<sup>162</sup> While salvation brings about the universal transformation of the cosmos, it also accomplishes the individual redemption of believers.<sup>163</sup> This section reflects on the impact of Christ the warrior king's reign on the soteriological categories of union, adoption, justification, sanctification, and perseverance.<sup>164</sup>

**United with the warrior king.** A personal soteriology informed by the warfare worldview of Scripture clarifies the biblical picture of union with Christ. The way conquest and substitution are aligned in the application of salvation to the believer is through union with Christ. In the warfare of Israel, there was a covenantal expectation that the nation would engage in *herem* warfare in which the conquered enemy and its possessions were entirely devoted to destruction so that no one (even women and children) was spared (Deut 7:1-2).<sup>165</sup> The Bible makes clear that all of those who are outside of Christ are worthy of the same *herem* destruction as these Canaanite nations because of their sin (Rom 3:10-11, 23). Indeed, this *herem* warfare climaxes on the cross, as God directs this judgment for sin towards Christ so that all those who are united to him

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<sup>162</sup>Moltmann states, "The great turning point from disaster to salvation took place on Golgotha; it does not just happen for the first time at the hour when we decide for faith, or are converted. Faith means experiencing and receiving this turning point personally, but faith is not the turning point itself. It is not my faith that creates salvation for me; salvation creates faith for me." Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 245.

<sup>163</sup>Jeffery, Ovey and Sach note that "salvation must be an act of conquest, for we are oppressed by the devil, and need someone to win the victory for us." Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 125.

<sup>164</sup>This section is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis of Christocentric kingdom warfare on every aspect of personal salvation. Instead, it focuses on key dimensions where a right understanding of Christ as warrior king either contributes to contemporary debates or personal holiness.

<sup>165</sup>Merrill, "The Case for Moderate Discontinuity."

by faith do not stand under its condemnation (2 Cor 5:21). Thus, in a sense, the atonement is God carrying out the *herem* of holy war on his son.<sup>166</sup> Triumph over the enemies of sin and death occurs through vicarious victory.

Consequently, believers experience this conquest as their own through faith union with Christ.<sup>167</sup> Through union with the messianic warrior, what is true of Jesus is now true of them (Col 3:1-4).<sup>168</sup> By faith, believers are ripped from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of Christ through union with the king (Col 1:13-14).<sup>169</sup> As the apostle John makes clear, faith is the means of victory by which believers overcome the world (1 John 5:4-5). This reality should not come as a surprise since the warfare call to God's people throughout the storyline of Scripture is to respond to his sovereign role in conquest with faith. He who delivered his people from their enemies through the Exodus as they followed by faith now delivers his people from sin and death through a New Exodus in union with Christ. It is only in union with Christ that the personal benefits of his vicarious victory come to believers.<sup>170</sup> Through union with Christ the warrior king, the cosmic conquest of the cross is applied to believers.

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<sup>166</sup>Making a similar claim from Gal. 3:13, Daniel Reid argues that “Paul speaks of Christ absorbing the curse, or herem, of the divine warrior against Israel, and so bringing redemption for his people and in turn for the world.” Reid, “Triumph,” 951.

<sup>167</sup>Moore says, “Every conversion to faith in Christ represents a defeat of the principalities and powers by the sovereign Kingdom authority of the resurrected and exalted Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-5).” Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 107.

<sup>168</sup>Wright exclaims, “The Messiah is therefore the one—this is clearest in Paul, but there are significant antecedents—in whom God's people are summed up, so that what is true of him is true of them.” Wright, *Justification*, 104.

<sup>169</sup>Niehaus states, “The Son combats and defeats the god of this world every time someone comes to faith in Christ.” Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 174.

<sup>170</sup>Moore writes that “evangelicals should refocus the discussion to the identity of the believer in union with Christ—a union that means not only relationship but also inheritance.” He adds that salvation should be “seen—in all of its aspects—as belonging to the Messiah and only in Him to His people.” Moore,

**Adopted by the warrior king.** A personal soteriology informed by the warfare worldview of Scripture crystallizes the biblical picture of adoption. Specifically, personal adoption is related to cosmic conflict as the biblical storyline indicates that believers “live in the middle of a spiritual war zone — a cosmic custody battle if you will.”<sup>171</sup> Beginning in the garden, kingdom warfare rages over whether humans will be identified as sons of the kingdom of darkness or the kingdom of light. In every occasion, God’s image bearers choose a Serpent instead of a Sovereign, a Pharaoh instead of a Father.<sup>172</sup> For all those outside of Christ, their father is the devil (John 8:34-38), and they are sons of disobedience (Eph 2:2). However, the messiah comes, recapitulates the failed sonship of Adam and Israel, and resists Satan’s attempt to adopt him in the wilderness temptations (Matt 4:1-11).<sup>173</sup> As a result, Christ establishes himself as the firstborn of many brothers so that whoever is united to him by faith receives adoption into his family (Rom 8:29).<sup>174</sup> After conversion, the lives of believers are marked by a constant remembrance of their adopted identity in Christ as a means to victory in warfare.

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*The Kingdom of Christ*, 120.

<sup>171</sup>Russell D. Moore, *Adopted for Life: The Priority of Adoption for Christian Families & Churches* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 102.

<sup>172</sup>Russell D. Moore, “Sermon: You Cannot Serve Both God and Mummy: Pharaoh Hunger and the Draw of a Golden-Calf Spirituality (Exodus 32:1-35),” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12, no. 3 (2008): 98.

<sup>173</sup>Moore explains, “Satan was not just trying to tempt Jesus; he was attempting to adopt Jesus. Satan, in all three temptations, is assuming the role of a father—first in provision, then in protection, and now in the granting of an inheritance. Satan didn’t just want to be Jesus’ lord; he wanted to be his father.” Moore, *Tempted and Tried*, 137.

<sup>174</sup>Moore captures the nature of this battle over identity: “The warfare that crackles all around us is all about the issue of identity. The powers threatened by the inheritance of which we will speak next want to redirect our minds from who we are in Christ; they want to point us instead to our own flesh—to our impending death, to our instinctual resemblance to Satan.” Moore, *Adopted for Life*, 65.

In addition to the establishment of identity, the warfare orientation of adoption includes an inheritance for believers. In the fall, Adam and Eve sacrifice their inheritance to satisfy their appetites—a pattern that continues in Esau (Heb 12:13-17), Israel (Exod 16:1-3), as well as all those outside of Christ (Phil 3:19). Though Satan tempts Jesus to exchange his inheritance to satisfy his appetites (Matt 4:1-11), Christ the warrior king proves his sonship by resisting him in a way that points forward to the serpent’s ultimate defeat on the cross.<sup>175</sup> Through the atonement and resurrection, Jesus restores an inheritance that is not limited to a tract of land in the Middle East but includes the entire cosmos (2 Cor 1:20). In Christ, this inheritance is given to believers as co-heirs of the promises secured by him (Gal 3:29; Jam 2:5).<sup>176</sup> From conversion onward, God is preparing believers for an “inheritance that is a rule. We are in an internship for the eschaton, learning to be kings and queens over the universe.”<sup>177</sup> Through adoption, believers are made children of the warrior king, finding both their identity and inheritance in Christ.

**Justified by the warrior king.** A personal soteriology informed by the warfare worldview of Scripture enhances the biblical picture of justification. Through the resurrection victory of Christ, God vindicates Jesus’ perfect life and death and shows him

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<sup>175</sup>Moore discusses Jesus’ victory in the wilderness temptations: “He is asked to grasp for his identity and his inheritance by forcing God’s deliverance and by gaining the kingdoms of this world apart from the cross. Satan asks Jesus to question God’s goodness, and to eat of his table and rule from this throne — without his brothers; those for whom he was going to the crucifixion stake.” Ibid., 107.

<sup>176</sup>Horton expounds on this inheritance in Christ, “As with justification, this adoption is not a legal fiction, since the law is fulfilled: the firstborn Son has won the entire estate by his victorious service to the crown, but every adopted child has an equal share. . . . The inheritance is passed on in perpetuity to all those coheirs included in his last will and testament.” Horton, *Covenant and Salvation*, 246.

<sup>177</sup>Moore, *Adopted for Life*, 109.



to be the justified One who is worthy to be declared righteous by God (Rom 1:4).

Therefore, it is only through union with this justified warrior king that we are declared just members of his kingdom.<sup>178</sup> Specifically, the warfare theme aids an accurate view of justification in three ways. First, it provides a clearer picture of the nature of God's righteousness. God's righteousness is not an abstract idea. In the Old Testament, righteousness language is closely connected with warfare.<sup>179</sup> Specifically, Alister McGrath comments on the warfare orientation of the Hebrew word for righteousness:

The *oldest* meaning of *sedaqa*, as judged by its use in the Song of Deborah (Judges 5:1-31), appears to be 'victory.' . . . This use of the term allows us to appreciate that the term 'righteousness' can possess both retributive and salvific aspects, without being reduced to, or exclusively identified with, either concept. Thus God's act of judgment is retributive with regard to Israel's enemies, but salvific with regard to God's covenant people.<sup>180</sup>

Therefore, from the onset of its usage, righteousness language about God relates to his role in warfare. The divine warrior demonstrates his righteousness both as he fights for his people in their faithful obedience and against his enemies (which occasionally includes his people) in their sinful rebellion. Clearly, the judge who presides over the court room of justification is also a warrior king who rules from his throne room.

Second, the warfare theme provides a clearer picture of the nature of the accuser. Satan is not the equivalent of an unbiased, state-appointed prosecutor. In addition to Scripture's picture of him as a wily serpent seeking someone to deceive (Gen

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<sup>178</sup>Horton, *Covenant and Salvation*, 36. Stuhlmacher adds, "Through the living and reigning Christ, justification, and with it entrance into God's kingdom, is guaranteed for believers." Peter Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification: A Challenge to the New Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 62.

<sup>179</sup>For more on righteousness language in the Old Testament, see Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 38-44.

<sup>180</sup>Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 10.

3:15; Rev 12), it portrays Satan as a prowling lion seeking someone to devour (1 Pet 5:8). Indeed, the meaning of the word Satan is “accuser.”<sup>181</sup> After the fall, Satan’s accusatory power centers on his ability to condemn sinners based on the law established by God.<sup>182</sup> Therefore, the primary weapon in Satan’s arsenal for spiritual warfare is the power of accusation, which is designed to expose how no one can stand in righteousness and be justified before God on their own apart from Christ the warrior king. Yet, the defeat of Satan on the cross through penal substitution eliminates his jurisdiction over believers (Rom 8:1).<sup>183</sup> As a result, the imputation of Christ’s righteousness comes as the divine warrior proves himself to be both just and the justifier of sinners who shatters the power of Satan (Rom 3:26).

Third, the warfare theme provides a clearer picture of the nature of the courtroom. Through the covenantal nature of cosmic conflict, the Bible depicts God not just as a judge ruling in his courtroom but also as a Suzerain ruling from his throne room. Michael Horton declares, “Thus we cannot reduce this covenantal dispute to the legal sphere. The courtroom and battlefield, forensic justification and *Christus Victor*, converge in the covenant lawsuit, with Isaiah 59 serving as a prime example.”<sup>184</sup> In Isaiah 59, God puts on righteousness as his breastplate (59:17), which results in judgment

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<sup>181</sup>Henri Blocher comments on the court room role of Satan: “Satan is a word for the adversary. In the law court, as in Psalm 109:6, the corresponding verb Satan means to stand against someone and to accuse him or her. . . . Satan’s role is that of the public prosecutor.” Blocher, “Agnus Victor,” 82.

<sup>182</sup>Ibid., 90.

<sup>183</sup>Michael Horton develops the connection between conquest and justification: “Evil, death, and cosmic powers no longer have any ultimate claim on us, not because they never really did but because Christ has conquered them in his body, by taking away any legal basis for their jurisdiction over us.” Horton, *Covenant and Salvation*, 307.

<sup>184</sup>Ibid., 110.

according to deeds (59:18). Nevertheless, even in the midst of this judgment, there is a promise of a Redeemer for those who turn from their transgressions (59:20).<sup>185</sup> Therefore, “the warfare theme is grounded in the forensic character of justification.”<sup>186</sup> In these ways, the throne room imagery of warfare aids the courtroom imagery of justification. Indeed, the twin themes of courtroom and throne room converge in Christ the warrior king.

### **Sanctification as the progressive experience of kingdom warfare. A**

personal soteriology informed by the warfare worldview of Scripture enlightens the biblical picture of sanctification. A right understanding of sanctification is enhanced by recognizing that kingdom warfare includes: (1) the pursuit of holiness, (2) through comprehensive conflict against all God’s enemies, (3) beginning immediately upon the rescue of redemption, (4) by both formative and disciplinary means, (5) based on the accomplished work of the divine warrior applied by the power of the Spirit. First, the pattern of warfare throughout Scripture sharpens the doctrine of sanctification because holiness is essential for victory. In the Yahweh wars of Israel, holiness was a central component of success because the nation recognized that God’s presence was with them in the battle.<sup>187</sup> Because the divine warrior is the one who fights for his people, they must

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<sup>185</sup>Seifrid recognizes this same pattern in Paul, “For Paul, the justification of human beings takes place only through God’s triumph and their defeat.” Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 59.

<sup>186</sup>Horton, *Covenant and Salvation*, 110.

<sup>187</sup>Patrick Miller adds that “in the earliest texts having to do with the Ark it is clearly associated with the holy wars of Yahweh and perceived as a type of palladium in battle, embodying the presence of Yahweh as he marched to fight for Israel and acting as a security for victory over her adversaries.” Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel*, 145.

pursue purity before, during and after the battle.<sup>188</sup> Christ the warrior king is victorious through his life and death precisely because of his holiness. Likewise, the church is called to holiness in its kingdom warfare. As citizens of the kingdom, believers must recognize that “to be a subject of that kingdom means obedience to God in every area of life.”<sup>189</sup> Therefore, sanctification is a battle for holiness with an awareness of both the presence of Christ in the conflict with sin and the persistence of sin until the return of Christ.

Second, believers pursue sanctification in Christ through comprehensive conflict against all rivals of the divine warrior. The biblical pattern of cosmic conflict not only includes holy war but also entails holistic war. The storyline of Scripture reveals a pattern of holistic warfare that begins with the conquest promise in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:15) and concludes with the conquest fulfillment in the garden of the new creation.<sup>190</sup> The church’s pursuit of sanctification should be understood as *herem* warfare not because it is called to take up physical arms to advance the kingdom. Instead, believers are engaged in a comprehensive conflict for holiness because they are called to put to death all rivals to Christ’s lordship in their lives (Col 3:5-6).<sup>191</sup> Recognizing the connection of Paul’s put off/put on/put to death motif for sanctification with Israel’s *herem* warfare significantly enhances the clarity of his call to sanctification in every

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<sup>188</sup>Longman and Reid note, “Many of the acts that preceded a war in the Hebrew Bible indicate the religious nature of the conflict. Sacrifice, circumcision, vows, oracular inquiries, ritual cleanness — each of these elements announced Israel’s understanding that God was present with them in battle.” Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 37.

<sup>189</sup>Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 229.

<sup>190</sup>Longman, “The Case for Spiritual Continuity,” 184–85.

<sup>191</sup>J. C. Ryle writes, “A holy violence, a conflict, a warfare, a fight, a soldier’s life, a wrestling, are spoken of as characteristics of the true Christian.” J. C. Ryle, *Holiness* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1952), xvi.

aspect of life.<sup>192</sup> Thus, sanctification is nothing less than spiritual *herem* warfare against all sinful rivals of Christ's kingship in the believer. There is no room for idolatrous insurrections against Christ the warrior king in the Christian life.

Third, Christians begin the battle for sanctification immediately after Christ the warrior king rescues them in redemption. Sanctification as the progressive pursuit of holistic spiritual warfare flows from the positional sanctification that occurs at the moment of salvation. As a result, the connection between the warfare theme and sanctification carries implications for the debate about whether there is a distinct second experience after conversion that enhances sanctification.<sup>193</sup> To the victor goes the spoils. This is the pattern established in the holy wars of Israel which plundered its enemies in conquest and which was plundered by its enemies in defeat.<sup>194</sup> Likewise, in the church's warfare, Christ as the reigning warrior king plunders his enemies (Col 2:15) and pours out the Spirit upon believers at conversion as the spoils of victory (Eph 4:8; Gal 5:22-24).<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>192</sup>Everett Berry captures the already but not yet tension of sanctification: "Moreover, in the end we see that because Christ's kingship is a reality now, sin in our lives is not only understood as rebellion against God our creator. It is also contrary to who we are as Christ's redeemed people because in the age to come, kingdom citizens will walk in full obedience to their Lord." C. Everett Berry, "The SBJT Forum," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12, no. 1 (2008): 111.

<sup>193</sup>Although it is interesting to note the way in which different models for sanctification use warfare language in their description of the Christian life (especially in the Keswick and holiness movements), it is outside the scope of this paper to provide a full analysis of the nuances of each.

<sup>194</sup>Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," 184–85; Philip D. Stern, *The Biblical Herem: A Window on Israel's Religious Experience*, Brown Judaic Studies 211 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1991).

<sup>195</sup>Moore asserts that "the work of the Spirit in bringing sinners to salvation is not a matter of personal piety, but represents in fact the conquering of the kingdom of Satan." Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 107, 152–53. See also Timothy G. Gombis, "Cosmic Lordship and Divine Gift-Giving: Psalm 68 in Ephesians 4:8," *Novum Testamentum* 47, no. 4 (2005): 374.

This reality has significant implications for the current debate about sanctification models.<sup>196</sup> Those who view sanctification as a second experience subsequent to conversion seem to denigrate this picture of the victor passing on the spoils of the Spirit to his people at the time of conquest (Acts 2:33; Eph 4:8).<sup>197</sup> Moreover, recognizing the Spirit as Christ's victory gift helps to avoid an overrealized view of sanctification, which suggests that warfare ceases at some point of entire sanctification.<sup>198</sup> While the Spirit can fill believers repeatedly for fresh encounters of warfare (Eph 5:18), the initiation of sanctification must come at salvation. If this New Testament image of the Spirit as victory gift is preserved, then it implies that sanctification begins at salvation as the Spirit becomes the sign and source of ongoing spiritual conquest.<sup>199</sup>

Fourth, believers grow in sanctification through both the formative and disciplinary activity of the divine warrior. In other words, God fights for them in their faithful obedience and against them in their sinful rebellion in order to conform them to the image of Christ the warrior king. Because the other portions of this section on sanctification focus on the formative component, this portion will center on the disciplinary. God's covenant faithfulness through conflict includes a retributive

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<sup>196</sup>For an overview of five models of sanctification, see Melvin E. Dieter et al., *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

<sup>197</sup>Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, *Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 162.

<sup>198</sup>This claim contrasts the Wesleyan view of entire sanctification, which suggests that the "war within oneself might cease." Melvin E. Dieter, "The Wesleyan Perspective," in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 17. And it contrasts the Keswick view that suggests the normal Christian life is one of "uniform sustained victory over known sin." Steven Barabas, *So Great Salvation: The History and Message of the Keswick Convention* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 84.

<sup>199</sup>James Hamilton comments on Eph. 5:18: "Paul is not commanding people to be inspired by a rush of the Spirit's power, but is calling for a way of life marked by the fruit of the Spirit." Hamilton, *God's Indwelling Presence*, 197.

dimension against his chosen people throughout redemptive history. The divine warrior casts Adam and Eve out of the Garden and defends it with flaming cherubim (Gen 3:22-24). He routs Israel before their enemies when they do not depend on him for victory (Num 14:39-45; Josh 7:1-9; 2 Chron 36:17-21).<sup>200</sup> God disciplines Christ the warrior king as he takes on the sins of the world. Now, in the church age, the divine warrior's discipline for those he loves occurs not only on an individual level in the believer (Heb 12:3-11) but also on a corporate level in the church (Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5). In the ongoing battle of sanctification, God fights both for his people in victory and against his people in discipline to bring about Christlikeness.<sup>201</sup>

Fifth, the continual work of sanctification is based on the completed work of Christ the warrior king. Throughout redemptive history, God grounds his present work among his people in his past redemption of his people. As the central salvation event in the Old Testament, the Exodus functioned as the foundational paradigm for God's future deliverance of his people.<sup>202</sup> Remembering this definitive victory strengthened Israel's faith as it faced future conflict (Isa 11:15-16; 51:10-11), and recalling the Exodus was

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<sup>200</sup>Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 48–60. The Torah makes provision for God's holy war against Israel during their times of rebellion (Deut 13:12-18) using the same type of language as in other passages that address *herem* warfare against enemy nations. Eugene Merrill notes, "Deuteronomy 13:12-18 contains some of the common terms for Yahweh war, such as the utter destruction (*hrm*), smiting (*nkh*), and burning (*srp*), but it is radically different in that this time Yahweh war is directed against persons and places in Israel itself." Merrill, "The Case for Moderate Discontinuity," 71.

