TRAINING CONGREGANTS AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

OF MATAWAN, NEW JERSEY, TO STUDY THE BIBLE

IN A CHRISTOCENTRIC MANNER

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Doctor of Ministry

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by

Daniel Ian Wiginton

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APPROVAL SHEET

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Daniel Ian Wiginton

Read and Approved by:

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Robert L. Plummer (Faculty Supervisor)

_____
James M. Hamilton, Jr. (Second Reader)

Date_____

I dedicate this project to my blessed wife, Micah.

"Has thou not seen how thy desires e'er have been granted in what he ordaineth?"

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PREFACE

Many people have made the completion of this project possible through their support and encouragement. I am thankful to my parents, who have always encouraged me to know the Lord through his Word. I came to faith in Christ after listening to my father present the gospel at a children's program. My mother taught me by example the importance of daily Bible intake.

I also am thankful to a number of people who encouraged me to pursue deeper knowledge of the Bible throughout my life. Neil Lodge and the teachers at Covenant Christian School were diligent to teach me the Bible and to keep the gospel at the forefront in my childhood. Dennis Cutbirth taught me to treasure the Bible in my teenage years at Lytle South Baptist Church. Kevin Shrum set an example of Christ-centered expository preaching at Inglewood Baptist Church while I was a college student. I have also had the privilege of serving on church staffs under two senior pastors with unwavering dedication to preach the Bible faithfully, Mike Hamrick and Bobby Holt.

I am thankful to the faculty of Southern Seminary, who have been a guiding influence in my walk with the Lord since I first attended the Give Me an Answer Conference as a college student fifteen years ago. I am especially thankful to Dr. Robert L. Plummer, who taught me biblical hermeneutics my first semester in seminary and has now served as the faculty supervisor of this project.

I am thankful to the members of the two churches I have served during the course of my Doctor of Ministry studies, Vista Grande Baptist Church and First Baptist Church of Matawan. Both churches have been supportive and understanding as I have dedicated time to academic study.

Finally, I am thankful to my wife, Micah, and to our three children, Benjamin,

Isaac, and Esther. We have experienced much as a family during the course of my studies, including pregnancies, births, emergency surgeries, loss of loved ones, many great blessings, and a move across the country. They have endured my occasional absence as deadlines approached and have foregone comforts as tuition bills came due. I cannot adequately express my appreciation for them.

My hope is that this work will bear fruit for the kingdom of God by leading more of his people to glorify Christ with their Bibles open, "that in everything he might be preeminent" (Col 1:18).

Daniel Wiginton

Aberdeen, New Jersey

December 2016

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to train congregants at First Baptist Church of Matawan, New Jersey, to study the Bible in a Christocentric manner.

Goals

The first goal of this project was to evaluate the congregation's knowledge of the Christocentric nature of the Bible. This goal was measured by a questionnaire distributed on a Sunday morning to be completed and returned by adult congregants (see appendix 1). This goal was regarded as successful when the surveys had been returned and the data from all responses had been analyzed.

The second goal of this project was to develop a six-week discipleship course on studying the Bible in a Christocentric manner. This goal was measured by four pastors from other evangelical churches by means of a rubric measuring biblical faithfulness, theological content, practical content, and accessibility to participants (see appendix 2). If necessary, the course material would have then been revised to meet the standards of the rubric. This goal was deemed successful when over 90 percent of the evaluation indicators were marked at sufficient or above.

The third goal of this project was to recruit fifteen to twenty adult congregants to participate in the discipleship course. Recruitment took place through verbal announcements from the pulpit, written notices in the church bulletin, and personal invitations. This goal was measured by the number of adult church members who made a written commitment to attend. This goal was deemed successful when between fifteen

and twenty adult congregants had indicated their commitment to participate.

The fourth goal of this project was to increase knowledge of studying the Bible in a Christocentric manner by teaching the six-week discipleship course. This goal was measured using a pre- and post-course questionnaire (see appendix 3) that assessed participants' personal Bible study habits, knowledge of the Christocentric nature of the Bible, and personal confidence in their ability to study the Bible in a Christocentric manner. This goal was regarded as successful when a t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-course questionnaires.

Context of the Ministry Project

This project was completed in the context of the First Baptist Church of Matawan, New Jersey. I have served as the pastor of the church since June 2013. Prior to that time, the church had been served by one pastor for over thirty-eight years. Because of the previous pastor's long tenure, the congregation has been especially sensitive to change. My presence is a major change in itself, so I have primarily sought to draw attention to the Bible as our unchanging source of authority and to Christ as its central figure. Although the church has always held the Bible in high regard, it was a significant change for members to sit under expository preaching as the primary element of the worship service. Many congregants were unfamiliar with the content of the Bible, and few initially demonstrated familiarity with its Christocentric nature.