<sup>201</sup>Donald Bloesch captures the tension of inaugurated sanctification balanced in these dual functions of God: "The victorious life is a striving towards victory rather than a matured possession of victory. The life of faith is a life of conflict and struggle." Donald G. Bloesch, *The Christian Life and Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 123.

<sup>202</sup>Dempster adds, "The account of the liberation of a band of Hebrew slaves from horrific oppression in Egypt is the event that shaped virtually everything in the biblical imagination." Stephen Dempster, "Exodus and Biblical Theology: On Moving into the Neighborhood with a New Name," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12, no. 3 (2008): 4.

also vital to its worship of the warrior king (Pss 66:6; 78:13).<sup>203</sup> Thus, the Exodus was the grounds of hope for future victory. The New Testament portrays Christ's incarnational assault on the kingdom of darkness as a second Exodus in which he is called out of Egypt (Matt 2:15), and then goes through the waters of judgment in his baptism to identify with the people of God (Matt 3:13ff.), before routing the enemies of God in the redemption of the atonement.<sup>204</sup> This New Exodus surpasses the original because it does not just serve as a ground of hope for future victory. Instead, it is itself the means of that victory because the progressive warfare of sanctification depends on the decisive deliverance of justification.<sup>205</sup>

As believers walk forward in the progressive victory of sanctification, it always begins by looking back to the original conquest of the New Exodus. Though the Church will not attain sinless perfection prior to Christ's second coming, the kingdom is advanced through Spirit-empowered personal holiness as the people of God demonstrate small obedience in hard places by looking back to Christ's conquest.<sup>206</sup> Therefore, the

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<sup>203</sup>Lind contends that the Exodus was "foundational for the Israelite community as the people of Yahweh. It was the sign of Yahweh's steadfast love (Ps 136:10-15) and was the basis for confidence in his future saving acts when Israel encountered political difficulties (Is 63:11-19)." Millard C. Lind, *Yahweh Is a Warrior: The Theology of Warfare in Ancient Israel* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1980), 46.

<sup>204</sup>Longman and Reid write, "Mark's previous use of New Exodus typology suggests that his temptation narrative, like that of Matthew and Luke, portrays Jesus as God's faithful Son who prevails over temptation where Israel failed." Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 95-96.

<sup>205</sup>Horton comments on the connection between justification and sanctification: "The gospel tells us that God has fought too hard for us, given too much for us, suffered too deeply for us, to leave us forgiven and yet bleeding on the battlefield." He continues by noting that "justification is not the first stage of the Christian life, but the constant wellspring of sanctification and good works." Horton, *Covenant and Salvation*, 264.

<sup>206</sup>Ladd declares, "The church has a dual character, belonging to two ages. It is the people of the age to come, but it still lives in this age, being constituted of sinful mortal men. This means that while the church in this age will never attain perfection, it must nevertheless display the life of the perfect order, the eschatological Kingdom of God." George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 268.



warfare indicatives of salvation shape the warfare imperatives of the Christian life.<sup>207</sup> The justification that comes through union with the divine warrior in personal salvation serves as the foundation for the sanctification that comes through the ongoing conflict of the divine warrior in progressive salvation. Through this pattern of progressive sanctification, God's people persevere in the battle until the end.

### **Perseverance as the progressive culmination of kingdom warfare.**

Soteriological discussions about perseverance usually center on the eternal security of the believer. While it is important to consider whether Christians can lose their salvation, it is helpful to reflect on how perseverance fits into the unfolding conflict of kingdom warfare.<sup>208</sup> Wesleyan theologian Steven Harper is surely correct when he says, "Final perseverance must be interpreted in the larger flow of God's comprehensive plan to deliver us from evil and to effect a new creation."<sup>209</sup> Most debates over eternal security focus on the exegesis of key texts such as the warning passages of Hebrews. However, biblical theologian Jeffrey Niehaus has articulated an argument rooted in the warfare

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<sup>207</sup>Though Boyd tends toward an over-realized view of sanctification, he rightly observes that the central goal of the Christian life is to "simply manifest what we already are because of Christ. The bomb of Christ's work has gone off; we must simply allow its impact to be felt fully." Gregory A. Boyd, *Repenting of Religion: Turning from Judgment to the Love of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 74. Boyd also suggests that if sanctification is not completed in this life, then believers must experience a purgatory-like experience to finish it in the next. Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 384. Instead, as N. T. Wright helpfully notes, "it's the *present* life that is meant to function as a purgatory." N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 171.

<sup>208</sup>This section in particular will offer a constructive connection between warfare and perseverance as it responds to an argument by Niehaus, who uses warfare imagery as an argument against preservation.

<sup>209</sup>J. Steven Harper, "A Wesleyan Arminian View," in *Four Views on Eternal Security*, ed. J. Matthew Pinson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 210.

theme of Scripture in which he suggests believers can lose their salvation that is worthy of consideration.

A god's temple presence among his people was a crucial component in the holy wars of nations in the ANE. This temple presence functioned as a base of operations for its warfare.<sup>210</sup> This same pattern is evident in the holy wars of Israel.<sup>211</sup> Yahweh would be among his people even as they battled, through the presence of the Ark.<sup>212</sup> Hence, God's presence in conflict resulted in victory. Yet, though gods of the ANE would be among their people as their obedience resulted in conquest, they often would abandon their people so that their rebellion resulted in defeat. Niehaus lists three reasons a god would abandon his temple presence: "inscrutable decree, divine judgment, or flight in the face of more powerful gods."<sup>213</sup> Regardless of the reason for the god's departure from the temple, his abandonment "paved the way for judgment, which took the form of military defeat."<sup>214</sup>

Yahweh demonstrates this pattern of abandonment for divine judgment with Israel. Repeatedly, the nation is warned that Yahweh will abandon his temple presence if they continue in rebellion (Jer 7:9-15; 1 Kgs 9:6-7). Finally, Ezekiel reports that this

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<sup>210</sup>Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 116.

<sup>211</sup>Niehaus notes that God's battle for his people included his presence among his people: "In the Old Testament, God wages war through the prophet and shepherd Moses against Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt to liberate Israel and establish them as his people by covenant. He then establishes a temple (tabernacle) presence among them." *Ibid.*, 31–32.

<sup>212</sup>Longman and Reid observe, "The ark represented the presence of God with the army during warfare. The very position of the ark in the camp shows this. It led the army during the day and was placed in the Tent of Meeting located in the center of the camp at night (Nu 2). The ark was apparently carried into battle with the Israelite army." Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 40–41.

<sup>213</sup>Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 116.

<sup>214</sup>*Ibid.*, 125.

temple abandonment occurs (Ezek 10:18-19) because of “idolatry and the spiritually ‘detestable things’ that are its fruit.”<sup>215</sup> According to Niehaus, this abandonment of the temple also parallels God’s abandonment of individuals in the Old Testament, such as with Saul (1 Sam 16:14).<sup>216</sup> Both with corporate and individual abandonment, God departs from his people because of their sin, resulting in oppression from their enemies.

Niehaus argues that this same pattern of temple abandonment due to rebellion occurs in the New Testament. In the New Testament, God did not just abandon his temple, but he also “abandoned a person who really was a temple of the Spirit, namely, his son.”<sup>217</sup> Now, both the church (2 Cor 6:16) and the individual (1 Cor 6:12-20) are portrayed as temples of the Spirit. Based on this pattern of temple and individual abandonment, Niehaus concludes from passages such as Heb. 6:4-6 that believers can indeed lose their salvation through apostasy: “If this understanding is correct, there is a real possibility of divine temple abandonment under the new covenant, even if it happens only rarely.”<sup>218</sup> In summary, because of the warfare pattern of temple abandonment, Niehaus surmises that believers can lose their salvation whenever God’s temple presence abandons them because of their rebellion.

Though his claim seems to follow from the biblical pattern of warfare, does Niehaus’s argument hold up under closer scrutiny? For several reasons, the answer is a resounding no. First, his argument misunderstands the nature of union with Christ. Niehaus is exactly right in noting that temple abandonment results from covenant

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<sup>215</sup>Ibid., 127.

<sup>216</sup>Ibid., 132.

<sup>217</sup>Ibid.

<sup>218</sup>Ibid., 135.

abandonment. However, through his perfect life and victorious death, Jesus maintains covenant faithfulness through conflict. Therefore, all those who are united with him by faith receive his righteousness (2 Cor 5:21).<sup>219</sup> Hence, the believer does not need to fear temple abandonment because there is no chance of covenant abandonment—the perfect righteousness of Christ ensures the eternal presence of Christ, which achieves the ongoing perseverance of believers through spiritual warfare.<sup>220</sup>

Second, his argument misunderstands the nature of the indwelling of the Spirit. In the Old Testament, God did not indwell particular people but particular places.<sup>221</sup> While Niehaus rightly understands this reality, his argument loses force as he draws a close analogy between abandonment of the temple and abandonment of individuals in the Old Testament. Niehaus then uses this false parallel between temple indwelling and personal anointing to enhance his argument that the Spirit’s indwelling can depart from the new covenant believer. In other words, he suggests that, if the Spirit could abandon individuals in the old covenant, why not now? However, there is not a one-to-one correlation between the testaments in this regard. Instead, the New Testament teaches that God provides the indwelling Spirit as the spoils of Christ’s victory providing a seal and

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<sup>219</sup>Ferguson writes that Jesus “came under the dominion of sin in death, but death could not master him. He rose and broke the power of both sin and death. Now he lives forever in resurrection life to God. The same is as true of us as if we had been with him on the cross, in the tomb and on the resurrection morning!” Sinclair B. Ferguson, “The Reformed View,” in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, ed. Donald L. Alexander (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989), 57.

<sup>220</sup>Gaffin notes, “United to Christ in his death and resurrection, believers share in the eschatological triumph of God over sin and its consequences.” Gaffin, “Atonement in the Pauline Corpus,” 144.

<sup>221</sup>As James Hamilton comments, “The Old Testament teaches that God was with His people by dwelling among them in the temple rather than in them as under the new covenant.” Hamilton, *God’s Indwelling Presence*, 25.

down payment guaranteeing our future inheritance (Eph 4:8; Acts 2:33).<sup>222</sup> Therefore, because individuals are now indwelt by the Spirit through our union with Christ the warrior king, perseverance is ensured (2 Cor 1:22).<sup>223</sup>

Third, Niehaus's argument misunderstands the nature of new covenant kingdom warfare. While there is certainly continuity between the warfare of Israel and the church, Niehaus fails to recognize important discontinuities that directly influence the doctrine of perseverance. To begin with, the perseverance of believers is rooted in the preservation of the divine warrior who fights for them (Phil 2:12-13).<sup>224</sup> As a result, perseverance in the battle is evidence of true belief (1 Jn 2:19).<sup>225</sup> But this pursuit of perseverance through spiritual warfare is not just given to believers individually. Instead, it is given to the church corporately (Eph 6:10-20).<sup>226</sup> What is striking about Niehaus's argument is that, while he suggests believers can experience temple abandonment, he does not make the same argument for temple abandonment of the church, even though

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<sup>222</sup>Leithart contends, "The Spirit Himself is the chief gift of the ascended King, of the Father and the Son (Matt. 7:11; Luke 9:13)." He continues, "The Spirit is Jesus' coronation gift to His people. The Spirit is not only Himself a gift, but a bearer of gifts; He is the gift that gives a foretaste of all our future gifts." Leithart, *The Kingdom and the Power*, 109.

<sup>223</sup>Sinclair Ferguson points out, "The Spirit is an *arrabon* (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14), a Semitic loan-word for a pledge or down-payment, a guarantee that the final installment of salvation and glory is assured." Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 177.

<sup>224</sup>Demarest recognizes the relationship between the roles of God and man in sanctification: "Assured of the victory, we wholeheartedly give ourselves to the spiritual battle. In the mystery of grace, our constructive efforts prove to be enablements of God's grace. God's working empowers his children to work for the persevering of their souls. We know that we are secure in Christ precisely as we continue in faith and holiness to the end of our lives on this planet." Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 462.

<sup>225</sup>Demarest adds, "Christians cannot claim the grace of divine preservation while living lives that are lukewarm, self-serving, and indifferent to sin. Those who do not contend against evil and do not pursue holiness likely are not born again." Ibid.

<sup>226</sup>Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 460; Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, *Ephesians*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2002), 293.

that would seem to follow logically from his claims. This dichotomy seems to demonstrate a misunderstanding of the relationship between the believer and the church as both fight against the spiritual enemies of God in perseverance.

### **Conclusion**

What does the evangelical doctrine of soteriology have to do with the biblical theme of warfare? Throughout the storyline of Scripture, a salvific focus characterizes cosmic conflict. From creation to new creation, the divine warrior is the cornerstone of redemption. This reality carries far ranging soteriological significance, from the cosmic implications of Christ's new creation victory to the personal and progressive implications of Christ's union with the believer. In the end, Russell Moore seems to be correct when he suggests that a warfare soteriology offers a significant advance to an evangelical theology of the kingdom by integrating soteriology with the biblical narrative of kingdom warfare.<sup>227</sup> The divine warrior's grand goal of salvation establishes his eschatological kingdom.

### **Christ the Warrior King and Eschatology**

The Bible's portrayal of kingdom warfare is fundamentally eschatological. "Perhaps clearer than any other set of doctrines, eschatology reminds us that the Bible is one coherent story, with one author and one theme," Moore states. "The story line begins in an innocent garden and ends in a glorious garden city, with a bloody and violent war in between."<sup>228</sup> Therefore, it is better to understand biblical eschatology not as a set of

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<sup>227</sup>Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 107.

<sup>228</sup>Russell D. Moore, "Personal and Cosmic Eschatology," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 858.

prophecy charts but as a battle plan.<sup>229</sup> As Barth points out, there is a danger if eschatology simply becomes a “short and perfectly harmless, closing chapter in dogmatics.”<sup>230</sup> The kingdom of God (and by implication, the kingdom conflict that achieves it) is a crucial concept in biblical eschatology.<sup>231</sup> In contemporary evangelical theology, a consensus has emerged about the nature and primacy of the kingdom of God.<sup>232</sup> The kingdom of God is a central biblical concept that focuses on the redemptive reign of God in Christ that has already been inaugurated but has not yet been fully consummated.<sup>233</sup> But how does a Christ-centered biblical theology of warfare enhance this evangelical consensus on the centrality of the kingdom of God for eschatology?<sup>234</sup> In

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<sup>229</sup>This idea springs from unpublished thoughts by Russell Moore.

<sup>230</sup>Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. E. C. Hoskyns, 6th ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 500.

<sup>231</sup>Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 37. Moltmann contends that “the kingdom of God is a more integral symbol of the eschatological hope than eternal life.” Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 131. He later adds that “cosmic eschatology’s symbol of *the new creation of all things* is more integral than the historical symbol ‘the kingdom of God.’” *Ibid.*, 132. This section on eschatology seeks, among other goals, to demonstrate that the cosmic concept of new creation is inseparably bound up with the historical concept of the kingdom of God.

<sup>232</sup>Grenz observes that contemporary theological reflections have been “fruitful in that most scholars now agree that eschatology focuses primarily on the kingdom of God.” Stanley J. Grenz, “The Deeper Significance of the Millennium Debate,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 36 (1994): 20. Moore traces how this consensus between future-oriented dispensationalists and present-oriented covenantalists emerged in contemporary eschatology in Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 25–80.

<sup>233</sup>Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 218. Boyd rightly portrays the “kingdom of God as a warfare concept.” Boyd, *God at War*, 172. Though he vehemently disagrees with Boyd’s theological project, Carson admits, “In fairness to his position, a great deal of his exposition of the warfare theme is insightful, helpful, and interesting.” D. A. Carson, “God, the Bible, and Spiritual Warfare: A Review Article,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42, no. 2 (1999): 258.

<sup>234</sup>Mathison provides a robust definition of eschatology: “Eschatology in a broader sense, however, concerns what Scripture teaches about God’s purposes in Christ for history. As such, eschatology does include a study of the consummation of God’s purposes at the end of history, but it also includes a study of the stages in the unfolding of those purposes.” Keith A. Mathison, *From Age to Age: The Unfolding of Biblical Eschatology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2009), 2.

other words, how does a better understanding of kingdom warfare sharpen kingdom theology?

This section argues that a Christocentric warfare theology yields beneficial insights for the Christ-centered, inaugurated, and consummated dimensions of a kingdom eschatology. To accomplish this task, it will first evaluate the Christ-centered nature of eschatology throughout the storyline of Scripture. Then, it will assess the implications of a warfare theology for issues in inaugurated eschatology, specifically as it relates to the militant mission of the church. Last, it will consider the impact of a Christobellian approach to various aspects of consummated eschatology. Though the purpose of this section is not to provide a comprehensive look at all areas of eschatology, it will focus on key aspects in which a Christocentric warfare eschatology can make a contribution to contemporary discussions.<sup>235</sup>

### **Christ the Warrior King and Christ-Centered Eschatology**

“The future has a name: Jesus of Nazareth. Like all doctrines of the faith, eschatology is an outworking of Christology,” Moore asserts.<sup>236</sup> If Moore’s claim is correct (and Scripture seems to support its accuracy), then what bearing does a warfare Christology have on the development of a kingdom eschatology? Because Christ is the “interpretive lens” through which believers should understand the Bible and the world, he is the centerpiece of a biblical view of the end times—eschatology is inherently

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<sup>235</sup>Moore contends that “the emerging evangelical consensus relating eschatology to the Kingdom of God carries with it crucial implications both for evangelical theology and for evangelical engagement.” Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 52.

<sup>236</sup>Moore, “Personal and Cosmic Eschatology,” 892.



Christocentric.<sup>237</sup> Therefore, the eschatological unity of the Bible focuses on Christ the warrior king. The centrality of Christ in the eschatological perspective of Scripture's warfare worldview is seen in (1) the messianic expectation of the Old Testament, (2) the messianic ministry of Christ, (3) the messianic community of the church, and (4) the messianic culmination of the end times.

First, the messianic expectation of the Old Testament is eschatological as it anticipates the arrival of a coming warrior king. Moore is correct when he states that eschatology is "inherently messianic—in both Old and New Testaments."<sup>238</sup> Thus, "eschatology is a central theme of biblical theology."<sup>239</sup> In particular, this reality manifests itself in the Old Testament's anticipation of an eschatological warrior king who will usher in the kingdom on the messianic day of the Lord (Joel 2:28-32; Zech 14:1-9).<sup>240</sup> Even the first warfare-oriented messianic promise in Genesis 3:15 is eschatological.<sup>241</sup> Both the explicit prophecy and implicit typology of the Old Testament demonstrate a thematic unity because of their eschatological perspective.<sup>242</sup> Christ the warrior king is central to the eschatological expectation of the Old Testament.

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<sup>237</sup>Boyd, *Repenting of Religion*, 142.

<sup>238</sup>Moore, "Personal and Cosmic Eschatology," 858.

<sup>239</sup>Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 53–54.

<sup>240</sup>Gaffin insists, "A global, elemental consideration, that comes from taking in the history of revelation in its organic wholeness, is the essentially unified eschatological hope of the Old Testament, a hope which, to generalize, has a single focus on the arrival of the Day of the Lord, inaugurated by the coming of the Messiah." Richard Gaffin, "The Usefulness of the Cross," *Westminster Theological Journal* 56 (1994): 230.

<sup>241</sup>Mathison claims that Genesis 3:15 is "a forward-looking promise, an eschatological promise." Mathison, *From Age to Age*, 26.

<sup>242</sup>Vriezen contends, "At the heart of the Old Testament message lies the expectation of the Kingdom of God, and it is the initial fulfillment of this expectation in Jesus of Nazareth . . . that underlies the message of the New Testament. The true heart of both Old Testament and New Testament is, therefore,

Second, the messianic ministry of Christ is eschatological as he inaugurates the new creation through his victorious identity, ministry, death, and resurrection. (1) The identity of Jesus is eschatological as the New Testament presents him as both a Second Adam who restores eschatological rulership to the cosmos (1 Cor 15:20-28; Rom 5:12-21) and a new Israel who plunders his eschatological enemies as he conquers the promised land of a new creation (Col 2:15; Heb 4).<sup>243</sup> (2) The ministry of Jesus is eschatological as the Gospels present it as an incarnational assault on the kingdom of Satan.<sup>244</sup> As Jesus initiates the kingdom through both his deeds and his discourse, he actually “achieves the eschaton.”<sup>245</sup> Indeed, the teachings of Jesus indicate that he recognizes the eschatological kingdom is both now and not yet (Matt 12:28; John 5:25).<sup>246</sup> (3) The death of Jesus is eschatological as he not only satisfies the eschatological wrath of God but also destroys the eschatological enemies of God (Col 2:14-15).<sup>247</sup> (4) The resurrection of Jesus is eschatological as he ushers in the new

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the eschatological perspective.” T. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, trans. S. Neuijen, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), 458.

<sup>243</sup>Boyd, *God at War*, 227; Gregory A. Boyd, *The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power Is Destroying the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 152.

<sup>244</sup>Boyd, *God at War*, 185; Millard J. Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 614.

<sup>245</sup>Boyd, *God at War*, 214, 186; Gustaf Wingren, *The Living Word: A Theological Study of Preaching and the Church*, trans. T. V. Pague (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1960), 53.

<sup>246</sup>Henry asserts, “No study of the kingdom teaching of Jesus is adequate unless it recognizes His implication both that the kingdom is here and that it is not here.” Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), 53.

<sup>247</sup>Horton, *Lord and Servant*, 243.

creation by defeating death.<sup>248</sup> Through both his person and his work, Christ the warrior king demonstrates himself as the cornerstone of the eschaton.

Third, the messianic community of the church is eschatological as it advances the kingdom of Christ through dependence on the eschatological Spirit of Christ. The church is the eschatological community of the kingdom that exists in this time between the times.<sup>249</sup> Empowered by the eschatological Spirit of Christ, the church is the means by which Christ the warrior king continues to execute his ongoing mission of ministry and mercy (Eph 4:8-11). Furthermore, because Jesus is “humanity eschatologically defined,” he is the image of God to whom believers in the church are being eschatologically conformed (Rom 8:28-29).<sup>250</sup> The church is the eschatological community of Christ the warrior king, awaiting the final consummation of his new creation kingdom.

Fourth, the messianic culmination of the end times is eschatological as Christ the warrior king consummates the victory he has already achieved. Moore rightly observes that “one cannot understand God’s ultimate purposes unless one understands that God’s purposes find their goal and content in Jesus Christ.”<sup>251</sup> Therefore, abstract

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<sup>248</sup>Mathison posits, “Jesus’ death and resurrection, then, is presented by Matthew as the eschatological turning point of the ages.” Mathison, *From Age to Age*, 384; Gregory A. Boyd, *Is God to Blame? Moving Beyond Pat Answers to the Problem of Evil* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 162; Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 320, 576; Ladd, *The Last Things: An Eschatology for Laymen*, 116.

<sup>249</sup>Bright states, “In the service of the victorious and already present Kingdom of God the church is given a joyful and triumphant task. The New Testament church saw itself, as we have said, as the people of that Kingdom, the ‘eschatological community’ which was living already in the age to come.” John Bright, *The Kingdom of God*, rev. ed. (New York: Abingdon, 1980), 232.

<sup>250</sup>Gregory A. Boyd, “Christian Love and Academic Dialogue: A Reply to Bruce Ware,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45, no. 2 (2002): 242.

<sup>251</sup>Moore, “Personal and Cosmic Eschatology,” 858–59.

discussions about facets of consummated eschatology that isolate them from the redemptive reign of Christ fail to account for the eschatological picture in the warfare worldview of Scripture.<sup>252</sup> In part, consummated eschatology also demonstrates the culmination of God's covenant commitment to the faithful remnant of Israel—a faithfulness that centers on the new, true and faithful Israel—Jesus Christ himself.<sup>253</sup> Yet, Christ the warrior king is not just the end goal of eschatology; he is also the means by which eschatological victory is achieved.<sup>254</sup> The fundamental benefit of integrating Scripture's warfare worldview with its eschatological perspective is that it clarifies how both the already and the not yet aspects of inaugurated eschatology center on the warfare of Christ the warrior king.<sup>255</sup>

### **Christ the Warrior King and Inaugurated Eschatology**

Writing after World War 2, Oscar Cullman likened inaugurated eschatology to the allied invasion of the Germans. Whereas the allied forces inaugurated their victory at Normandy on D-Day by striking a decisive blow against their enemies, the conquest was not yet consummated until they completed the victory on V-Day. He explains, “The hope of the final victory is so much the more vivid because of the unshakably firm conviction

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<sup>252</sup>Mathison explains the connection between a biblical theology of eschatology and the kingdom: “Biblical eschatology involves the first advent of Jesus Christ as much as his second advent. Biblical eschatology involves God's entire redemptive plan, determined by the Father, Son, and Spirit before the foundation of the world. All of redemptive history, is, in fact, the outworking of God's eschatological plan, involving the establishment of his kingdom on earth.” Mathison, *From Age to Age*, 699.

<sup>253</sup>Moore asserts that “God's kingdom purposes are *in Christ*. He is the last man and the true Israel, the bearer of the Spirit.” Moore, “Personal and Cosmic Eschatology,” 867.

<sup>254</sup>Moore states that “Kingdom eschatology is, by definition, an emphasis on the messianic role of Christ.” Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 76.

<sup>255</sup>Boyd, *God at War*, 227.

that the battle that decides the victory has already taken place.”<sup>256</sup> Inaugurated eschatology is fundamentally bound up with Christobellian warfare. Moore is precisely correct to suggest that “nearly every eschatological question at issue is related to the ‘already’ and ‘not yet’ aspects of the reign of Christ.”<sup>257</sup> While contemporary theology has significantly reflected on inaugurated eschatology, theologians have given little attention to its relationship with the warfare worldview of Scripture. What can a warfare theology contribute to a better understanding of the nature of inaugurated eschatology, especially as it relates to the mission of the church?<sup>258</sup>

The locus of Christ the warrior king’s eschatological activity during this overlap of the ages is the kingdom community of the church. Therefore, it is important to reflect on the relationship between the mission of Christ and the mission of the church in this time between the times. Since Scripture portrays a divine warrior Christology, what

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<sup>256</sup>Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, trans. Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1950), 87. His imagery is all the more striking when it is recalled that Cullmann was a German. Commenting on Cullmann’s understanding (which he later affirms as his own), Pope Benedict XVI notes that “the turning point, the midpoint of time, is already here, though it does not coincide with the end of world history.” Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, trans. Michael Waldstein, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 53. See also James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 463; Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 81–82; Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 301.

<sup>257</sup>Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 60.

<sup>258</sup>There have been many attempts to explain the relationship between the church and the inaugurated kingdom. Ladd offers five claims: (1) the church is not the kingdom, (2) the kingdom creates the church, (3) the church as witness of the kingdom, (4) the church as instrument of the kingdom, and (5) the church as custodian of the kingdom. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 262–77. In the missional church discussion, Hunsberger argues for three ideas: “In Jesus’ way of carrying out God’s mission, we discover that the church is to represent God’s reign as its community, its servant, and its messenger.” George R. Hunsberger, “Missional Vocation: Called and Sent to Represent the Reign of God,” in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, ed. Darrell L. Guder and Lois Barrett (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 102. More recently, Harper and Metzger divide their treatment of the church as eschatological community into sections on roles and characteristics of the community. Brad Harper and Paul Louis Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology: An Evangelical and Ecumenical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009), 47–78.

implications does this carry for the church's mission?<sup>259</sup> How does the motif of Christ as warrior king shape the composition, structure and ministries of the church? To answer these questions, a more foundational inquiry must be addressed—what is the relationship between the mission of Christ the warrior king and the mission of the church? This section argues that the mission of the church reflects the mission of Christ the warrior king during this time of inaugurated eschatology so that the eschatological community of the kingdom is: (1) the *great community* composed of those who have been united to the warrior king, (2) following the *Great Commission* as those who have been sent by the warrior king to proclaim his kingdom reign, and (3) living out the *great commandment* as those who have been transformed by the warrior king to display the Christ-like ethics of the kingdom.<sup>260</sup>

**Christ the warrior king and the great community.** The community of the church is great because it is composed of those who are not. The church is the great community of the kingdom because it is united to the great warrior king. This section, then, deals with the militant identity of the church—who it is as the outpost of the warrior king. The church is the great community, first, because it is the eschatological colony of the inaugurated kingdom. Because it is the locus of Christ's present reign, "the church is

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<sup>259</sup>Christopher Wright defines the church's mission as "our committed participation as God's people, at God's invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation." Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 23.

<sup>260</sup>This section follows the approach of Moore and Sagers, who argue that the eschatological community of the kingdom is marked by three dimensions: composition, proclamation, and transformation. An examination of the warfare nature of each of these three components follows, with a consideration of their implications for the mission of the church. Russell D. Moore and Robert E. Sagers, "The Kingdom of God and the Church: A Baptist Reassessment," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12, no. 1 (2008): 76.

a preview of life under the rule of God in the age to come, a forerunner of the new Jerusalem, a foretaste of the heavenly banquet, a sign of the reign of God.”<sup>261</sup> As such, “local churches should see themselves as outcroppings of heaven” because they are the foretaste of Christ’s new creation reign. Just as he is head over this new creation colony (Col 1:18-22), so too will Christ rule over all things (1 Cor 15:26-28).<sup>262</sup>

The church is where the kingdom of Christ—his righteous reign—is now manifested in this time between the times as his eschatological victory has been inaugurated but not yet fully consummated.<sup>263</sup> The church as eschatological community embodies the reality that Christ the warrior king has initially defeated his enemies and now “the reign of Christ is focused in this age solely on His reign as Messiah over the people called into the Kingdom, namely, those who make up the church.”<sup>264</sup> If the church is the eschatological community of the kingdom, this reality fundamentally shapes its

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<sup>261</sup>Lois Barrett, “Missional Witness: The Church as Apostle to the World,” in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, ed. Darrell L. Guder and Lois Barrett (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 128. “The church is an eschatological community, fully engaged in the present through its identity as God’s community of the future,” add Harper and Metzger. Harper and Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology*, 76. For a discussion of the church as eschatological community from a wide swath of evangelical ecclesiology, see Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 262–77; Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 131–74; Hunsberger, “Missional Vocation,” 77–109; Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 189; John L. Dagg, *Manual of Church Order* (Harrisonburg, VA: Gano, 1990), 139.

<sup>262</sup>D. A. Carson, “Evangelicals, Ecumenism and the Church,” in *Evangelical Affirmations*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry and Kenneth S. Kantzer (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 366.

<sup>263</sup>Ladd argues that the “Kingdom of God is God’s redemptive reign. It is God’s conquest through the person of Christ over His enemies: sin, Satan and death.” George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 95; Clowney, *The Church*, 38. Elsewhere, Ladd clarifies the relationship between the church and the kingdom, “the church is the community of the Kingdom but never the Kingdom itself.” Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 262.

<sup>264</sup>Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 152. On the relationship between Christ’s resurrection and the church’s eschatological mission, see Gary D. Badcock, *The House Where God Lives: The Doctrine of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 327.

militant mission since the church is the outpost of Christ the warrior king's eschatological reign in the inaugurated kingdom.<sup>265</sup>

The church is the great community, second, because it is the theo-political colony of the inaugurated kingdom—composed of holy warriors who have been united to the warrior king. Dagg comments, “Believers in Christ compose a nation, a holy nation, over which Christ is the king.”<sup>266</sup> Indeed, the apostle Peter recognizes the church as a new theo-political Israel in Christ because it is a royal priesthood and a holy nation called out by the king (1 Pet 2:9).<sup>267</sup> Therefore, the church as the theo-political colony of the kingdom is a Christocracy in which the Davidic king shepherds his subjects—rescuing them from their enemies and protecting them from their oppressors—through spiritual warfare.<sup>268</sup>

The church is the great community, third, because it is the regenerate colony of the inaugurated kingdom—called to reflect its composition as the community of conquest through regenerate church membership. Citizens are made subjects of the king when he rescues them from the domain of darkness and transfers them into the kingdom of Christ through faith union with him (Col 1:13-14). The kingdom community consists exclusively of those who have pledged allegiance to Christ. Therefore, regenerate church membership is an act of warfare because “joining the church is in itself a public

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<sup>265</sup>Confirming this contention, Harper and Metzger note that “in any discussion of the characteristics of the church as an eschatological community, we would be remiss if we did not discuss the disarming of Satan.” Harper and Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology*, 74.

<sup>266</sup>Dagg, *Manual of Church Order*, 129; cf. 139.

<sup>267</sup>Clowney adds, “The church as the community of Christ's kingdom on earth is a theo-political order.” Clowney, *The Church*, 189.

<sup>268</sup>Moore and Sagers, “The Kingdom of God and the Church,” 77.



declaration of being rightly related to the King.”<sup>269</sup> Likewise, baptism is spiritual warfare as believers are rescued from the condemnation of the principalities and powers and publicly profess that they receive deliverance through the eschatological victory of Christ.<sup>270</sup> As God warred against his people Israel in their sinful rebellion (i.e., Josh 7), he continues to purify his people from insurrectionists through church discipline as an act of warfare (1 Cor 5:3-5).<sup>271</sup> As a result, part of the church’s mission is to maintain the purity of its composition as the redeemed community of Christ.

The church is the great community, fourth, because it is the lasting colony of the inaugurated kingdom—persevering against the assaults of the enemy because of Christ’s eschatological victory. As Matthew 16:18 confirms, “The gates of Hades as fortifications of the devil will not stand against the assault of Christ’s church.”<sup>272</sup> Because Christ battles on behalf of his people, the church will stand against its enemies until his victory is fully consummated. Furthermore, as Grenz points out, “What the church is, in short, is determined by what the church is destined to become.”<sup>273</sup> Consequently, the church can maintain hope and perseverance in the midst of its Christocentric mission because it knows that it will continue to be protected through union with Christ.

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<sup>269</sup>Ibid.

<sup>270</sup>Harper and Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology*, 127–28; Russell D. Moore, “Theology Bleeds: Why Theological Vision Matters for the Great Commission, and Vice-Versa,” in *The Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God’s Mandate in Our Time*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Adam Greenway (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 113; Moore and Sagers, “The Kingdom of God and the Church,” 78; Stephen J. Wellum, “Baptism and the Relationship between the Covenants,” in *Believer’s Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn Wright (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 69.

<sup>271</sup>Moore and Sagers, “The Kingdom of God and the Church,” 78.

<sup>272</sup>Clowney, *The Church*, 41.

<sup>273</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 479.

The church is an embassy of the eschaton because it is a colony of conquest. It's composition as the great community of the kingdom results from its union with the great conquest of Christ the warrior king. Even (perhaps especially) as it relates to the church's mission, kingdom implies warfare. In summary, the first dimension of the church as eschatological community is its composition—the church is the great community, composed of citizens of the king who are marked out by the king in an enduring colony of the kingdom. If the church composes the inaugurated kingdom as the great community, then it must proclaim the inaugurated kingdom through the Great Commission.

**Christ the warrior king and the Great Commission.** “The Great Commission is not a theme float for a mission in a long parade of cultural triumphs. It is the marching orders of the Lord for his church,” states Edmund Clowney.<sup>274</sup> The Great Commission is the enduring command of the divine warrior by which he offers an ongoing call to spiritual warfare for the church's mission.<sup>275</sup> This section, then, deals with the militant mission of the church—what it does as the army of the warrior king.<sup>276</sup> In the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20), Jesus “was not launching a global public relations

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<sup>274</sup>Clowney, *The Church*, 67.

<sup>275</sup>For an able defense of applying the Great Commission beyond the disciples to the church, see William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (London: Baptist Missionary Society, 1942).

<sup>276</sup>Boyd comments on this mission, “Hence Jesus did not just carry out his warfare ministry; he commissioned, equipped and empowered his disciples, and the whole of the later church, to do the same. He set in motion the creation of a new humanity, one that again exercises dominion over the earth, by giving us his power and authority to proclaim and demonstrate the kingdom just as he did.” Boyd, *God at War*, 214.

campaign. He was declaring war.<sup>277</sup> Moore summarizes the warfare nature of the Great Commission:

The Great Commission is a theology of cosmic warfare—a theology centered on the unveiling of the long-hidden mystery of Christ and his church. It means the overthrow of the ancient powers that have long held the creation captive through sin and death. It means the triumph of a resurrected Messiah over every principality and power hostile to the reign of the Creator. It means that God is keeping his promises to his anointed King. If this bores us—or the nations and tribes around us—it’s only because we don’t see what’s going on with the Great Commission. It isn’t boring. It’s war.<sup>278</sup>

The Great Commission links the militant mission of the church with the mission of Christ the warrior king in several ways.<sup>279</sup> (1) The Great Commission demonstrates the authority of the warrior king as he asserts his power over a conquered cosmos by sending out his people to carry out his mission (Matt 28:18).<sup>280</sup> (2) The Great Commission documents the command of the warrior king as he instructs his people on how to carry out his mission (Matt 28:18-19).<sup>281</sup> (3) The Great Commission declares the

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<sup>277</sup>Moore, “Theology Bleeds,” 104.

<sup>278</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>279</sup>Because of space limitations, this section on the mission of the church cannot address everything related to the warfare nature of what the church does. Areas for further discussion include issues like whether healings and exorcism play a role in the militant mission of the church today

<sup>280</sup>As Moore says, “A theology of the Great Commission is inextricably tied up with a theology of the church. King Jesus, after all, commands the believing community to baptize the nations and to plant congregations across the planet. Contemporary evangelicals seem to recognize at least this much. What we often miss, however, is the authority Christ grants to his church in the Great Commission.” Ibid., 117. See also Andreas J. Köstenberger, “Baptism in the Gospels,” in *Believer’s Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn Wright (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 22; Peder Borgen, *Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism* (New York: T & T Clark, 1998), 59–60; K. L. Sparks, “Gospel as Conquest: Mosaic Typology in Matthew 28:16-20,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (2006): 651.

<sup>281</sup>Christ’s commissioning of the church is comprehensive, including instructions for inclusion (baptism), integration (making disciples), and instruction (instructing them to obey). Moore, “Theology Bleeds,” 105. For more on the central command of Matthew 28:19 to make disciples (μαθητεύσατε), see Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Jesus and the Twelve*, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 348–67. For more on the dimension of teaching in the Great Commission, see M. David Sills, *Reaching and Teaching: A Call to Great Commission Obedience* (Chicago: Moody, 2010), 15–30.

presence of the warrior king as he promises to battle on behalf of the community of the kingdom until his victory is fully culminated (Matt 28:20).<sup>282</sup> Carrying out the Great Commission's call to warfare, the church proclaims the gospel of the kingdom through preaching, missions, and ministry.

First, the church carries out the Great Commission of Christ the warrior king through its gospel message. In the church, this gospel message is announced primarily through the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the ordinances.<sup>283</sup> Preaching itself is an act of war because it is the means by which the church battles against the world, the flesh and the devil through the proclamation of Christ.<sup>284</sup> Put simply, preaching is, as Moore puts it, “expositional exorcism.”<sup>285</sup> Preaching is warfare because the proclamation of Christ (whether in public preaching or personal evangelism) is the means by which Christ himself rescues captives from the principalities and powers.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>282</sup>For more on the promise of Christ's presence in the Great Commission, see Andreas J. Köstenberger, “Mission,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. Brian S. Rosner et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 668; Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 238.

<sup>283</sup>Moore and Sagers note that the ordinances are “proclamations—the voice of Jesus announcing an invading Kingdom through the first stage of the invasion force, his church. Where Jesus speaks, he is *there*. And he is there as King and Lord.” Moore and Sagers, “The Kingdom of God and the Church,” 81. Therefore, both baptism and the Lord's supper are declarations of war. Because of space limitations, it is not possible to explore this line of thought further.

<sup>284</sup>For more on this concept, see Doug Williams, “Preaching as Spiritual Warfare,” in *Preach the Word! The Call and Challenge of Preaching Today*, ed. Greg Haslam (Lancaster, UK: Sovereign World, 2006), 463–66.

<sup>285</sup>This phrase was coined by Russell Moore, but it has not yet appeared in his published work. His most substantial discussion of preaching as spiritual warfare can be found in Russell D. Moore, “Preaching Like the Devil,” *Touchstone* 23, no. 3 (2010): 1–4. For examples of sermons on spiritual warfare by well-known figures in church history, see Warren W. Wiersbe, ed., *Classic Sermons on Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1992).

<sup>286</sup>Moore adds, “This also means we must recognize that our preaching is always subversive. Every preached word is a salvo in the spiritual warfare against the Evil One. We must then, like the Apostle Paul, learn how not to be ‘ignorant of his designs’ (2 Cor. 2:11).” Moore, “Preaching Like the Devil,” 3; Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2007), 226.