One indication that the Bible had not played a central role in many members' lives is that few were in the habit of bringing their Bibles to church when I began serving as pastor. For a number of Sunday mornings after my arrival I asked the congregation to hold up their Bibles prior to turning to the text for the sermon. In the initial weeks, fewer than ten Bibles were present among nearly one hundred people in attendance.

The congregation also initially demonstrated a lack of familiarity with much of

the content of the Bible. For example, when I first presented the biblical qualifications for deacons, even some of the deacons themselves were surprised by the existence and content of those qualifications.

The context of the local religious culture also affects the way members regard the Bible. Of the residents of Monmouth County, New Jersey, where the church is located, 41.6 percent are affiliated with Roman Catholic parishes, 3.3 percent are affiliated with Jewish synagogues or temples, and only 2.5 percent are affiliated with evangelical churches.[1] The Roman Catholic and Jewish approaches to religion are the most familiar in local culture and sometimes underlie even our own congregants' assumptions about church and the Christian life. In this cultural setting, ceremonies and social concerns are often prioritized above biblical knowledge. Roman Catholic and Jewish influence in local culture also affect the common approaches to the Bible's central message, viewing the Bible as a guideline for ethical living rather than as a unified testimony to the person and work of Christ.

Despite all of these factors, the congregation of First Baptist Church has demonstrated enthusiasm toward the Bible and a remarkable willingness to submit to its teachings. For example, despite the initial surprise at the qualifications for deacons, the congregation understood that the Bible presented those qualifications clearly. In response, they overwhelmingly voted to amend the bylaws to include them. Congregants have also responded positively to expository preaching. For example, as I preached through the book of Acts, many expressed a desire to begin engaging in personal evangelism.

Much of the congregation's willingness to hear and believe the Bible is due to the influence of the previous pastor, Lewis Kisenwether. When presented with unfamiliar biblical concepts, numerous church members have quoted him as saying, "The Bible says

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[1]City-Data, "Religions in Monmouth County, New Jersey," accessed August 8, 2016, http://www.city-data.com/county/religion/Monmouth-County-NJ.html.

it. I believe it. That settles it." The congregation has long held a high view of Scripture's authority and a willingness to submit to its teachings.

As congregants have grown in their familiarity with the content of the Bible, some have expressed interest in how they can understand it in a Christocentric way. I frequently mention in sermons that the whole Bible points to Christ, but it is impractical to explain Christocentric interpretive methods in depth in the setting of a sermon. Congregants have needed the opportunity to develop their ability to study the Bible as a unified testimony to the lordship of Jesus Christ. That need has been accompanied by an attitude of eagerness, openness, and submission to the Bible's message.

Rationale

Every believer in Christ is called to pay regular attention to the Word of God, and this project was designed to help equip the members of First Baptist Church to do so more effectively. Jesus asserts in John 10:27, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Therefore, hearing the Word of God gladly is itself a defining mark of the true people of God. Nothing is more fundamental to the lives of Christians and to the life of the church than gladly hearing and submitting to the Bible. Congregants at First Baptist Church need to be equipped to study the Bible well.

The development and implementation of a six-week discipleship course on Christocentric Bible study was intended, at its most basic level, to encourage participants to study their Bibles. The material helped equip them to do so more effectively. Within this study, each session led participants to examine the Christocentric nature of the Bible. This focus of the course was important for the health and effectiveness of the church for at least five reasons.

First, Jesus taught that all of Scripture should be read in light of him, and the

apostles and other New Testament authors modeled this interpretive method.[2] Learning to view the entire Bible as Christocentric is therefore necessary in order for congregants to be faithful to the teachings of Jesus and the example of the apostles.

Second, explicit mention of Christ is required in any setting if persons are to be converted to faith in Christ (Rom 10:14-17). Rightly understood, a Christocentric understanding of the Bible will move congregants to proclaim the gospel more often both inside the church and in their daily interactions with others. Thus, the proliferation of Christocentric interpretation at First Baptist Church should result in more opportunities for people to place their faith in Christ and be saved.

Third, an accurate understanding of the Christian life requires an explicit focus on Christ (Gal 2:20). Graeme Goldsworthy makes this point well:

> We grow in our Christian lives by being conformed more and more to the image of Jesus, not to the image of Abraham or Moses. . . . Thus the prime question to put to every text is about how it testifies to Jesus. Only then can we ask how it makes real his rule over us, and makes real his presence with us so that we are conformed more and more to his image.[3]

The increased use of Christocentric interpretation at First Baptist Church is thus a step toward more effective discipleship.