Preachers must be “obsessed” with proclaiming the entire Christ-centered storyline of Scripture (1 Pet 1:10-12; Luke 24:27; John 5:39), recognizing how its typological patterns and structures find their fulfillment in the establishment of the kingdom through the eschatological victory of Christ.<sup>287</sup> At stake in the announcement of the kingdom through preaching is “the Word of the King himself, the vehicle through which King Jesus governs his colonies and calls into existence his Kingdom.”<sup>288</sup> Through proclamation, the church engages in spiritual warfare as it announces the kingdom with the authority of the messianic warrior in such a way that it rescues captives from bondage and equips citizens for battle (2 Cor 5:20).<sup>289</sup>

Second, the church carries out the Great Commission of Christ the warrior king through its gospel mission. Personal evangelism and worldwide missions are the local and global expressions of the church’s kingdom conflict. In other words, evangelism and missions are fundamentally spiritual warfare. As Newbiggin notes, Jesus goes ahead of his missional people “like a commander leading troops into battle.”<sup>290</sup> In evangelism and missions, the church is calling sinners to submit to the reign of Christ and

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<sup>287</sup>R. Albert Mohler, *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 103. For more on the relationship between typology, the kingdom, and warfare in preaching, see Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 137, 223; J. Ligon Duncan, “Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,” in *Preaching the Cross*, ed. Mark Dever et al. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 56; Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible As Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961).

<sup>288</sup>Moore and Sagers, “The Kingdom of God and the Church,” 79.

<sup>289</sup>Moore admonishes preachers, “Also, remember you are speaking for Christ. There’s a passion and a gravity that ought to come with standing in the place of the One who has been granted all authority.” Moore, “Preaching Like the Devil,” 4. For more on preaching with the authority of Christ, see Moore and Sagers, “The Kingdom of God and the Church,” 80; Moore, “Theology Bleeds,” 116; Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 270.

<sup>290</sup>Lesslie Newbiggin, “Recent Thinking on Christian Beliefs, VIII: Mission and Missions,” *Expository Times* 88, no. 9 (1977): 240.

renounce allegiance to his enemies.<sup>291</sup> To join Christ in his worldwide rescue mission, the church must embrace a wartime mentality in which it not only evangelizes on a personal level but also engages in missions on a global level.<sup>292</sup> Unless missions is recognized by the church as more than a program to support, it cannot fully realize the militant nature of missions.<sup>293</sup> Instead, the church should “throb with the same evangelistic fervor that fuels its king—and to call, with His authority, the nations to surrender before His coming global reign.”<sup>294</sup> Missions is the primary battleground of the inaugurated kingdom.

Third, the church carries out the Great Commission of Christ the warrior king through its gospel ministry. Just as Jesus’ incarnational assault on the kingdom of darkness was characterized by both word and work, the church’s militant mission consists of both the gospel message (word) and gospel ministry (work).<sup>295</sup> Kingdom ministry should work in tandem with kingdom proclamation, never in replacement of it, so that the church can demonstrate to the world that its word matches its works.<sup>296</sup> There

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<sup>291</sup>Moore and Sagers, “The Kingdom of God and the Church,” 80.

<sup>292</sup>John Piper, *The Pleasures of God*, rev. ed. (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2000), 228.

<sup>293</sup>Moore asserts, “There is nothing programmatic about leading sinners to faith in Christ. Instead, the expansion of global missions represents the plundering of the kingdom of Satan (Mark 3:27; John 12:31-32; 2 Tim 2:25-26). The embrace of the gospel by sinners is more than just persuasion; it is the kingly activity of Jesus as the Son of David calling together a ‘flock’ over which he rules as Shepherd (John 10:15-16; cf. Ezek 37:24).” Moore, “Theology Bleeds,” 104. Gibbs and Bolger add, “A community committed to the gospel of the reign of God provides the most convincing apologetic of the gospel.” Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 125.

<sup>294</sup>Moore, “Theology Bleeds,” 117.

<sup>295</sup>Dickson declares that “Jesus insisted that his healings, exorcisms and mastery over nature were not only an indication of his kingly status in God’s kingdom; they were a preview of the kingdom itself.” John Dickson, *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission: Promoting the Gospel with More Than Our Lips* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 214.

<sup>296</sup>Clowney, *The Church*, 16; Moore and Sagers, “The Kingdom of God and the Church,” 82. For more on the relationship between word and deed in the church’s evangelistic mission, see J. Mack Stiles, *Marks of the Messenger: Knowing, Living and Speaking the Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL:

are a variety of gospel ministries in the church—from counseling, men’s ministry and family ministry to discipleship, worship and orphan care—that promote the inaugurated kingdom.<sup>297</sup> For example, the ministry of counseling is one instance of “an act of war against the kingdom of darkness, advancing the kingdom of light.”<sup>298</sup> The church wages Christocentric warfare through both word and work. Yet, the church’s militant mission continues not just through what it does but also through how it lives as it embodies the ethics of the warrior king.

**Christ the warrior king and the great commandment.** If the church as the great community clarifies who the eschatological community is to be and the church’s Great Commission explains what the eschatological community is to do, then the church’s great commandment reveals how the eschatological community is to live. This section, then, deals with the militant ethic of the church—how it lives as the outpost of the warrior king. Jesus tells the Pharisees that the great commandment—the law of life that embodies the ethics of the inaugurated kingdom—is to love God and love neighbor (Matt 22:34-40).<sup>299</sup> It seems as if Jesus’ call to war in the Great Commission conflicts with his call to love in the great commandment. Can they be reconciled? How does this call to love in the great commandment connect with the church’s kingdom conflict?

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InterVarsity, 2010), 49–60.

<sup>297</sup>Dickson states that “the best kept secret of Christian mission is that the Bible lists a whole range of activities that promote Christ to the world and draw others toward him.” Dickson, *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission*, 109.

<sup>298</sup>Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 174. Ferguson adds, “Pastoral counseling must always therefore have the one great fear in view, and Jesus Christ the deliverer as the divinely appointed remedy.” Ferguson, “Christus Victor et Propitiator,” 187.

<sup>299</sup>It is significant that Jesus follows this explanation by asking the Pharisees about the messiah (Matt 22:41-46). It seems as if Jesus intentionally makes a link between the great commandment and his messianic identity. If love is tied to his messianic identity, then it should be tied to the church’s mission.

The great commandment's call to love is how the church should live out the Great Commission's call to war. As those who are being transformed into the image of the warrior king (Rom 8:28-29; 2 Cor 3:18), the church is to live out the ethics of the kingdom (i.e., Matt 5-7). Moore and Sagers explain that the church is "to exhibit personally the ethics of Jesus' rule and reign. In other words, the subjects of the Kingdom will live in such a way that signals the truth that the Kingdom has come and that the Kingdom is coming."<sup>300</sup> Carrying out the great commandment's call to love, the church embodies the ethics of the warrior king through (1) personal holiness, (2) social justice, and (3) socio-political engagement.

First, the church lives out the ethics of the inaugurated kingdom by embodying the great commandment's implied call to personal holiness. To love God "with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matt 22:37) means that Christians must fight the good fight of the faith in the pursuit of sanctification. As the church follows after the warrior king, its community will become more like him (1 Cor 11:1; Phil 2:3-11). After his victorious death and resurrection, Christ pours out the Spirit as the spoils of victory upon believers to empower them to pursue Christlikeness by standing against the deceptive assault of the enemy (Eph 4:8). As Horton writes, "Mediating Christ's royal ministry, the Spirit subdues unbelief and the tyranny of sin in the lives of believers" based on the spoils of Christ's victory (Eph 4:8-16).<sup>301</sup> To facilitate this progressive sanctification, the church intentionally invests in member care so that its

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<sup>300</sup>Moore and Sagers, "The Kingdom of God and the Church," 81.

<sup>301</sup>Michael S. Horton, *People and Place: A Covenant Ecclesiology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 25.



missional people might become disciplined warriors.<sup>302</sup> Moore and Sagers comment, “The church also serves as a training ground for ruling and reigning authority in the coming kingdom. . . . In other words, Jesus is training his subjects of the Kingdom to be kings and queens of the cosmos.”<sup>303</sup> Therefore, as it images the mission of the warrior king, part of the church’s mission is to offer basic training for its soldiers so that they might become more like Christ. To love God and neighbor wholly begins with the church being holy.

Second, the church lives out the ethics of the inaugurated kingdom by embodying the great commandment’s implied call to social justice. A right understanding of the church’s militant mission helps to clarify its role in mercy ministry.<sup>304</sup> On the one hand, it confirms that social justice is an important emphasis in God’s kingdom work.<sup>305</sup> As the church seeks to reflect the life mission of its king, it recognizes that Jesus cared for the poor and marginalized through neighbor love (Mark 12:30-31).<sup>306</sup> Thus, for example, pure and undefiled religion is caring for widows and orphans (Jam 1:27). Yet,

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<sup>302</sup>For more on the concept of believers as disciplined warriors, see Chuck Lawless, *Disciplined Warriors: Growing Healthy Churches That Are Equipped for Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002).

<sup>303</sup>Moore and Sagers, “The Kingdom of God and the Church,” 82.

<sup>304</sup>Keller explains, “Here is a working definition for the ministry of mercy: it is *the meeting of (1) ‘felt’ needs through (2) deeds.*” Timothy J. Keller, *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1997), 46.

<sup>305</sup>Moore states, “A Kingdom-oriented, holistic vision of soteriology would necessitate church-based social ministry as well as personal evangelism in a ministry to the whole person, but social ministry is not enough. Evangelicals must also address the cultural and political undercurrents that threaten the lives of individuals and the societal order itself.” Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 124. Henry adds that “Christian love is only half biblical when it deteriorates into a concern only for the souls of men and is indifferent to the needs of the body.”

<sup>306</sup>Boyd contends, “Everything Jesus was about manifested Calvary-like love and should therefore be seen as acts of war against the destructive powers that seek to keep people from living in God’s love. The central call of every disciple is to imitate *this* life, manifest *this* kingdom, and thereby engage in *this* warfare.” Boyd, “Christus Victor View,” 40.

on the other hand, a right view of the church's warfare shows that the pursuit of mercy ministry must enhance, not distract from, the church's central call to battle in proclamation.<sup>307</sup>

Properly understanding the church's militant mission can prevent the church from an either/or view of social justice. The church fights for both those who are socially oppressed through mercy ministry and those who are spiritually oppressed through gospel proclamation.<sup>308</sup> It rescues both sinners from the kingdom of darkness and sufferers from the darkness of society (Col 1:13; Luke 10:36-37). Therefore, social justice is not a distraction from the church's militant mission but a part of its holistic kingdom conflict.<sup>309</sup> The church is called to care for the civilian casualties of war that result from kingdom conflict.<sup>310</sup>

Third, the church lives out the ethics of the inaugurated kingdom by embodying the great commandment's implied call to socio-political engagement.<sup>311</sup> If the

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<sup>307</sup>Lunde asserts, "Since God's kingdom was arriving in fulfillment of his historical actions of deliverance, Jesus' disciples were to *demonstrate* its presence in tangible ways that image its presence. *Proclamation and demonstration*—these dimensions belong inextricably together. Without either of them present, God's mission is only partially realized." Jonathan Lunde, *Following Jesus, the Servant King: A Biblical Theology of Covenantal Discipleship*, Biblical Theology for Life (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 176.

<sup>308</sup>Moore maintains, "The proclamation of love of neighbor is not incidental to gospel proclamation, as though it were some kind of secondary implication of the gospel." Moore, *Tempted and Tried*, 155.

<sup>309</sup>Moore writes, "A Kingdom-oriented, holistic vision of soteriology would necessitate church-based social ministry as well as personal evangelism in a ministry to the whole person, but social ministry is not enough. Evangelicals must also address the cultural and political undercurrents that threaten the lives of individuals and the societal order itself." Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 124.

<sup>310</sup>Leithart says that "there is a warfare 'behind' the warfare, a *Religionskrieg* behind the *Kulturkampf*, a holy war behind the cultural war." He adds, "The conflict 'behind' the cultural war is the conflict of the kingdom of God against the kingdom of Satan."

<sup>311</sup>Though much more could be said about applying inaugurated eschatology to socio-political engagement, space limitations prevent it. A helpful resource on the issue is Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*.

church's members are citizens of Christ the warrior king's theo-political reign, then what does this mean for how the church should view both its relationship to government? To love neighbor includes submitting to the governing authorities (Rom 13:1-7).<sup>312</sup> Indeed, just before Jesus brings up the great commandment, he instructs the Pharisees to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matt 22:21).

The church's expression of Christocentric conflict in socio-political engagement does not simply entail a culture war crusade against moral evils or political foes. Instead, it supports religious liberty, recognizing that, behind these structural evils in society, there is a spiritual Evil who rages against the culture because the messianic king has defeated him.<sup>313</sup> It also leaves open the possibility that the state, not the church, might engage in just war as an expression of neighbor love to protect those who are in danger of oppression through military action.<sup>314</sup> Overall, it means that the church is a

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<sup>312</sup>Clowney comments, "The church, while a company of pilgrims, is also an embassy of Christ's kingdom, representing the authority of Christ. By his command, the church teaches Christians to be subject to the state." Clowney, *The Church*, 190.

<sup>313</sup>Moore and Sagers state, "Thus, the centuries-old Baptist commitment to the separation of church and state and religious liberty is, at its heart, a biblical affirmation of the inaugurated-but-not-consummated Kingdom of God. Seeing the 'already' aspect of the Kingdom in the church, and not in the state or the culture, will save Christians from a naïve utopianism on the one hand or a satanic tyranny on the other." Moore and Sagers, "The Kingdom of God and the Church," 83.

<sup>314</sup>It is too complex to address the issue of military ethics in this section. However, it is necessary to say a brief word about pacifism because this paper supports just war theory when most authors who highlight the theme of warfare in Scripture are pacifists. The main problem with pacifism seems to be a failure to recognize what stage it is in redemptive history. As a result, it bases its military vantage point on an overrealized eschatology. Consequently, it embraces a naïve utopianism in which it wrongly believes that protection of the innocent can happen apart from occasional military conflict in a fallen world. Pacifists are exactly correct that Jesus models self-sacrificial love in such a way that it points the church towards non-violence, but they fail to recognize that the Beatitudes must be balanced by a recognition of the ongoing role of the state as described in Romans 13. While the conquest of the cross ends the nationalistic dimension of the kingdom of God, the role of protection remains not with the church but with the state, thus allowing for the possibility of just war. Put simply, just war seems best because of the inaugurated nature of the kingdom's coming and the spiritual nature of the church's conflict. For more on just war, see J. Daryl Charles and Timothy J. Demy, *War, Peace, and Christianity: Questions and Answers from a Just-War Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010); Arthur F. Holmes, *War and Christian Ethics: Classic and Contemporary Readings on the Morality of War*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

kingdom counter-culture. The church carries out the ongoing mission of Christ the warrior king based on who it is (the great community), what it does (the Great Commission), and how it lives (the great commandment). The identity, mission, and ethic of the church derive from the identity, mission, and ethic of Christ the warrior king. This call to war continues until the inaugurated kingdom is consummated by the return of Christ.

### **Christ the Warrior King and Unrealized Eschatology**

“The message of Christian eschatology is that the tumult of this present warfare between the people of Christ and the principalities and powers is not eternal. Armageddon has been on the horizon since Eden,” Moore declares.<sup>315</sup> Despite postmodern resistance toward triumphalism,<sup>316</sup> the Bible is unwavering as it presents unrealized eschatology as a cosmic conquest achieved by Christ.<sup>317</sup> An evangelical eschatological consensus has emerged in recent years in which scholars from both the dispensational and covenantalist sides have converged on a recognition of the already but not yet nature of the kingdom.<sup>318</sup> If the kingdom is central to the unfolding of unrealized eschatology, then this implies that Christobellian kingdom warfare is central to the

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<sup>315</sup>Moore, “Personal and Cosmic Eschatology,” 893.

<sup>316</sup>Lints states, “Postmoderns repudiate the triumphalism expressed both in the assertion that history is headed toward a humanly inspired utopia and the assertion that it is headed toward a divinely inspired heavenly kingdom.” Lints, *The Fabric of Theology*, 216.

<sup>317</sup>Moltmann contends, “Christian eschatology must be broadened out into cosmic eschatology, for otherwise it becomes a Gnostic doctrine of redemption, and is bound to teach, no longer the redemption of the world but a redemption from the world, no longer the redemption of the body but a deliverance of the soul from the body.” Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 259.

<sup>318</sup>Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 25–80. He adds that “the emerging evangelical consensus is adamant in its refusal to identify current events with sensational theories of the end of the age.” *Ibid.*, 74.

unfolding of unrealized eschatology.<sup>319</sup> The warfare-orientation of unrealized eschatology is evident not only in the Bible's content about the end times (what it says) but also its presentation of the last days (how it says it).<sup>320</sup> But how does kingdom conflict emerge in the eschaton? This section contends that a warfare eschatology can contribute to current discussions on various aspects of consummated eschatology by reminding evangelical theology about the militant nature of (1) eschatological victory, (2) eschatological judgment, and (3) eschatological new creation.

**Christ the warrior king and eschatological victory.** Christ the warrior king inaugurates his eschatological victory at the cross and consummates it at his return. His future conquest comes through a second incarnational invasion of the created order.<sup>321</sup> Christ the warrior king's eschatological victory is marked by: (1) his second coming, (2) his cataclysmic kingdom conflict in Revelation 19, and (3) his millennial reign.

First, the second coming of Christ inaugurates the consummation of his eschatological victory as he returns to finally defeat all his enemies. According to Ladd, "The Second Coming will be a second divine invasion in which the majesty and glory of God will be revealed."<sup>322</sup> The sudden assault of Christ's return is the event that triggers

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<sup>319</sup>Moore asserts, "Both covenant theology and Dispensationalism, however, often discuss Israel and the church without taking into account the Christocentric nature of biblical eschatology." Moore, "Personal and Cosmic Eschatology," 906–07.

<sup>320</sup>Moore declares, "John sees all of history as culminating in the kingship of Jesus as the Lion of Judah, the Root of David (Rev. 5:5-6)." Ibid., 872. The way the Bible's presentation of eschatology is inherently warfare-oriented can be seen because Revelation has parallels with the genres of apocalypticism and combat myths that appeared in the surrounding Ancient Near Eastern culture. Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1994), 44.

<sup>321</sup>Ladd states, "There are, in other words, two great events in God's conquest of the powers of evil, two invasions of God into history: the Incarnation and the Second Coming." Ladd, *The Last Things: An Eschatology for Laymen*, 47.

<sup>322</sup>George Eldon Ladd, "Historic Premillennialism," in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four*

the culmination of kingdom warfare (Matt 24:27).<sup>323</sup> In his coming (παρουσία),<sup>324</sup> Christ the warrior king carries out multiple acts of strategic warfare—he raptures the living saints (1 Thess 4:17),<sup>325</sup> resurrects the dead saints (Rev 20:4),<sup>326</sup> destroys the lawless one (2 Thess 2:8),<sup>327</sup> and crushes Satan underneath his feet (Rom 16:20).<sup>328</sup>

Second, the last battle of Christ the warrior king pictured in Revelation 19 documents the culminating conflict of the kingdoms. Ladd asserts, “Chapters 19-20 form a continuous narrative announcing the marriage of the Lamb, the victorious return of

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*Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), 34.

<sup>323</sup>Witherington observes that “the whole schedule of eschatological events hinges on the return of Christ. Until and unless Christ returns, there will be no resurrection of the dead, no final judgment, no life everlasting, no Dominion of God on earth as in heaven. In many ways the return of Christ is a trigger event much like the resurrection of Christ was.” Ben Witherington III, *Imminent Domain: The Story of the Kingdom of God and Its Celebration* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 50.

<sup>324</sup>Commenting on the word παρουσία, Wright points out that “the word was often used of the ‘royal presence’ of kings and rulers. If we spoke of Jesus’ royal presence within God’s new creation, rather than thinking of his ‘coming’ as an invasion from outside, our talk about the future might make more sense.” Borg and Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus*, 203.

<sup>325</sup>Wright declares, “When Paul speaks of ‘meeting’ the Lord ‘in the air’ the point is precisely not—as in the popular rapture theology—that the saved believers would then stay up in the air somewhere, away from the earth. The point is that, having gone out to meet their returning Lord, they will escort him royally into his domain, that is, back to the place they have come from.” Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 133; Mathison, *From Age to Age*, 512. Moore adds, “The rapture of the church is intentionally public—a vindication of Jesus’ people before the watching world. Moreover, the rapture signals the new kings and queens of the earth, as the translated church meets Jesus outside ‘the gates’ of the atmosphere to join him in his march to victory.” Moore, “Personal and Cosmic Eschatology,” 906. Though it is outside the scope of this dissertation to address, it affirms a posttribulation rapture. See Douglas J. Moo, “A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture,” in *Three Views on the Rapture: Pretribulation, Prewrath, or Posttribulation*, ed. Alan Hultberg (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 185-241.

<sup>326</sup>Ladd comments on the connection between the resurrection of Christ and the saints, noting that “the resurrection of Jesus was itself an eschatological event. By this we mean to say that the resurrection of Jesus was not an isolated event in the midst of history; it was itself the beginning of the eschatological resurrection.” Ladd, *The Last Things: An Eschatology for Laymen*, 78.

<sup>327</sup>Moore highlights the cosmic significance of this defeat: “The idea of Jesus of Nazareth triumphantly returning as a warrior-king to reclaim his cosmic inheritance is anchored to a thoroughgoing supernaturalism and an orthodox Christology.” Moore, “Personal and Cosmic Eschatology,” 902.

<sup>328</sup>According to Cole, in Romans 16:20, Paul ties the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15 to Christ’s return: “The apostle thus links ‘peace’ (shalom) with the outworking of the *protoevangelium*.” Cole, *God the Peacemaker*, 92; Moyer V. Hubbard, *Christianity in the Greco-Roman World: A Narrative Introduction*

Christ and his victory over his enemies.”<sup>329</sup> Prior to the battle, the apostle John describes the marriage supper of the lamb—a victory feast celebrating the conquest over Christ the warrior king’s enemies with his loyal soldiers of the Spirit (Rev 19:6-10).<sup>330</sup> In “the most extended description of Jesus’ coming,” Revelation 19:11-21 depicts Christ the warrior king riding a white horse as he returns to “judge and make war on those who oppose him” in fulfillment of the Old Testament’s militant messianic expectation.<sup>331</sup> Therefore, the culminating event of kingdom conflict confirms what the biblical narrative has conveyed all along—namely, that Christ is a conquering messianic warrior king who will fully and finally destroy all his enemies.<sup>332</sup>

Third, the biblical narrative seems to describe a millennial reign of Christ the warrior king following his return in which he fulfills Scripture’s messianic expectation of a conquering deliverer who would rule in the midst of his enemies.<sup>333</sup> From a warfare

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(Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 52.

<sup>329</sup>Ladd, “Historic Premillennialism,” 35. There is a widespread evangelical consensus that Revelation 19 presents the second coming of Christ as the return of a warrior king. G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 948; David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 1053; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 679.

<sup>330</sup>Ladd points out that “Revelation 19:6-10 announces the ‘marriage of the Lamb’—the union of Christ with his bride, the church, which will occur at Christ’s return.” Ladd, “Historic Premillennialism,” 34. Moore explains its connection to the Lord’s Supper: “The fellowship we have now around the Lord’s table should point us to the inexpressible joy of eating bread and drinking wine with our triumphant King Jesus.” Moore, “Personal and Cosmic Eschatology,” 916.

<sup>331</sup>Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 815.

<sup>332</sup>Moore claims that the passage presents “the return of Jesus himself as a glorious and triumphant warrior-king (Rev. 19:11-21).” Moore, “Personal and Cosmic Eschatology,” 873; Ladd, “Historic Premillennialism,” 35; Mathison, *From Age to Age*, 687.

<sup>333</sup>It is outside the scope of this section to defend historic Premillennialism. Instead, it assumes Premillennialism and reflects on the warfare significance of it. For a defense of the Premillennialism position, see Ladd, “Historic Premillennialism”; Craig A. Blaising, “Premillennialism,” in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 155-227. For a critique of dispensational Premillennialism in general and the concept of a pretribulation

standpoint, what is the redemptive historical purpose of the millennium? Moore declares, “It seems that God’s glorification of Christ entails a public vindication of his rule specifically in the presence of his enemies, a final, visible subjugation of the rivals of Christ’s throne (Ps. 110; 1 Cor. 15:24-28).”<sup>334</sup> The warfare-oriented nature of the millennium appears in both the Old Testament’s allusions to this period (Isa 65:17-25)<sup>335</sup> and the New Testament’s description of this phase (Rev 20:1-6).<sup>336</sup> It is important to bear in mind that, regardless of which theological position someone takes toward the timing of the millennium, it clearly functions as a pivotal phase in the militant mission of the messiah.<sup>337</sup> However, it seems as if the premillennial perspective best accounts for how the millennium fits into the already but not yet eternal reign of Jesus over his enemies.<sup>338</sup> Christ the warrior king’s eschatological victory also entails eschatological judgment.

**Christ the warrior king and eschatological judgment.** Christ is not only the conquering shepherd-messiah who brings eschatological victory for his people but also the triumphant warrior-king who brings eschatological judgment against his enemies.

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rapture in particular, see George Eldon Ladd, *The Blessed Hope: A Biblical Study of the Second Advent and the Rapture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956).

<sup>334</sup>Moore, “Personal and Cosmic Eschatology,” 912.

<sup>335</sup>Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 64.

<sup>336</sup>According to Blaising, an analysis of Revelation 20 reveals that the millennial kingdom “is best interpreted as a future phase or stage of the eschatological kingdom.” Blaising, “Premillennialism,” 197.

<sup>337</sup>Ladd explains, “The New Testament nowhere expounds the theology of the millennium, that is, its purpose in God’s redemptive plan. In some way not disclosed in Scripture, the millennium is part of Christ’s Messianic rule by which he puts all his enemies under his feet (1 Cor. 15:25).” Ladd, “Historic Premillennialism,” 39.

<sup>338</sup>Moore asserts that “a premillennial kingdom theology answers” the challenge of Scripture’s already but not yet language “by articulating the Millennium, not as a separate dispensation from the eternal state, but as an initial phase of it, even as the current reign of Christ over the church is an initial phase of His universal global dominion.” Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 64.



Before evaluating these acts of judgment, a word must be said about the prominent issue in contemporary theology of non-violence.<sup>339</sup> Is the eschatological judgment that Jesus carries out non-violent, as many allege?<sup>340</sup> It seems that, from both the graphic imagery of Revelation and (more importantly) the trajectory of the warfare theme in the biblical narrative, the answer is no.<sup>341</sup> Instead, the return of Christ is a return to the violence of *herem* warfare.<sup>342</sup> This eschatological judgment of Christ the warrior king's enemies culminates in several warfare-oriented acts: (1) the great tribulation, (2) the final judgment, and (3) hell.

First, the great tribulation is an act of eschatological judgment in which the entire world experiences an intensified time of kingdom conflict.<sup>343</sup> The great tribulation

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<sup>339</sup>Many scholars who address the Bible's warfare theme embrace pacifism as it relates to current military activity and non-violence as it relates to both contemporary daily life and future judgment. See, for example, Lind, *Yahweh Is a Warrior*; John Howard Yoder, *The War of the Lamb: The Ethics of Nonviolence and Peacemaking* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009); Ronald J. Sider, *Non-Violence: The Invincible Weapon?* (Dallas: Word, 1989).

<sup>340</sup>For example, Segal states, "Like the book of Daniel and the Jesus movement, the book of Revelation's basic model is nonviolent resistance for the community enforced with militant rhetoric of the punishments waiting for the enemies of God through the intervention of Christ. The Christ who returns is the agent of punishment." Alan Segal, *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in Western Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 494–95.

<sup>341</sup>Horton declares, "There is no way of getting around the warrior theme and its obvious references to a cosmic judgment that eventuates in cataclysmic defeat for the powers—and not just in abstraction, but in the concrete reality of political action taken against the enemies of God." He continues, "There is a real and historical cleansing of God's world, not only by sympathetic suffering with, but by triumphant victory over, all who have set their faces against YHWH and his Messiah." Horton, *Lord and Servant*, 243.

<sup>342</sup>Longman writes, "Yahweh war is, in one sense then, a struggle against the realms of evil on a massive, transcendent level, an engagement that commences with the first creaturely hubris and that will end only when Satan and his minions are fully eradicated from God's kingdom." Merrill, "The Case for Moderate Discontinuity," 82.

<sup>343</sup>For a thorough evaluation of how the great tribulation fits into Christian eschatology, see Alan Hultberg, *Three Views on the Rapture: Pretribulation, Prewrath, or Posttribulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010).

is not some entirely new round of suffering (Matt 24:15-35).<sup>344</sup> Instead, it is an escalation of the suffering experienced throughout the conflict of the ages (Rev 12-14).<sup>345</sup> When the intensity of the battle grows, so does the intensity of the suffering.<sup>346</sup> Does a biblical theology of warfare shed any light on whether believers experience this tribulation? Scripture seems to indicate that Christians will experience the great tribulation but be protected through it because the Bible establishes a pattern of victory coming through suffering.<sup>347</sup> Just as the Old Testament's *herem* warfare was a foretaste of the divine warrior's eschatological judgment, the great tribulation points ahead to it as well.<sup>348</sup> Affirming a post-tribulational return of Christ preserves Scripture's presentation of both the intensity of this eschatological conflict and the imminency of Christ's eschatological coming.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>344</sup>Moo writes that "the Bible predicts a time of unprecedented tribulation for the people of God at the end of time—though I would want to insist that this tribulation is not to be separated from the tribulation that believers experience throughout this interadvent time period of time, the 'last days.'" Moo, "A Case for the Posttribulation Rapture," 239.

<sup>345</sup>Revelation notes the kingdom conflict that occurs during the tribulation period by recalling "visions of the heavenly warfare that is manifested in the tribulational distress (chap. 12), of the satanic power of that time (chap. 13), and of the protection and ultimate vindication of God's people (chaps. 7, 14)." Ibid., 232.

<sup>346</sup>Ladd points out that "Jesus taught that all his disciples could expect in the world was tribulation and persecution." He continues, "The only difference between the normal role of the Christian in the world and the time of the Great Tribulation is the intensity of the persecution." Ladd, *The Last Things: An Eschatology for Laymen*, 64.

<sup>347</sup>Did the divine warrior remove Israel from Egypt before he sent the plagues upon his enemies? Did God protect Jesus from pain as he achieved the conquest of the cross? No, in these prior warfare situations, the divine warrior shepherds his people through their sufferings as he leads them to ultimate victory. Why would the eschatological tribulation be any different? Douglas J. Moo, "The Case for the Posttribulation Rapture Position," in *Three Views on the Rapture*, ed. Gleason L. Archer (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 174.

<sup>348</sup>Commenting on the Old Testament's *herem* warfare, Horton points out, "Just as God warns the world of the judgment to come, that event is not only anticipated but actually experienced in part by the idolatrous nations that occupy God's land." Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology*, 162; Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," 173–74.

<sup>349</sup>Defending how posttribulationists can affirm the imminency of Christ's return, Moo

Second, the final judgment is an eschatological act of warfare by which Christ the warrior king declares kingdom condemnation for his dissident enemies and kingdom vindication for his loyal soldiers. Moore contends, “The final judgment focuses on the kingship of Christ. Jesus pointed to this judgment throne as a crucial aspect of his kingly role as Son of David when he will distinguish between the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46; Ezek. 34:17-24).”<sup>350</sup> Therefore, eschatological judgment is closely tied to kingdom warfare.<sup>351</sup> Indeed, the act of judgment demonstrates that Jesus is the ruling world authority who is fully qualified to render an eternal verdict on all nations because of his global kingdom triumph (Rev 20:4, 10, 15).<sup>352</sup> This last judgment entails covenant condemnation for the divine warrior’s enemies and kingdom inheritance for his people (Matt 25:34). As a result, the eschatological judgment is the global (1 Cor 4:5), final (Heb 9:27) act of Christ the warrior king (Matt 7:21-23; 2 Cor 5:10).

Third, hell is the eschatological culmination of Christ the warrior king’s battle against his enemies.<sup>353</sup> Hell’s eternal judgment falls on all the divine warrior’s enemies,

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explains, “It is better to define *imminency* as the possibility of Jesus’ coming for His people *at any time*—‘time’ being understood broadly as a short *period* of time.” Moo, “The Case for the Posttribulation Rapture Position,” 210.

<sup>350</sup>Moore, “Personal and Cosmic Eschatology,” 898.

<sup>351</sup>Moltmann posits, “The eschatological doctrine about the restoration of all things has these two sides: *God’s Judgment*, which puts things to rights, and *God’s kingdom*, which awakens to new life.” Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 255. Of course, the problem with Moltmann’s understanding of the final judgment is that he seems to believe that evil will simply be “condemned and annihilated.” Ibid.

<sup>352</sup>Hoekema says, “The work of judging, moreover, will be Christ’s final exaltation and highest triumph. While on earth he was condemned by earthly rulers; now he will sit in judgment over all earthly authorities.” Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 256.

<sup>353</sup>For a defense of the biblical concept of hell against contemporary revisions, see Christopher W. Morgan, ed., *Hell Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents Eternal Punishment* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

both angelic and human (Matt 25:41, 46).<sup>354</sup> Placed within the warfare worldview of the Bible, it is reasonable to understand hell as the eschatological consummation of *herem* warfare. What was carried out by Israel in Canaan and experienced by Christ on the cross is now culminated in eternal condemnation.<sup>355</sup> Some scholars focused on Scripture's warfare theme, such as Boyd, reject the idea of hell as eternal torment.<sup>356</sup> Instead, they argue for a modified annihilationist view.<sup>357</sup> The problem with this view seems to be that their annihilation fails to account for the Scriptural expectation that hell will be ongoing bodily punishment (Rev 14:10-11; 20:10).<sup>358</sup>

Likewise, Boyd's assertion that eternal punishment in hell demonstrates that "God remains nonvictorious" seems untenable.<sup>359</sup> Precisely the opposite is the case.

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<sup>354</sup>Boyd declares that "hell is first and foremost the destiny of God's cosmic enemies, not us. If humans go there, it is because they have willfully aligned themselves with the ones for whom it was prepared." Boyd, *God at War*, 287. Moore adds, "The final judgment results in the condemnation of sinners—both human and angelic—to hell, a place of indescribable torment." Moore, "Personal and Cosmic Eschatology," 898.

<sup>355</sup>Longman explains the eschatological significance of Israel's *herem* warfare in this way: "The object of warfare moves from the Canaanites, who are the object of God's wrath for their sin, to the spiritual powers and principalities, and then finally to the utter destruction of all evil, human and spiritual." Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," 184–85.

<sup>356</sup>Boyd claims, "Tying these various speculations together, we may once again assert the paradoxical conclusion that hell is the eternal suffering of agents who have been annihilated." Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 356.

<sup>357</sup>Is it possible that their misunderstanding of hell could result from a misunderstanding of *herem* warfare? Boyd seems to accept the argument that Israel's Canaanite genocides should be understood as a metaphor for full devotion to God, which points away from violence. If Boyd rejects the divine intentionality of a bodily judgment of God's enemies that was without mercy in the Old Testament, then is it surprising that he seems to do the same thing in his understanding of hell?

<sup>358</sup>David Piske and Robert Pyne assert, "This approach is creative, and its emphasis on the lasting character of freedom coheres well with Boyd's theology. However, it does not adequately address the Scriptures that speak of eternal bodily punishment (John 5:29; Rev. 20:10)." David Piske and Robert A. Pyne, "Satan and the Problem of Evil," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161, no. 1 (2004): 113.

<sup>359</sup>He continues, "Instead of a glorious universal kingdom unblemished by any stain, an ugly dualism reigns throughout eternity." Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 336. Others supporting Boyd's view include Clark H. Pinnock, "The Conditional View," in *Four Views on Hell*, ed. William Crockett (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 151; David L. Edwards and John Stott, *Evangelical Essentials: A*

Eternal bodily punishment is an ongoing declaration of the triumph that Christ achieved through the cross and resurrection as those who continue even in hell to reject the broken body and shed blood of Christ must suffer bodily forever in judgment.<sup>360</sup> At last, Christ the warrior king has put all his enemies under his feet (Ps 110:1).<sup>361</sup> Thus, hell is ongoing, conscious suffering because it is the place of ongoing, conscious sinners.<sup>362</sup> As in all of eschatology, final judgment centers on Christ as divine warrior. As the messianic warrior king judges his enemies, he also establishes his eschatological new creation kingdom.

**Christ the warrior king and eschatological new creation.** Christ the warrior king's militant mission culminates in the establishment of the eschatological new creation. His rescue of the world includes not only the redemption of his people but the restoration of his cosmos.<sup>363</sup> Leithart contends, "Christ's kingdom has as its goal nothing less than the re-creation of the cosmos and the healing of the nations. Jesus established

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*Liberal Evangelical Dialogue* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 319.

<sup>360</sup>Morgan says, "The Bible seems to teach that God's ultimate victory is compatible with the endless punishment of the wicked." Christopher W. Morgan, "Annihilationism: Will the Unserved Be Punished Forever?," in *Hell Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents Eternal Punishment*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 217.

<sup>361</sup>Moore states, "Jesus does indeed triumph over all things, making peace through the blood of his cross (Col. 1:20), but this peace does not mean the redemption of each individual. Instead, Jesus triumphs over his enemies—as they are all consigned to damnation beneath the feet of his sovereign kingship." Moore, "Personal and Cosmic Eschatology," 900.

<sup>362</sup>Morgan explains that "the coexistence of heaven and hell does not hinder the glorious victory of God or the utter happiness of the redeemed." He continues, "This is not some sort of cosmological dualism as the conditionalists allege. How could there be dualism when God reigns supreme and all his enemies are vanquished? No, there will be no hint of dualism. Instead, God's victory will be glorious, his reign will be absolute, and justice will prevail." Morgan, "Annihilationism: Will the Unserved Be Punished Forever?," 218.

<sup>363</sup>Wright asserts that "creation needs more than mere completion or fulfillment. God's act of new creation must also deal with the problems of the old. The path to life is blocked by evil, corruption, and death. The world needs rescue, redemption." Borg and Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus*, 198.

His kingdom to bring the creation to its appointed goal.”<sup>364</sup> While the church is the eschatological embassy of the kingdom, heaven is the capitol of the kingdom—the palace of the warrior king.<sup>365</sup> Whether it was the Old Testament’s conception of Sheol, Jesus’ parable about the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), or Paul’s recognition that to die is to “be with Christ” (Phil 1:23), Scripture presents the intermediate state as either a time of eschatological blessing or cursing informed by a person’s standing in the kingdom of Christ.<sup>366</sup> Those who are a part of the eschatological community of the church because they are united to the warrior king become part of the kingdom community of heaven when they pass from life to death.<sup>367</sup> Yet, even the intermediate kingdom state of heaven looks ahead to the arrival of the new heavens and new earth.<sup>368</sup>

A warfare eschatology recognizes that the new creation kingdom is the capstone of Christ the warrior king’s eschatological invasion. N. T. Wright quips that “heaven is important but it’s not the end of the world.”<sup>369</sup> In other words, a spiritual vision approach to the eschaton that neglects the new creation undermines a warfare

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<sup>364</sup>Leithart, *The Kingdom and the Power*, 171.

<sup>365</sup>Witherington maintains, “Heaven is the dwelling place of God.” He adds that “when we discuss the future of God’s Dominion the idea is that there will be, as it were, a merger of heaven and earth.” Witherington III, *Imminent Domain*, 49.

<sup>366</sup>For more on these passages about the intermediate state, see Ladd, *The Last Things: An Eschatology for Laymen*, 30–35.

<sup>367</sup>Witherington observes, “It is of course true that God’s Dominion, his perfect reign, is already happening in heaven, but this should not lead us to equate heaven and God’s dominion. Heaven is currently a place, God’s dominion is the condition of that place, and is in part the condition of the life of believers on earth.” Witherington III, *Imminent Domain*, 53.

<sup>368</sup>Witherington notes, “It is never an adequate theology to say ‘this world is not my home, I’m just passing through’ as if heaven were all that really mattered. To the contrary, the New Testament suggests just the opposite. Heaven is not the believer’s home. It is simply a place through which they pass between the time they die and when they are raised from the dead.” *Ibid.*

<sup>369</sup>Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 41.

eschatology. Scripture makes clear that Jesus himself is that new creation, as N. T. Wright declares, “He is the start of the creator’s new world: its pilot project, indeed its pilot.”<sup>370</sup> What this reality means is that there is continuity between the inaugurated experience of the kingdom now and the consummated nature of the new earth to come.<sup>371</sup> The new earth signals the triumph of Christ the warrior king in the restoration of the creation, the cultural mandate, and the covenant community.<sup>372</sup> At last, Christ the warrior king fully realizes the messianic hope of the biblical narrative as he establishes his unending reign in the new creation (2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1-4).<sup>373</sup> Therefore, biblical eschatology is incomplete unless it reflects on how the new creation fits into God’s kingdom purpose to establish the reign of his messianic warrior.

### Conclusion

The biblical theme of warfare has a close connection to the doctrine of eschatology. The entire storyline of Scripture has an eschatological focus centered on a messianic warrior who would establish a future kingdom. A warfare eschatology has profound influence on kingdom living in a variety of areas, as Moore declares:

A person’s eschatology, then, has everything to do with the way he lives now—whether one trusts Jesus for a future kingdom, or whether one grasps at the passing

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<sup>370</sup>Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 576.

<sup>371</sup>Mouw says, “But if we think of the future life in terms of inhabiting a Heavenly City, we have grounds for looking for some patterns of continuity between our present lives as people immersed in cultural contexts and the life to come. The Bible, I think, encourages us to think in these terms.” Richard J. Mouw, *When the Kings Come Marching in: Isaiah and the New Jerusalem*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 19.