Fourth, a Christocentric approach to interpretation and exposition helps guard against the danger that the gospel message could become assumed rather than explicitly communicated in the life of the church. Michael Horton summarizes well the line of thinking that can lead to the loss of explicit gospel teaching: "Everybody here already believes that. Now we just need to get on with living it out."[4] Matt Chandler elaborates on this flawed reasoning:

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[2]Chapter 2 presents biblical evidence to support this assertion.

[3]Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 252.

[4]Michael Horton, *Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 120.

This sort of thinking is devastating to the soul. We call this the 'assumed gospel,' and it flourishes when well-meaning teachers, leaders, and preachers set out to see lives first and foremost conformed to a pattern of behavior (religion) and not transformed by the Holy Spirit's power (gospel).[5]

A proliferation of Christocentric biblical interpretation should help move the church toward a pattern of consistent gospel proclamation and dependence on the grace of God.

Fifth, as church members begin to interpret the Bible in a Christocentric manner, they are better equipped to point their neighbors toward the biblical gospel of grace in the midst of a local culture saturated with Roman Catholic and Jewish theologies of works-based righteousness. When church members can articulate well the centrality of the person and work of Christ in Scripture, they can be more effective at overcoming the common local perceptions of the Bible as a legalistic document.

Definitions

Several terms used in this project must first be defined.

Biblical theology. This term refers to the study of "the interpretive perspective reflected in the way the biblical authors have presented their understanding of earlier Scripture, redemptive history, and the events they are describing."[6] The practice of biblical theology extends to the whole Bible and is not limited to studying this interpretive perspective in particular portions or genres of Scripture.

Christocentric hermeneutic. This term refers to an approach to interpreting the Bible "through a christological lens in which the incarnate Christ is seen to be the

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[5]Matt Chandler, *The Explicit Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 14.

[6]James M. Hamilton, *What is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible's Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 16. While Hamilton's definition is fitting for the purposes of this project, it must be noted that alternative definitions abound. For an overview of the influential approaches to biblical theology put forth by Johann Philipp Gabler, William Wrede, and Heikki Räisänen, see Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 23-27. Thielman summarizes, "Over the last three centuries, Gabler, Wrede, and Räisänen . . . [all] argued for the separation of the historical task from the theological enterprise, and all three gave history priority over theology." Ibid., 27. For an overview of evangelical approaches to biblical theology, see Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 80-98. Goldsworthy notes that even among scholars who share evangelical presuppositions concerning the Bible, there is a "lack of consensus about some major issues in the discipline." Ibid., 78.

ultimate interpretive key to accessing the full meaning(s) of the biblical text."[7] The divine inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of the Bible are assumed in this Christocentrism.[8]

Gospel. This term refers to "God's account of his saving activity in Jesus the Messiah, in which, by Jesus' death and resurrection, he atones for sin and brings new creation."[9]

Typology. This term refers to the observation of "divinely intended patterns of historical correspondence and escalation in significance in the events, people, or institutions of Israel, and these types are in the redemptive historical stream that flows through the Bible."[10]

Limitations and Delimitations

The project was limited by participants' attendance of teaching sessions and use of written material. Those who attended all sessions and used all written materials were most likely to benefit from the course. Some, however, did not fully participate.

One delimitation of the project was that all goals were completed in a fifteen-week time period. A second delimitation was that data was only collected from congregants who were at least eighteen years of age.

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[7]Dane C. Ortlund, "Christocentrism: An Asymmetrical Trinitarianism?" *Themelios* 34, no. 3 (2009): 318, accessed August 29, 2016, http://s3.amazonaws.com/tgc-documents/journal-issues/34.3/themelios-34-3.pdf. Ortlund offers this definition for "hermeneutic Christocentrism" and rightly notes that there are also other varieties of Christocentrism which are not concerned primarily with hermeneutics. For the purposes of this project, the terms *Christocentric* and *Christocentrism* will refer to hermeneutic Christocentrism unless otherwise noted.

[8]Thus, this Christocentrism is set apart from varieties such as the "Christocentric hermeneutical key" proposed by Christian Smith. Smith presents his form of a Christocentric hermeneutic as a means of reading the Bible in a "truly evangelical" manner after arguing that belief in biblical inerrancy is an unhelpful sociological phenomenon in evangelicalism. Christian Smith, *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism Is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011), 93-126.

[9]Simon Gathercole, "The Gospel of Paul and the Gospel of the Kingdom," in *God's Power to Save: One Gospel for a Complex World?,* ed. Chris Green (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 149.

[10]James M. Hamilton, Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 42.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this project included a congregational questionnaire, an evaluation rubric, and a pre- and post-course questionnaire.[11] Four goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to evaluate the congregation's knowledge of the Christocentric nature of the Bible. This goal was evaluated using a questionnaire, which ushers distributed to the congregation during a Sunday morning worship service (see appendix 1). Congregants were given time to complete the questionnaire before the conclusion of the service and returned it afterward. The questionnaire gauged respondents' understanding of the Bible as Christocentric and also included questions about their personal Bible study habits. It also contained demographic questions such as age, sex, and the length of time they have attended the church. The data gathered through this questionnaire was tabulated and examined to inform the development of the curriculum.