<sup>372</sup>Moore, “Personal and Cosmic Eschatology,” 912–14.

<sup>373</sup>Henry declares, “The evangelical vision of the new society, or the Kingdom on earth, is therefore messianic, and is tied to the expectation of the return of Christ in glory.” Carl F. H. Henry, *Evangelicals at the Brink of Crisis: The Significance of the World Congress on Evangelism* (Waco, TX: Word, 1967), 68; Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 62.

securities of this present age. Our understanding of the future informs our Christian hope, our personal ethics, our social action, and our corporate witness. Eschatology then should be at the forefront of our evangelism, discipleship, worship, counseling, spiritual formation, and vocational activity.<sup>374</sup>

Throughout the biblical narrative, eschatology is Christ-centered as it focuses on the king who ushers in the kingdom as the forerunner of the new creation. A warfare eschatology sheds new light on the nature of the church's militant mission during this current overlap of the ages. In addition, it provides new insight into the future nature of eschatology as the entire universe looks forward to the culmination of Christ the warrior king's cosmic purposes in the establishment of his new creation kingdom. The divine warrior's eschatological kingdom is closely connected to how he brings it about through providence.<sup>375</sup>

### **Christ the Warrior King and Providence**

“Jesus is *the* model for understanding God's relationship to the world,” asserts open theist John Sanders.<sup>376</sup> Open theism has injected several talking points into contemporary discussions about providence. While much focus has been placed on the nature of God's foreknowledge in dialogue with open theists, compatibilists have largely neglected the common emphasis among open theists like Sanders on the centrality of

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<sup>374</sup>Moore, “Personal and Cosmic Eschatology,” 917.

<sup>375</sup>Moltmann contributes, “If the rule of God is the scarlet thread running through the writings of the Old and the New Testament, then the *mysterium salutis* – the mystery of salvation – is one and the same as the *mysterium gubernationis Dei* – the mystery of God's providence for salvation is effected in a redemptive history in accordance with God's salvific plan.” Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 7.

<sup>376</sup>John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Divine Providence*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 115. All italics in quotes are found in the original citation. *Ibid.*, 93. See also Gregory A. Boyd, “God Limits His Control,” in *Divine Providence: 4 Views*, ed. Dennis Jowers (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 1. For more on open theism, see the seminal works Richard Rice et al., *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994); Clark Pinnock, ed., *The Grace of God and the Will of Man* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1995).



Christ for a proper perspective of providence. Instead, as Greg Boyd argues, “There’s no reason to think a Christocentric starting point is any less crucial for our reflections on divine providence than for any other topic.”<sup>377</sup> But do compatibilists actually fail to integrate Christ into their reflections on providence? Compatibilist Brian Payne affirms that there is a deficient connection between Christology and providence in most compatibilist models. According to Payne, this seems “to make God’s providential work appear generic, even arbitrary, or at worst capricious.”<sup>378</sup> What is the proper relationship between Christology and providence in a compatibilist model of providence?

This section argues that a recovery of a Christocentric compatibilism will recognize the warfare-oriented nature of both the mediatorial role of Christ in providence and the teleological goal of providence in Christ. To accomplish this task, it will begin with the Christocentric nature of providence by evaluating both the role of Christ in God’s providential preservation and the nature of compatibilistic concurrence displayed in the life and death of Christ. Next, it will consider the Christotelic dimension of providence by demonstrating that the glory of God in Christ is the ultimate goal of God’s providential government. Finally, it will conclude with the Christobellic component of providence by assessing how the Christ-oriented warfare worldview of Scripture enhances the compatibilist view. Implications for the compatibilist model will be considered throughout the section.<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>377</sup>Boyd, “God Limits His Control,” 2; Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 93.

<sup>378</sup>Payne, “The Summing up of All Things in Christ,” 23.

<sup>379</sup>Before developing this argument, several points of clarification are in order. First, this section uses the term compatibilism in a broader sense than usual as a synonym of the Reformed concept of meticulous providence. For a definition of compatibilism, see John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 637. Bruce Ware defines the meticulous view of providence embraced in this analysis, “God continually oversees and directs all things pertaining to the

## Christocentric Compatibilism: The Role of Christ in Providence

Gregory Boyd states that “the open model of providence is the most compelling for all who make Christ the centerpiece of their understanding of God.”<sup>380</sup> Therefore, open theists not only contend that a Christocentric approach to providence is essential but also argue that their model best exemplifies this approach as they reinterpret providence through the “lens of Christ.”<sup>381</sup> Yet, a Christ-centered approach to providence is evident long before open theism became prominent in contemporary scholarship.<sup>382</sup> Christology was essential to the understanding of providence by early church fathers such as Chrysostom and Augustine.<sup>383</sup> Reformers such as Luther and Calvin recognized the

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created order in such a way that 1) he preserves in existence and provides for the creation he has brought into being, and 2) he governs and reigns supremely over the entirety of the created order in order to fulfill all of his intended purposes in it and through it.” Bruce A. Ware, *God's Greater Glory: The Exalted God Of Scripture And The Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 17.

Second, Christocentric compatibilism does not seek to supplant the Trinitarian nature of providence as the ultimacy of the Father is carried out through the agency of the Son by the work of the Holy Spirit. Instead, it recognizes that both the fullest expression and the ultimate goal of his providence are through the rulership of Christ. For more on the dual images of God as king and father as it relates to providence, see Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 615.

Third, though open theism serves as a foil for the following discussion, this section is primarily a constructive proposal for compatibilists rather than a sustained critique of open theism or other libertarian models. Open theists are the primary conversation partner in this treatment, and many of the points developed undermine the legitimacy of its system. For full-fledged critiques of open theism, see Bruce A. Ware, *God's Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000); John Piper, Justin Taylor, and Paul Kjos Helseth, eds., *Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003); John M. Frame, *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2001).

<sup>380</sup>Boyd, “God Limits His Control,” 28.

<sup>381</sup>Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 116–17. See also Boyd, “God Limits His Control,” 2; Boyd, *Repenting of Religion*, 142.

<sup>382</sup>The following brief historical treatment of Christ-centered providence is not designed to be exhaustive. Instead, it is intended to show that prominent theologians in key periods of church history recognized the importance of Christology for all of theology, including providence.

<sup>383</sup>Christopher A. Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 191, 203–04.

centrality of Christ for all of Scripture, including the issue of providence, with Calvin claiming he was “minded to affirm Christ’s Kingdom” when discussing God’s relation to the world.<sup>384</sup> In contemporary theology, Karl Barth labeled protestant approaches to providence that neglected the relationship with Christology as “blatantly ‘liberal.’”<sup>385</sup> This section contends that a recovery of the Christocentric approach to providence emphasized by open theists and evident throughout church history will not only strengthen the compatibilist approach but also yield fruitful implications for its system. In what ways is compatibilism Christocentric?

First, Scripture affirms that the role of Christ in providence includes his preservation of all things. In both Colossians 1:16-17 and Hebrews 1:3, credit is given to Christ for not only establishing the world in creation but also upholding the world in providence.<sup>386</sup> Thus, this first dimension of Christocentric compatibilism focuses on Christ’s role in the providential category of preservation.<sup>387</sup> Since both passages (Col 1:13-20; Heb 1:1-14) offer sustained discussions of the person and work of Christ, it is not surprising that they mention the Christ-centered nature of providence. In Colossians

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<sup>384</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:174; Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (Mulberry: Sovereign Grace, 2001), 13.

<sup>385</sup>Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance, vol. 1.1 (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 3:32. For more on Barth’s Christ-centered approach to providence, see Kathryn Tanner, “Creation and Providence,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. J. B. Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 111–26; Robert Sherman, *The Shift to Modernity: Christ and the Doctrine of Creation in the Theologies of Schleiermacher and Barth* (New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 93–116.

<sup>386</sup>F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 49.

<sup>387</sup>Helm considers preservation “the most fundamental and basic way in which the care we have referred to is expressed. To preserve is to keep in being or in existence.” Paul Helm, *The Providence of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 22. For more on the Christ-oriented nature of preservation, see Payne, “The Summing up of All Things in Christ,” 37.

1, the apostle Paul not only affirms that all things are created by and for Christ (Col 1:16) but also asserts that all things “hold together” (συνέστηκεν) in Christ by his sustaining power (Col 1:17).<sup>388</sup> Feinberg points out that the Greek verb συνέστηκεν “has the idea of gluing something together. Hence, Christ’s preserving power keeps our universe from coming unglued.”<sup>389</sup> Therefore, in Colossians 1:17, Paul attributes the sustaining power of preservation to Christ, which is elsewhere credited to the Father (cf. Ps 104), thus confirming the warrior king’s responsibility in providence.

Like Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 1:3 also confirms the centrality of Christ’s role in providence. After affirming the agency of Christ in creation (Heb 1:2), Hebrews 1:3 asserts that Christ “upholds” (φέρων) all things by his powerful word.<sup>390</sup> Mark Talbot notes that the verse describes Christ as “providentially governing everything through sustaining all of the universe’s objects and events as he carries each of them to its appointed end by his all-powerful word.”<sup>391</sup> Again, as in Colossians 1:17, Hebrews ascribes to Christ the providential preservation of the cosmos, which is a function of the

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<sup>388</sup>Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B & H, 1991), 220; N. T. Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 73.

<sup>389</sup>Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 564; cf. 463. Therefore, as Walter Wink asserts, the world is a “single system converging” on Christ. Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 115.

<sup>390</sup>Harold W. Attridge, *Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 45; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 56.

<sup>391</sup>Mark R. Talbot, “All the Good That is Ours in Christ’: Seeing God’s Gracious Hand in the Hurts Others Do to Us,” in *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God*, ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 41; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 56–57; Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 49.

Father.<sup>392</sup> Clearly, because these passages describe how Christ preserves all things, a Christocentric approach to providence is warranted.<sup>393</sup>

Second, both Christ and his crucifixion offer the clearest picture of the compatibilist freedom of inclination active in God's relation to the world. "If Jesus is ultimate revelation of who God is and what humans are supposed to be in relationship to God, then we should pay particular attention to the way divine providence works in the life of Jesus," Sanders rightly asserts.<sup>394</sup> Accordingly, this second dimension of Christocentric compatibilism focuses on the providential category of concurrence in the experience of Christ.<sup>395</sup> To begin with, Christ himself exemplifies compatibilist freedom. He demonstrates his freedom of inclination in his willingness to be crucified as he claims both the inclination and authority to go to the cross (John 10:18).<sup>396</sup> Indeed, even open theist Greg Boyd admits Christ has compatibilist freedom, "Let me simply go on record as saying that I, for one, hold that Jesus possessed compatibilistic freedom. In my view, Christ was humanity eschatologically defined."<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>392</sup>Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 47:14; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 57.

<sup>393</sup>Open theists criticize compatibilism (what they often call the "blueprint model") even if Christ is the architect of the blueprint because they believe it undermines the legitimacy of freedom. Yet, as Feinberg notes, "God's decree doesn't make history irrelevant, for it is not history, but its blueprint, and there is an obvious difference between a plan and its accomplishment." Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 695.

<sup>394</sup>Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 93. However, Sanders's open theist assessment of providence in the life of Christ does not seem to handle the biblical data most accurately.

<sup>395</sup>David Nelson defines concurrence as meaning "both God and his creatures work together to accomplish God's sovereign purposes in the world." David P. Nelson, "The Work of God: Creation and Providence," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 280. For more on the experience of providence in the life of Jesus, see E. Frank Tupper, "The Providence of God in Christological Perspective," *Review and Expositor* 82, no. 4 (1985): 579-80.

<sup>396</sup>Piper, *The Pleasures of God*, 309. More work could be done in contemporary scholarship examining the role of compatibilist concurrence particularly in the life of Christ.

<sup>397</sup>Boyd, "Christian Love and Academic Dialogue," 242; Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 121. He continues, "The whole purpose of libertarian freedom, in my view, is to become what the God-man

The crucifixion itself is the most lucid example of compatibilist concurrence active in God's providential ordering of the world. Acts 2:23 and Acts 4:27-28 seem to suggest that a compatibilist approach makes the most sense of the crucial event of the atonement.<sup>398</sup> As "lawless men" carry out the greatest atrocity by following their freedom of inclination to crucify and kill Jesus (Acts 2:23), they are doing what God's "hand had predestined to take place" (Acts 4:28). This act is done in such a way that these men are held morally responsible while God uses the greatest evil to bring about the greatest good.<sup>399</sup> Christ and his crucifixion provide the clearest picture of concurrence in Christocentric compatibilism because they both confirm Christ's freedom of inclination and display the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

Third, Christocentric compatibilism yields helpful benefits for the complicated issues of providence, such as the problem of evil.<sup>400</sup> There can be a tendency in

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was from the start: humans who are defined in their essence by openness to God." Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 121. If humans are, then, striving to become like the God-man, which includes compatibilistic freedom, then why must this wait to be realized until the eschaton?

<sup>398</sup>For open theist treatments of these texts, see Gregory A. Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 45; Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 105; Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 121. For a critique of open theist approaches to these passages, see Mark R. Talbot, "True Freedom: The Liberty That Scripture Portrays as Worth Having," in *Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity*, ed. John Piper, Justin Taylor, and Paul Kjoss Helseth (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 87–94. See also Ware, *God's Greater Glory*, 87–88.

<sup>399</sup>Ware comments, "Now, why are these wicked people preeminently *blameworthy* while God is preeminently *praiseworthy* for carrying out the same action (i.e., the action of putting Christ on the cross)? The answer clearly is that *they* did their evil *for the sake of the evil*, while *God* worked through their evil *for the sake of the greater and glorious good that would result*." Ware, *God's Lesser Glory*, 206; cf. 137; Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 713; Talbot, "True Freedom," 82. Before Clark Pinnock shifted to open theism, he contended that these verses demonstrate compatibilist concurrence. Clark H. Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1985), 92–93. Carson asserts that rejecting the concurrence evident in these passages would destroy Christianity. D. A. Carson, "God's Love and God's Sovereignty," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156, no. 623 (1999): 264.

<sup>400</sup>Though it is outside the scope of this section to develop further, the crucifixion offers the best evidence for God's asymmetrical relationship to evil, which preserves his innocence in a compatibilist model. For more on this subject, see Ware, *God's Greater Glory*, 98–109.

compatibilist approaches to affirm the importance of Christ in providence on a theoretical level but then to neglect the centrality of Christ on a practical level with the problem of evil. For example, Helm contends that Christians should “think about providence and evil in the light of who Christ is and what he did” both as victim of evil and victor over evil.<sup>401</sup> Yet, he struggles to develop a Christocentric approach to evil when fleshing out his theodicy. Likewise, Feinberg never mentions Christ in his chapter discussing compatibilism and the problem of evil in his book *No One Like Him*.<sup>402</sup> How can compatibilists integrate Barth’s insight that the Christological cure is the key vantage point for making sense of the sickness of evil?<sup>403</sup>

For compatibilists, the need for Christ-centeredness is particularly important because it keeps the greater good theodicy from being generic and abstract.<sup>404</sup> Instead, the greater good is the glory of God in Christ as God works all things to conform believers to the image of Christ corporately (Rom 8:28-29) and to sum up all things in Christ cosmically (Eph 1:10-11).<sup>405</sup> As compatibilists further develop the centrality of Christ in their treatments of the problem of evil, they will strengthen their theodicy. In summary,

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<sup>401</sup>Helm, *The Providence of God*, 195.

<sup>402</sup>Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 777–98. For a more extensive treatment of the problem of evil by Feinberg, see John S. Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problems of Evil*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004).

<sup>403</sup>Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 1.1:309.

<sup>404</sup>In contrast, Frame contends that the greater good defense must be understood theistically by recognizing that the greater good is the greater glory of God in Christ. John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God, A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 171–72.

<sup>405</sup>David Nelson notes, “In the end the cross of Christ serves as the ultimate divine answer to the problem of evil.” Nelson, “The Work of God: Creation and Providence,” 290. Piper adds, “The ultimate reason that suffering exists in the universe is so that Christ might display the greatness of the glory of the grace of God by suffering in himself to overcome our suffering.” John Piper, “The Suffering of Christ and the Sovereignty of God,” in *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God*, ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 82.

the Christ-centered approach to providence seen in many open theists should cause compatibilists to reconsider the relationship between Christology and providence. Yet, it is not enough simply to consider the role of Christ in providence. Instead, it is also essential to discuss the goal of providence in Christ.

### **Christotelic Compatibilism: The Goal of Providence in Christ**

This section argues that Christocentric compatibilism must not only embrace the centrality of Christ's role in providence but also include a Christotelic component in which the glory of God in Christ is recognized as the end goal of God's providential rulership.<sup>406</sup> To clarify, Payne emphasizes that Christotelic compatibilism "does not mean that one must see Christ in every detail of every providential act of God; on the contrary, the emphasis is on the grander scope of the whole pattern of redemptive history and its Christotelic thrust."<sup>407</sup> While the last section demonstrated the Christocentric nature of preservation and concurrence, the Christotelic dimension of providence focuses on the Christ-centered nature of the providential category of government as God rules all things so that they culminate in the kingdom of Christ the divine warrior.<sup>408</sup>

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<sup>406</sup>The term "Christotelic" is a helpful term popularized by Peter Enns in *Inspiration and Incarnation*. However, the use of this term does not imply agreement with Enns on his controversial views of divine inspiration and authority. For a discussion of the term by Enns, see Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 154–55. For a critique of Enns's approach to Scripture, see G. K. Beale, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

<sup>407</sup>Payne, "The Summing up of All Things in Christ," 22.

<sup>408</sup>Though Grenz's treatment of providence differs from compatibilism, he gives a succinct definition of government as "God's teleological care and control over creation." Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 117. Frame notes that government emphasizes that providence is moving to a destination and all things are working toward that goal. Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 276.



Again, open theists have captured the importance of a Christotelic thrust to providence, which many compatibilists have overlooked. John Sanders asserts, “If we begin with Jesus as the model for experiencing divine providence as well as the goal of humanity—what we are meant to be—then our understanding of the role of providence changes dramatically.”<sup>409</sup> But can open theists best account for the Christotelic nature of providence when they redefine the nature of God’s knowledge of the future? Though it is outside the scope of this dissertation to develop a thorough answer to this question, the answer seems to be no.<sup>410</sup>

If there are shortcomings to the Christotelic dimension of providence for open theists, can compatibilists offer a more compelling vision? In many cases, compatibilists neglect the Christotelic nature of providence because they articulate an abstract version of the ultimate end of God’s governance.<sup>411</sup> Some compatibilists discuss the Christ-centered nature of providence by developing the idea of Christ as the mediator of God’s rulership, like the previous section of this chapter.<sup>412</sup> Yet, the problem is that most do not go far

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<sup>409</sup>Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 122. Sanders is on to something as he argues that a right view must not lose sight of how the goal of providence is focused on Jesus. Yet, Jesus is not just the goal of humanity; he is the goal of the entire cosmos. Likewise, Boyd claims that “any model of divine providence that hopes to be considered viable by followers of Jesus must be able to render intelligible God’s ability to bring good out of evil and ultimately defeat evil and accomplish his over-all purposes for creation.” Boyd, “God Limits His Control,” 5. Therefore, Boyd is precisely correct when he contends that Jesus is “humanity eschatologically defined” because he is the image of God to whom believers are being eschatologically conformed (Rom 8:28-29) and in whom all things are being fully summed up (Eph 1:10). See also Boyd, “Christian Love and Academic Dialogue,” 242.

<sup>410</sup>For a critique of the open theist approach to the Christotelic dimension of providence, see Ware, *God’s Lesser Glory*, 156–60, 224.

<sup>411</sup>“The *telos* of the program of redemption,” Moore states, is “not on God’s glory in the abstract, or on the justification of the individual sinner, but on the glory of God in the exaltation of Jesus as the triumphant Final Adam and mediatorial Warrior-King.” Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 107; Payne, “The Summing up of All Things in Christ,” 24.

<sup>412</sup>For example, see Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of The Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 400; Tupper, “The Providence of God in Christological Perspective,” 579–80; Helm, *The Providence of God*, 195.

enough in their development of the Christ-centered nature of providence because they fail to develop the Christotelic component of eschatological fulfillment in Christ.<sup>413</sup> Payne asserts that “most models of risk-free providence typically fail to emphasize this Christotelic thrust, even when the mediation of Christ in providence is emphasized.”<sup>414</sup> What biblical and theological support is there for this Christotelic dimension of compatibilist providence?

First, Scripture presents the culmination of the Christotelic component of God’s government as the summing up of all things in Christ. The primary evidence for this dimension is Ephesians 1:10-11 in which the apostle Paul ends his opening remarks (1:3-14) by concluding that God is governing all of history according to the counsel of his will in order to sum up (ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι) all things in Christ.<sup>415</sup> In brief, God is bringing all things to a summary point in Christ.<sup>416</sup> Furthermore, while Hebrews 1:3 and Colossians 1:17 are pivotal verses in depicting the Christocentric nature of God’s preservation, they also shed light on the Christotelic scope of his government. As many

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<sup>413</sup>Payne contends that “even a standard meticulous model of providence that rightly emphasizes the mediatorial role of Christ in God’s providential activity can have the tendency to eclipse the Christ-oriented thrust of God’s action in history.” Payne, “The Summing up of All Things in Christ,” 32.

<sup>414</sup>Ibid., 49.

<sup>415</sup>Lloyd-Jones points out that ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι is best understood as to sum up again, which emphasizes that this Christotelic culmination is also a restoration of the centrality of Christ that was a reality from the outset of God’s providential plan. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God’s Ultimate Purpose: An Exposition of Ephesians 1:1-23* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 201. Commenting on ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι, O’Brien notes that it is an aorist infinitive that “signifies purpose: the summing up of all things is the goal to be achieved.” O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 114. For more on this verb, see Thorsten Moritz, “‘Summing Up All Things’,” in *One God, One Lord: Christianity in a World of Religious Pluralism*, ed. Andrew D. Clarke and Bruce W. Winter (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 88-111.

<sup>416</sup>Payne, “The Summing up of All Things in Christ,” 48. Moritz states that Ephesians “presents Jesus Christ as the centre (2:13-19) and the goal (1:10) of history.” Thorsten Moritz, “Ephesians,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. Brian S. Rosner et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 316. See also Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1990), 33-34.

have pointed out, the key verb “upholds” (φέρων) in Hebrews 1:3 does not picture Christ like the mythical character Atlas, merely holding up the world, but instead implies him carrying all things forward to a destination.<sup>417</sup> Likewise, Christ’s preservation in Colossians 1:17 must be linked to 1:18-22 in which Paul confirms that God’s ultimate goal is to make Christ head over a new creation.<sup>418</sup> Therefore, this first biblical and theological support for the Christotelic dimension of providence is captured nicely by Vanhoozer who describes Christ as the “full flowering of divine providence and the summation of the history of redemption.”<sup>419</sup>

Second, Scripture exhibits the Christotelic thrust of God’s governance by describing how this goal is realized through the eschatological victory of Christ the warrior king. While Christ’s defeat of his enemies is fully inaugurated through his victorious death and resurrection, it is not yet finally consummated until he returns, bringing eschatological conquest.<sup>420</sup> As Russell Moore notes, “The entire sweep of redemptive history finds its goal in the glory of God in Christ. God is glorified when His messianic king is recognized as the rightful governor of the entire created universe (Phil 2:7–11).”<sup>421</sup> As seen in Revelation 19:6-21, Jesus will return for eschatological rescue in which the powers are no match for his sovereign lordship.<sup>422</sup> Therefore, a Christian

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<sup>417</sup>This Atlas analogy can be found in O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 56–57; Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 49; Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 276.

<sup>418</sup>Payne, “The Summing up of All Things in Christ,” 37.

<sup>419</sup>Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Providence,” in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 644.

<sup>420</sup>As Helm declares, “If he ordains the victory he must ordain the battle; if he ordains the battle he must ordain the army, and so on.” Helm, *The Providence of God*, 219.

<sup>421</sup>Moore, “Theology Bleeds,” 113.

<sup>422</sup>Jack Cottrell, *What the Bible Says about God the Ruler* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001),

approach to providence clearly must be Christotelic not only because it is centered on the culmination of providence in the glory of God in Christ but also because Christ the warrior king himself is the one who brings about this goal through eschatological victory.<sup>423</sup>

Third, Christotelic compatibilism provides the most solid ground for believers to have hope in the ultimate, eschatological conquest of Christ. Compared to other approaches to Scripture's warfare worldview, Boyd admits that his warfare eschatology depicts a scarier world "for the simple reason that opening one's eyes to the reality of war is indeed scary." However, he claims that his warfare eschatology "offers more hope, precisely because it unabashedly acknowledges the dismal and demonic state of the world in its present war-torn condition."<sup>424</sup> But why can Christocentric compatibilism not equally acknowledge the dismal and demonic state of the world in its present war-torn condition?<sup>425</sup> Instead, Christotelic compatibilism offers more hope to the church not only because it matches the open view's accurate understanding of the current situation but also renders a more robust picture of the divine warrior's future conquest. Boyd's explanation of the believer's hope seems inconsistent with the way that Revelation

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418.

<sup>423</sup>Payne comments, "God's demonstration of his sovereignty in history is not merely a power-play in order to communicate his control and omnipotence, but so that his Christotelic purpose will be achieved." Payne, "The Summing up of All Things in Christ," 40.

<sup>424</sup>Boyd, *God at War*, 292; Boyd, *Is God to Blame?*, 109, 163–64; Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 173.

<sup>425</sup>Boyd's claim seems like an excellent example of Carson's critique that Boyd sometimes misrepresents the eschatological hope of his opponents. Carson expresses this concern, "What he fails to point out is that his opponents offer eschatological hope no less than he, but also insist that God retains his sovereignty all the way to the eschaton. Boyd constantly draws from one strand of what his opponents say without reporting on or listening to what else they say that might be relevant." Carson, "God, the Bible, and Spiritual Warfare: A Review Article," 260.

portrays eschatological hope in the midst of warfare.<sup>426</sup> In the end, is it possible for a God who cannot certainly know all the actualities of the future to give certain hope to his followers in the present?<sup>427</sup> Instead, Christotelic compatibilism, as Helm points out, allows believers to have “confidence in ultimate reconciliation and righteousness in God’s kingdom, which is the *telos* of God’s providential rule.”<sup>428</sup>

Christotelic compatibilism focuses on how God’s providential government culminates in the glory of God in Christ through the eschatological victory of Christ.<sup>429</sup> The first two sections of this analysis of the warfare-oriented nature of providence have established the role of Christ in providence (Christocentric compatibilism) and the goal of providence in Christ (Christotelic providence). The final section builds upon these to consider how a Christ-centered approach to providence fits in with the warfare worldview of Scripture.

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<sup>426</sup>Carson explains the true nature of eschatological hope, “In the NT, part of the anguish of the book of Revelation is bound up with the consternation of the martyrs already under the throne: How long will it be until their blood is avenged? Precisely when evil seems so strong and opposition to the people of God so ominous and threatening, John refuses to back off and conclude that since we are in a warfare situation, and God is doing the best he can, we must simply accept the suffering. Far from it. We are indeed in a warfare situation, but the Lord God Omnipotent reigns, and this eschatological note of certain triumph is irrefragably tied to this truth.” *Ibid.*, 266.

<sup>427</sup>Ware declares, “Open theism’s denial of exhaustive divine foreknowledge calls into question the Church’s ultimate eschatological hope that God will surely accomplish all his plans and purposes, exactly as he has told us in Scripture that he will, and openness assurances that he will succeed ring hollow, in that not even God knows (that is, can know) what unexpected turns lie ahead and how severely these may thwart his purposes or cause him to change his plans.” Bruce A. Ware, “Defining Evangelicalism’s Boundaries Theologically: Is Open Theism Evangelical?,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45, no. 2 (2002): 209. Elsewhere, Ware asks of open theists, “can a believer know that God will triumph in the future just as he has promised he will?” Ware, *God’s Lesser Glory*, 21. Boyd seeks to counter these critiques of Ware through his development of neo-Molinism. See Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 124–44. Ware refutes Boyd’s neo-Molinism in Bruce A. Ware, “Robots, Royalty and Relationships? Toward a Clarified Understanding of Real Human Relations with the God who Knows and Decrees All That Is,” *Criswell Theological Review* 1, no. 2 (2004): 191–203.

<sup>428</sup>Helm, *The Providence of God*, 228; Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil*, 475.

<sup>429</sup>As Ladd explains, “The Kingdom of God means that God is King and acts in history to bring history to a divinely directed goal.” Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 331.

## **Christobellic Compatibilism: Christ the Warrior King and Providence**

“Christianity agrees with Dualism that this universe is at war. But it does not think this is a war between independent powers. It thinks it is a civil war, a rebellion, and that we are living in a part of the universe occupied by the rebel. Enemy-occupied territory—that is what this world is,” states C. S. Lewis.<sup>430</sup> Throughout the storyline of Scripture, God is often portrayed as a divine warrior whose providential government focuses on Christ-centered conflict in which God seeks to magnify his messianic warrior king by subduing this civil war. Because one of the primary ways that God’s governance manifests itself in a fallen, hostile cosmos is through warfare, it is necessary to think through the Christobellic nature of compatibilism. As previously noted, the term “Christobellic” emphasizes the Christ-oriented nature of warfare throughout the storyline of Scripture.

Because providence entails divine rulership, it is important to consider the relationship between providence and the warfare worldview of Scripture. This section contends that Christobellic compatibilism offers a better framework than open theism for integrating the Christ-centered nature of providence with the warfare worldview of Scripture.<sup>431</sup> Christocentric compatibilism contrasts “the newer ‘warfare worldview’ proposals,” Moore comments, because they fail “to relate Christ’s Kingdom activity as a warrior-king against the authorities of evil to His sovereignty over the cosmos, both of

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<sup>430</sup>C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 45–46.

<sup>431</sup>To accomplish this task, this section will first assess and critique the open theist approach to the relationship between warfare and providence. Then, it will address Christobellic compatibilism, including practical implications in several challenging areas in discussions of providence. It is outside the scope of this section to evaluate the compatibilist approach with other models of libertarian freedom. The reason it focuses on open theism is because open theists like Boyd have written extensively in this area.

which are maintained in Scripture and in historic Christian orthodoxy.”<sup>432</sup> Since Christobellian conflict is a major component of God’s governance throughout redemptive history, which model of providence does the most effective job of integrating Christocentric providence with the warfare worldview of Scripture?

Open theists have not only contended for the centrality of the relationship between providence and warfare but also argued that this subject is a key test case for the efficacy of any approach to providence. Indeed, Boyd articulates a challenge to any system of providence, “In this light, it’s my conviction that the ability of a proposed model of providence to render intelligible the reality and scope of evil in the world and the need for God to battle against it should constitute a central criteria by which it is judged to be acceptable or not.”<sup>433</sup> Open theists contend that an open-ended view of the future is crucial to the Bible’s warfare worldview because it sustains the legitimacy of the freedom of moral agents.<sup>434</sup> But can the warfare-oriented providence of open theism offer a credible solution to the relationship between cosmic conflict and God’s government? A critique of open theism on this point reveals that its approach actually diminishes the warfare nature of providence rather than enhances it.<sup>435</sup>

First, open theists do not successfully justify why self-determining freedom is needed for genuine warfare. As previously noted, Boyd states, “Let me simply go on record as saying that I, for one, hold that Jesus possessed compatibilistic freedom. In my

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<sup>432</sup>Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 106.

<sup>433</sup>Boyd, “God Limits His Control,” 3.

<sup>434</sup>Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 61.

<sup>435</sup>Upcoming footnote citations will largely stem from works interacting directly with Boyd’s articulation of open theism rather than open theism in general because Boyd has written most extensively on the relationship between providence and warfare.

view, Christ was humanity eschatologically defined.”<sup>436</sup> But how is it possible in an open theist model that Jesus could genuinely battle against the kingdom of darkness through his deeds and his death if it was all done with compatibilistic freedom? And if it was possible for Jesus to genuinely engage in cosmic conflict while having compatibilistic freedom, then why could humans not as well?<sup>437</sup> If even one person could genuinely engage in cosmic conflict while possessing compatibilistic freedom, then it renders self-determining freedom unnecessary for authentic warfare. How much more so if that one person is Jesus of Nazareth who, as Boyd points out, is “humanity eschatologically defined?”<sup>438</sup>

Second, open theism’s open-ended eschatology muddles how God’s cosmic conquest will unfold in the Christotelic culmination of God’s providential purposes. Though Boyd makes it clear that God will have final victory, how will cosmic conflict develop prior to this conclusion?<sup>439</sup> Process theists such as David Griffin also critique open theism on this point because it likely entails God eventually giving up divine self-limitation and taking “unilateral charge of the outcome of the world” in order to ensure final victory.<sup>440</sup> Yet, Boyd is not troubled by the potential for cosmic conflict to continue

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<sup>436</sup>Boyd, “Christian Love and Academic Dialogue,” 242; Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 121.

<sup>437</sup>Furthermore, if it is of the essence of humanity to have libertarian freedom as Boyd argues, but Christ does not have this self-determining freedom, then does this not undermine the notion that Christ was fully human?

<sup>438</sup>Ware raises other questions related to Jesus’ compatibilism in Bruce A. Ware, “Rejoinder to Replies by Clark H. Pinnock, John Sanders, and Gregory A. Boyd,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45, no. 2 (2002): 255.

<sup>439</sup>Boyd confirms the certainty of consummated victory, “It is clear that God shall someday vanquish this rebel kingdom, but it is equally clear that in the meantime he genuinely wars against it.” Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 15.

<sup>440</sup>David Ray Griffin, “Process Theology and the Christian Good News: A Response to



indefinitely because God will never give up until he finally succeeds.<sup>441</sup> The irony is that, though open theists like Boyd often reject a greater good theodicy,<sup>442</sup> their warfare eschatology seems to reveal that they actually embrace one—the greater good for which God seems to allow warfare (and the evil involved) to continue for an indefinite amount of time is the preservation of self-determining free will.<sup>443</sup>

Third, open theism is not a necessary component of a robust warfare worldview. Boyd readily grants that believers can embrace the Bible's warfare worldview without adopting open theism.<sup>444</sup> However, he does believe that those who do not combine this warfare worldview with an open-ended eschatology are inconsistent.<sup>445</sup> So, if open theism is not necessary for a warfare worldview, and if it actually seems to undermine the nature of Christobellic providence, then why should evangelicals embrace it? The clear answer is that they should not because open theism and its implied risk are

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Classical Free Will Theism,” in *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue between Process and Free Will Theists*, ed. John B. Cobb and Clark H. Pinnock (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 33.

<sup>441</sup>Boyd suggests, “As the biblical narrative testifies, he is the Lord of love who refuses to give up! Even if it were possible for entire generations completely to rebel against him, the Lord knew before he entered into this plan that he was willing to do whatever it took and to work for however long it might take to see his creation bear the fruit he was seeking.” Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 157.

<sup>442</sup>Ibid., 179–80.

<sup>443</sup>Robert Pyne concisely articulates this point, “After repeatedly arguing that God is engaged in a real war, one in which evil occurs against His will, Boyd's eschatology leads him to say that God ‘endures’ evil ‘for a time’ because He has a greater purpose—the preservation of freedom.” Robert A. Pyne, “God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155, no. 2 (1998): 235.

<sup>444</sup>Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 86. He even hedges against the necessity of open theism for a Trinitarian warfare theodicy. Boyd confesses that “it is not my intention to wager the entire credibility of the Trinitarian warfare theodicy on my defense of the open view of the future.” He also adds that the open theism component of his warfare worldview “is not an issue over which Christians should divide.” Ibid., 87.

<sup>445</sup>Boyd states, “Many sisters and brothers in Christ embrace something like the Trinitarian warfare worldview and are actively engaged in overt spiritual warfare who nevertheless hold to the EDF doctrine. I believe that they do so with a certain inconsistency, as I shall attempt to demonstrate. But I applaud their theology and practice.” Ibid.

not necessary to preserve the genuine nature of cosmic conflict.<sup>446</sup> Instead, a Christobellic approach to providence is more consistent when grounded in compatibilism.<sup>447</sup>

Christobellic compatibilism seems to be the best approach to relating providence to the warfare worldview of Scripture.<sup>448</sup> Specifically, it provides helpful implications for challenging issues to providence.<sup>449</sup> First, it yields insightful perspectives on the role of angels and demons in God's meticulous providence. C. S. Lewis quips, "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them."<sup>450</sup> Contemporary models of providence in general and compatibilism in particular often fall into the first category. They often fail to consider the role of cosmic conflict between angels and demons in God's providential governance.

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<sup>446</sup>Terrance Tiessen explains, "I have significant appreciation for Boyd's treatment of the biblical material concerning spiritual conflict, but I disagree in regard to the risk which Boyd believes God has undertaken and regarding the seriousness of the threat that the rebellious spirits pose to his rule in the world. Satan himself is very powerful and is indeed the enemy, the Satan, the opponent of God but God is always completely in control." Terrance Tiessen, "Does Yahweh Take Risks?," *Didaskalia* 18, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 116. See also Carson, "God, the Bible, and Spiritual Warfare: A Review Article," 267; Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:232.

<sup>447</sup>Commenting on *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, Christopher Hall asserts, "One does not need to accept the openness model to be thankful to Boyd for deepening our awareness of the broader supernatural context of life lived between the times. The contemporary church lives in a war zone, and much of the suffering and evil that human beings experience becomes more coherent when viewed against the dark backdrop of Satan's continuing attempt to disrupt God's redemptive purposes." Christopher A. Hall, "Openness Season," *Christianity Today* (February 2003): 90–91.

<sup>448</sup>This section will not explore the relationship between compatibilism and the warfare worldview of Scripture because this foundational connection has already been established in the chapters on the biblical data of the Old and New Testaments. Instead, it will focus on beneficial implications of the connection between compatibilism and the warfare worldview.

<sup>449</sup>Because of space limitations, it is outside the scope of this section to address objections to Christobellic compatibilism, such as those questioning the legitimacy of conflict without self-determining freedom.

<sup>450</sup>C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), ix.

Because angels and demons are moral agents, compatibilists affirm that they also have freedom of inclination.

Christobellic compatibilism emphasizes that God's governance is three dimensional—God, man and angelic beings all play a role in kingdom warfare.<sup>451</sup> On a cosmic level, there is a consistent connection between battles that unfold on the historical plane and the cosmic conflict that rages between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light (2 Kgs 6; Dan 10).<sup>452</sup> On a personal level, the warfare worldview of Scripture sometimes attributes human disease (Luke 13:11-16), and human affliction (Job 1:6; 2:1) to demonic powers.<sup>453</sup> How many other ways might angels and demons play a role in the execution of God's government? Christobellic compatibilism can strengthen typical treatments of meticulous providence because it emphasizes the role that angels and demons, who also possess freedom of inclination, play in the unfolding plans of God.

Second, Christobellic compatibilism can strengthen the compatibilist defense against the problem of natural evil. According to Feinberg, it is natural evil that “atheists complain about most and theists find most difficult to justify.”<sup>454</sup> It is typical for compatibilists like Feinberg to divide how to handle the problem of natural evil into two categories—first, explaining natural evil that comes from human moral choices with

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<sup>451</sup>On the relationship between the demonic realm and free human choices, see Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority: God Who Stands and Stays Part Two*, vol. 6 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999), 272.

<sup>452</sup>On Daniel 10, see John Piper, “Suffering and the Sovereignty of God: Ten Aspects of God's Sovereignty Over Suffering and Satan's Hand in It,” in *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God*, ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 20.

<sup>453</sup>Cottrell, *What the Bible Says about God the Ruler*, 401; Piper, “Suffering and the Sovereignty of God,” 21.

<sup>454</sup>Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil*, 191.

freedom of inclination and, second, explaining natural evil that does not come from human moral choices with a natural law defense.<sup>455</sup> However, this approach misses the three dimensional nature of Christobellic compatibilism in which angelic and demonic beings are the source of some natural evil. For example, Scripture attributes events that are often regarded as natural evil to angelic or demonic beings such as earthquakes (Matt 28:2), fire and windstorms (Job 1), disease (Job 2:7; Matt 9:32-33) and eschatological judgments that include natural calamities (Rev 8:6-13).

Free will theists have offered a defense for this cosmic type of natural evil that can be adapted by compatibilists to enhance their theodicy. Beginning with Alvin Plantinga in recent scholarship, they have argued that, because this natural evil results from the self-determining choices of demonic beings, it is appropriate to use the free will defense.<sup>456</sup> Plantinga explains, “Satan rebelled against God and has since been wreaking whatever havoc he can. The result is natural evil. So the natural evil we find is due to free actions of nonhuman spirits.”<sup>457</sup> Picking up on Plantinga’s trajectory, open theists, like Boyd and Sanders, attribute some natural evil to the work of demonic beings.<sup>458</sup> The upshot of this approach is that since natural evil can be linked to demonic forces, it mitigates criticisms based on the gratuitous extreme of some natural evil because some (perhaps even much) of it is a subset of moral evil.

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<sup>455</sup>For example, *ibid.*, 191–203.

<sup>456</sup>For an explanation of the free will defense, see Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 29–33.

<sup>457</sup>*Ibid.*, 58–59; cf. 27–28. See also Alvin Plantinga, *God and Other Minds: A Study of the Rational Justification of Belief in God* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 151–52.

<sup>458</sup>Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 274.

Why have compatibilists not adapted this argument to their treatments of natural evil? Compatibilists can incorporate this approach by explaining the natural evil caused by demonic beings in the same way they deal with moral evil committed by humans through an appeal to the freedom of inclination.<sup>459</sup> This argument does not provide a theodicy for all natural evil, nor does it enable compatibilists to identify which natural evil is specifically the result of demonic activity. Instead, it supplements the natural law defense rightly embraced by compatibilists in their approach to natural evil.<sup>460</sup> Overall, Christobellian compatibilism shows how God's government integrates with the warfare worldview of Scripture.

### **Conclusion**

The Christ-centered approach to providence seen in many open theists should cause compatibilists to reconsider the relationship between Christology and providence. Christocentric compatibilism affirms the role of Christ in sustaining all things as the mediator of divine providence. It also recognizes Christ and his crucifixion as the clearest picture of the outworking of compatibilist concurrence through freedom of inclination. Christocentric compatibilism contains a Christotelic thrust that focuses on how God's providential government culminates in the glory of God in Christ through eschatological victory in Christ. It also includes a Christobellian component that integrates God's providential government with the warfare worldview of Scripture. Each of these components of a Christ-centered approach to meticulous providence yields helpful

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<sup>459</sup>For an example of addressing moral evil through an appeal to the freedom of inclination, see Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil*, 165–90.

<sup>460</sup>*Ibid.*, 87.

implications for compatibilists. In the end, Christocentric compatibilism recognizes that both the fullest expression and the ultimate goal of God's providence is Christ the warrior king.

### **Summary: Christ the Warrior King and Systematic Theological Themes**

In summary, a theological analysis of the divine warrior theme in Christology reveals several major themes. First, this chapter shows the potential contribution that a systematic appropriation of a biblical theology of warfare can make to contemporary theology. In the atonement, Christ the warrior king achieves vicarious victory through penal substitution. In soteriology, Christ the warrior king applies the cosmic, personal, and progressive implications of his triumph to believers through faith union. In eschatology, Christ the warrior king's inaugurated and consummated kingdom culminates in his unrivaled future rulership. In providence, Christ the warrior king sustains and governs the unfolding of the world's events through cosmic conflict.

Second, this chapter demonstrates the value of biblical theology for theological formulation. Many scholars have reflected on the relationship between biblical and systematic theology in recent days.<sup>461</sup> This chapter is a test case for this connection. By definition, systematic theology is applying the storyline of Scripture to the storyline of

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<sup>461</sup>On the relationship between biblical theology and theological formulation, see D. A. Carson, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. Brian S. Rosner et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 89–104; Willem A. VanGemeren, "Systems of Continuity," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 37–62; John S. Feinberg, "Systems of Discontinuity," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 63–88. For examples of the interaction between biblical theology and theological formulation, see the articles in Scott Hafemann and Paul House, eds., *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

life in light of the storyline of history. Therefore, systematic formulation must flow from biblical theology in light of the grand narrative's own categories and themes. This chapter has been an attempt to do just that—namely, to apply a biblical theology of warfare to several doctrines in systematic theology.

Third, this chapter recognizes how Christology in general (and a warfare Christology in particular) can inform other loci of systematic theology. All of theology is applied Christology.<sup>462</sup> To develop a distinctly Christian systematic theology, it is essential to consider how every doctrine relates to Christ. If Jesus is the center of the storyline of Scripture, then he must be at the center of its application to the storyline of life. Despite the theological reflections on the divine warrior theme in Christology made in this chapter, there are many further areas of research worthy of study, which the brief concluding chapter will highlight.

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<sup>462</sup>Russell Moore has made this claim in many of his unpublished lectures.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

In *The Kingdom of Christ*, Russell Moore notes that Gregory Boyd has “identified perhaps the defining theme of canonical revelation—the triumph of Christ as divine-human warrior in the restoration of a fallen cosmos.”<sup>1</sup> This dissertation has sought to explore this “defining theme of canonical revelation” through a biblical, historical, and theological analysis of the divine warrior theme in Christology. The remainder of this concluding chapter will not only summarize the findings of this dissertation but also suggest areas for further study.

#### **Summary of Arguments**

This dissertation has made a series of arguments about Christ the warrior king that culminate in its thesis: the divine warrior theme is a central Christological feature in both biblical and historical theology, which carries significant implications for contemporary issues in systematic theology. This dissertation’s attempt at a biblical theology of warfare has identified several features that should mark any evangelical warfare theology. It is (1) rooted in the warfare worldview of Scripture,<sup>2</sup> (2) focused on

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<sup>1</sup>Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 107.

<sup>2</sup>As Boyd asserts, “The ultimate canvas against which the unfolding drama of world history is played out is, for biblical authors, a warfare worldview.” Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 14.



the unfolding kingdom of Christ,<sup>3</sup> and (3) centered on Christ the warrior king.<sup>4</sup> A summary of each chapter's findings follows.

Chapter 1 positioned the subject of the divine warrior theme and Christology in its contemporary theological context. The last 100 years of theology have seen both an emerging consensus on the nature of the kingdom and a growing interest in the nature of biblical warfare. This chapter evaluated various approaches to the canonical theme of warfare. Then, it suggested that a Christ-centered biblical theology of warfare could build on the evangelical consensus about the nature of the kingdom to provide new insights for contemporary theological issues. This chapter also offered the thesis and methodology of the dissertation, contending that a biblical, historical and theological analysis of the divine warrior theme in Christology reveals that Christ the warrior king is a central aspect of Christology.

Chapter 2 demonstrated that a historical evaluation of the divine warrior theme in Christology reveals that prominent theologians throughout church history have recognized Christ as warrior king, especially through their recognition of the atonement as victory. If, as this dissertation has argued, a central biblical feature is its presentation of Christ as warrior king, then this theme should be recognized and developed by major theologians throughout church history. An analysis of the patristic, medieval, Reformation, post-Reformation, and contemporary periods reveals that, though each

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<sup>3</sup>Ladd defines the warfare-oriented kingdom: "The Kingdom of God is the redemptive rule of God in Christ, destroying his enemies and by implication bringing to his people the blessing of his reign." George Eldon Ladd, *The Last Things: An Eschatology for Laymen* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 107.

<sup>4</sup>Horton notes, "It is undeniable that both Old and New Testaments give significant development to the warrior theme in reference especially to the conquest of Canaan, the Davidic monarchy, and the prophetic expectation of David's heir, with the new Testament fulfillment in Christ as the warrior-servant who not only drives the serpent from the Holy Land but finally crushes his head." Michael S. Horton, *Lord and Servant: A Covenant Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 244.

phase of church history varies in how it presents the theme, they all prominently affirm the image of Christ as warrior king.

Chapter 3 two demonstrated that the divine warrior theme is a central feature in the messianic expectation of the Old Testament. Employing a biblical theology of warfare, this chapter showed that the messianic expectation of the Old Testament culminates in the anticipation of a coming messianic warrior king who would be a new David bringing about a new reign over a new Israel through a new Exodus into a new creation.<sup>5</sup> This evaluation showed that “throughout the Old Testament the enmity between the serpent and the woman’s seed is the big story behind all of the headlines.”<sup>6</sup> While the Old Testament expects a coming warrior king, the New Testament presents a conquering warrior king.

Chapter 4 argued that the divine warrior theme is a central feature in the messianic fulfillment of the New Testament. It demonstrated that kingdom warfare characterized the words and works of Jesus.<sup>7</sup> But it also noted that his messianic victory came in a way that Israel did not fully anticipate— conquest came through crucifixion; triumph came through torture.<sup>8</sup> It also showed that warfare is a key feature to the

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<sup>5</sup>As a result, notes Vos, “The expectation of the kingdom of God became equivalent to the Messianic hope of Israel.” Geerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church* (New York: American Tract Society, 1903), 19.

<sup>6</sup>Horton, *Lord and Servant*, 251.

<sup>7</sup>Marshall points out that “the whole of the ministry of Jesus was a campaign against Satanic power.” I. Howard Marshall, *The Work of Christ* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1969), 31; Ladd, *The Last Things: An Eschatology for Laymen*, 115.

<sup>8</sup>James observes that “the cross is the point of greatest defeat (Jesus was killed, crucified and buried); yet at the same time, it is the point of greatest triumph, for it was precisely in his death that his followers have life eternal.” Frank A. James III, “The Atonement in Church History,” in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological & Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 214.

inaugurated but not yet consummated kingdom of Christ.<sup>9</sup> The image of Christ as warrior king is fundamental to how the storyline of Scripture portrays the unfolding triumph of the kingdom.<sup>10</sup>

Chapter 5 argued that the divine warrior theme in Christology carries significant implications for systematic theology. A warfare Christology sheds light on the relationship between penal substitution and *Christus Victor* by contending for an atonement theology of vicarious victory. A warfare Christology entails a Christ-centered, warfare-oriented soteriology in both its cosmic and personal aspects. A warfare Christology clarifies the warfare orientation of eschatology in both its inaugurated and consummated dimensions. A warfare Christology re-centers providence by demonstrating the role of Christ in providence and the goal of providence in Christ. This chapter also suggests that the process of moving from a biblical theology of warfare to theological formulation would also yield beneficial insights in other areas of systematic theology.

Overall, this dissertation has attempted to make a new contribution to the literature on the Bible's treatment of warfare. Why was a new contribution necessary? Some attempts at a biblical theology of warfare have methodological limitations, which prevent them from developing a Christ-centered perspective that is applied to systematic

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<sup>9</sup>Vos states that “our Lord’s conception was that of one kingdom coming in two successive stages.” Geerhardus Vos, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2001), 309. Therefore, as Leithart notes, “The establishment of the new world order of the kingdom was not a rescue operation, but the beginning of a cosmic construction project.” Peter J. Leithart, *The Kingdom and the Power: Rediscovering the Centrality of the Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1993), 170.

<sup>10</sup>According to Bright, the New Testament declares that “Christ—through his ministry, his death and resurrection—has made the triumph of that Kingdom sure.” John Bright, *The Kingdom of God*, rev. ed. (New York: Abingdon, 1980), 237.

theology.<sup>11</sup> Other treatments of a biblical theology of warfare have theological limitations, which prevent their insights from being fully integrated into contemporary evangelical theology.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, this dissertation has sought to contribute to the subject through its Christ-centered biblical theology of warfare. Yet, there are more contributions that could be made to the subject through further research.

### **Areas for Further Research**

This dissertation has attempted a comprehensive biblical, historical, and theological analysis of the divine warrior theme in Christology. However, there are areas of research that warrant further exploration in this subject matter. At the conclusion of Aulén's monumental work, *Christus Victor*, he suggests that "no form of Christian teaching has any future before it except such as can keep steadily in view the reality of the evil in the world, and go to meet the evil with a battle-song of triumph."<sup>13</sup> As this dissertation concludes, this final section will suggest areas for further study and offer brief reflections on the future of warfare theology.

First, further research on a divine warrior Christology could enhance a biblical theology of warfare through an in-depth exegetical analysis of key Scripture passages related to the subject. Because this dissertation was intended to be an overview of the

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<sup>11</sup>For example, Longman and Reid's helpful book *God Is a Warrior* attempts a biblical theology of warfare (primarily focused on the Old Testament). Yet, it does not integrate its findings into constructive theological formulation.

<sup>12</sup>D. A. Carson expresses this concern in his review of Boyd's *God at War*: "Nevertheless, I regretfully conclude that the strengths of this book are precisely the things that make it so dangerous. Its genuine attractions will make it more influential than it deserves to be. Boyd's stance is exegetically unconvincing, theologically troubling, historically selective, philosophically naive, and frequently methodologically unfair." D. A. Carson, "God, the Bible, and Spiritual Warfare: A Review Article," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42, no. 2 (1999): 258.

<sup>13</sup>Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement*, trans. A. G. Hebert (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 159.

topic, it was limited in how much exegetical interaction it could provide. What if new scholarship focused on the divine warrior theme in the messianic expectation of Isaiah or examined the warfare motif in the Johannine literature? If further research preserved the typological emphasis of this biblical theology and combined it with detailed evaluation of key texts, it could enhance the treatment of the divine warrior theme in Christology.

Second, further research on a divine warrior Christology could examine material from the Ancient Near East and second temple Judaism to situate this theme in its historical context.<sup>14</sup> How is the warfare theology of Scripture similar to and different from that of surrounding cultures in the Ancient Near East? How did the divine warrior theme in the writings of second temple Judaism influence warfare-oriented messianic expectations during New Testament times? An evaluation of materials from the Ancient Near East and second temple Judaism could only enhance further theological reflections on the divine warrior theme in Christology.

Third, further research on a divine warrior Christology could consider contemporary appropriations of it in global Christianity.<sup>15</sup> Christianity's emerging growth is in the global south.<sup>16</sup> These cultures tend to resonate with both the Bible's warfare

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<sup>14</sup>Because some work has already emerged in this area and because of space limitations, these source materials were not addressed in the dissertation. For treatments of the topic, see Boyd, *God at War*, 29–168; Tremper Longman and Daniel G. Reid, *God Is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 83–90.

<sup>15</sup>Because of space and resource limitations, this dissertation did not focus on the perspectives of global Christianity. Instead, it centered on western Christianity in general and evangelical Protestantism in particular.

<sup>16</sup>Philip Jenkins explains that “there can be no doubt that the emerging Christian world will be anchored in the Southern continents.” He adds, “By 2050, only about one-fifth of the world’s 3 billion Christians will be non-Hispanic Whites. Soon, the phrase ‘a White Christian’ may sound like a curious oxymoron, as mildly surprising as ‘a Swedish Buddhist.’ Such people can exist, but a slight eccentricity is implied.” Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 14, 3.

worldview and its emphasis on spiritual warfare.<sup>17</sup> What additional insights on the divine warrior theme might scholars from the global south be able to provide? An evaluation of materials from the global south could certainly add new insights on the divine warrior theme in Christology.

Fourth, further research on a divine warrior Christology could re-orient the church's mission.<sup>18</sup> The mission of the church is an extension of the mission of Christ the warrior king. If Christ's mission was an incarnational assault on the kingdom of darkness, then he has called and equipped the kingdom community to continue this conflict until his return. Therefore, the militant mission of Christ should fundamentally shape the composition, proclamation, and transformation of the church as seen in its regenerate membership, organizational structure, celebration of the ordinances, preaching, counseling, ministry and social justice. If the mission of the church is seen in light of the biblical narrative's Christ-centered focus on kingdom warfare, it could transform the nature of this eschatological kingdom community.

Fifth, further research on a divine warrior Christology could be applied to other doctrines of systematic theology. For example, how could scholars develop a more robust theology proper if they integrated the beneficial insights of open theists on the warfare theme without jettisoning the traditional doctrine of God? How could it help theologians deal with contemporary issues in pneumatology more effectively if they recognized that the Holy Spirit is Christ's victory gift poured out upon the church as the sign and source

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<sup>17</sup>Jenkins observes, "As Christianity moves South, it is in some ways returning to its roots." Ibid., 15. This return to Christianity's roots includes a resurgence in spiritual warfare. He discusses this return to roots at length in Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>18</sup>Though this dissertation made some observations on the nature of the church's mission, evangelicalism would benefit from further reflection in this area.

of ongoing triumph? The systematic theological categories addressed in this dissertation should be seen as test cases that demonstrate the potential of integrating a biblical theology of warfare into contemporary theological formulation.

Sixth, further research on a divine warrior Christology could enhance evangelical public theology. One of the great contributions of Moore's *Kingdom of Christ* was its ability to demonstrate the implications of an evangelical consensus on the kingdom for socio-political engagement. If evangelicals could reach a consensus on the nature of kingdom warfare, then it could have similar ramifications for military ethics and social justice. By understanding the Christ-centered nature of warfare in its redemptive historical context, further study could develop a firmer foundation for just war while avoiding the pitfalls of a utopian pacifism or a nationalistic militarism.<sup>19</sup> By seeing the issue of social justice through the lens of Christobellian conflict, further inquiry could develop a better basis for caring about the casualties of spiritual warfare that society marginalizes.

Seventh, further research on a divine warrior Christology could profoundly impact biblical spirituality. In particular, it could help evangelical spirituality to recognize the importance of the warfare theme in how the Bible portrays the pursuit of spirituality. Seeing spirituality as warfare could reshape the individual pursuit of piety as believers embrace the call to wage war against their sin and pursue holiness. It could also reshape the community component of piety as the church reformulates how to equip its

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<sup>19</sup>For more on the Christian perspective of just war theory, see Oliver O'Donovan, *The Just War Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); J. Daryl Charles and Timothy J. Demy, *War, Peace, and Christianity: Questions and Answers from a Just-War Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010); Peter J. Leithart, *Defending Constantine: The Twilight of an Empire and the Dawn of Christendom* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 333–42.

members for spiritual conflict. Combined with the development of a warfare ecclesiology, if evangelicals embrace the warfare-oriented nature of biblical spirituality, it could produce the most significant impact on evangelical churches in the next century.

### **The Future of Warfare Theology**

What is the future of warfare theology? Before reflecting on the future, it is important to recall how the present arrived. Two streams of thought in 20<sup>th</sup> century theology converged to enable the development of a Christ-centered biblical theology of warfare. First, a resurgent focus on the warfare theme occurred, with Aulén’s *Christus Victor* combining with the re-emerging interest in spiritual warfare to spark the shift. Second, an evangelical consensus on the nature of the kingdom developed, with Ladd’s biblical insights combining with Henry’s socio-political reflections to develop agreement. These theological developments established the foundation that enabled the resurgence of a warfare theology. With an evangelical consensus on the nature of the kingdom emerging side-by-side with a global awakening on the nature of spiritual warfare, it warrants a biblical, historical, and theological analysis of how these issues converge in a divine warrior Christology.

The motivation for this dissertation and the hope for the future of warfare theology is both the presence of the theme in biblical theology and the potential of the theme for evangelical theology. Moore has suggested that “the defining theme of canonical revelation” could perhaps be “the triumph of Christ as divine-human warrior in the restoration of a fallen cosmos.”<sup>20</sup> Therefore, a divine warrior Christology is central to the warfare worldview of the biblical narrative. In addition to his assertion about the

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<sup>20</sup>Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 107.



centrality of Christobellic warfare in biblical theology, Moore also affirms its potential for re-shaping evangelical formulation:

If this appropriation of the Kingdom warfare imagery present in Scripture and the Patristic tradition were magnified across the evangelical spectrum, the implications for the worship, evangelism, spirituality, cultural engagement, and internal structures of the churches could be monumental—and perhaps more significant than Henry and his generation’s call for an evangelical renaissance in university education, philosophy, the sciences, and so forth.<sup>21</sup>

This dissertation has been a first attempt at magnifying kingdom warfare across the evangelical spectrum. Evangelicals are awakening to the realization that the value of a consensus on the nature of the kingdom is limited without a consensus on the nature of kingdom warfare. The future of evangelical theology could be profoundly impacted if it embraces a biblical theology of kingdom warfare. Christ the warrior king has been and will continue to be the central figure in the unfolding of redemptive history. Imagine the potential if Christ the warrior king also becomes a central feature in the future of evangelical theology.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 107.

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### **Dissertations**

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## ABSTRACT

### CHRIST THE WARRIOR KING: A BIBLICAL, HISTORICAL, AND THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DIVINE WARRIOR THEME IN CHRISTOLOGY

Phillip Ross Bethancourt  
Doctor of Philosophy  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011  
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Chapter 1 introduces the dissertation's thesis, highlights its methodology and establishes its goals. This dissertation argues that the divine warrior theme is a central Christological feature in both biblical and historical theology, which carries significant implications for contemporary issues in systematic theology. This chapter also sets the argument within the contemporary context of various approaches to theme of warfare in Scripture.

Chapter 2 offers a historical analysis of treatments of the divine warrior theme in Christology. It reveals that prominent theologians throughout church history have recognized Christ as warrior king, particularly through their understanding of the atonement as victory.

Chapter 3 explores how the divine warrior theme is a central feature in the messianic expectation of the Old Testament. It highlights how a biblical theology of warfare interplays with the Old Testament's emphasis on the unfolding kingdom of God.

Chapter 4 argues that the New Testament presents Christ as a warrior king in its messianic fulfillment. The New Testament's treatment of the person and work of

Christ presents him as a conquering messianic warrior. In addition, both the inaugurated and consummated dimensions of eschatology center on Christ the warrior king's victory.

Chapter 5 demonstrates how the divine warrior theme in biblical theology yields beneficial insights into contemporary issues in systematic theology. It examines how a divine warrior Christology contributes to evangelical theology in the areas of the atonement, salvation, eschatology, and providence.

Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation by offering a summary of arguments and considering areas for further research related to the subject. It suggests that evangelical theology could benefit significantly from further exploration of the divine warrior theme in Christology.

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