The second goal was to develop a six-week discipleship course on studying the Bible in a Christocentric manner. This goal was measured by four evangelical pastors from other churches by evaluating the course curriculum using a rubric (see appendix 2). The rubric measured four aspects of the curriculum: biblical faithfulness, theological content, practical content, and accessibility to lay participants. For each of these aspects, the rubric included questions for the evaluators to answer using a four-point scale. The responses to each question were scaled as insufficient, requires attention, sufficient, or exemplary. There was also space for comments on each question. When these pastors returned the rubric having marked over 90 percent of the evaluation indicators at sufficient or above, the curriculum was considered acceptable for use. If fewer than 90 percent of the evaluation indicators had been marked at sufficient or above, the

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[11]All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

curriculum would have been revised and evaluated again by the same panel of pastors until it met this standard of acceptability.

The third goal was to recruit between fifteen and twenty adult congregants to participate in the discipleship course. Recruitment occurred by way of verbal announcements, written notices in the church bulletin, and personal invitations. Adult congregants were asked to return commitment cards indicating their intention to participate in the course. Some participants also used email and text messages to express their commitment to attend. This goal was met when more than fifteen congregants made written commitments to participate in the course.

The fourth goal was to increase knowledge of studying the Bible in a Christocentric manner by teaching the six-week discipleship course. This goal was evaluated using a pre- and post-course questionnaire (see appendix 3). The questionnaire included questions about the participants' personal Bible study habits, knowledge of the Christocentric nature of the Bible, and personal confidence in their ability to study the Bible in a Christocentric manner. It was distributed to participants as they arrive at the first session of the course. They were asked to complete and return it prior to the start of the teaching time. The same questionnaire was distributed to the participants again at the end of the last course session and returned before the participants left. Participants were asked to place the same four-digit identification number on their pre-course questionnaire and their post-course questionnaire so that the resulting data could be properly analyzed while also maintaining anonymity. Once all data had been tabulated, a t-test for dependent samples was used to determine whether there was a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post-course scores.[12]

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[12]For an explanation of t-tests for dependent samples, see Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 188-94.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION
FOR STUDYING THE BIBLE IN A
CHRISTOCENTRIC MANNER

The Bible teaches that Christ is the subject of all of its writings and thus ought to be interpreted in a Christocentric manner. There is, therefore, no limit to the number of texts that could be included in this study, but four in particular will help demonstrate the truthfulness of this claim. Genesis 3:15 is both a predictive prophecy of the Messiah and the beginning point of a Christocentric typology that runs throughout the OT and NT. Matthew 2:15 is an example of a NT author's Christocentric interpretation of an OT text that is not a direct messianic prediction. In Luke 24:25-27 and 44-47, Jesus teaches his disciples to interpret the entire OT as Christocentric, pointing to his death, resurrection, and worldwide gospel proclamation. John 5:39 and 46 record another instance in which Jesus teaches that he is the subject of all Scripture, such that to fail to believe in him is to fail to believe the OT.

Genesis 3:15

Genesis 3:15 is an early indicator of the Christocentric nature of the Bible, presenting messianic hope in the midst of the curses of the fall. It predicts a long but lopsided battle between the serpent's offspring and the woman's offspring, ending in the serpent's demise. This Christocentric typological pattern continues through Genesis, the Pentateuch, and the remainder of the OT, culminating in the NT with Christ as the victorious seed of the woman.

Context

The opening chapters of Genesis describe God's process of creation. Genesis 2

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recounts God's creation of mankind in his image to exercise dominion over the earth as his viceroys.[1] Adam and Eve are initially free to enjoy all of the fruit available to them except for the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God accompanies the command not to eat this fruit with the warning, ". . . in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen 2:17).[2] Adam and Eve instead obey the voice of the serpent, who promises, "You will not surely die" (Gen 3:4). In response to their sin, God pronounces a series of curses upon the serpent, the woman, the man, and the ground (Gen 3:14-19). Within these curses are the words from God to the serpent in Genesis 3:15, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."[3]

The Nature and Duration of the Enmity

The enmity (אֵיבָה) God places between the serpent and the woman is violently hostile in nature. The other biblical uses of אֵיבָה (Num 35:21-22; Ezek 25:15; 35:5) are all found in connection with violence, whether committed by an individual or an army. The force of this hostility is found also in the grammar the author employs in describing the two parties. According to Waltke and O'Conor, the use of independent personal pronouns with finite verbs in each clause indicates an explicit antithesis.[4] Picking up on

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[1]T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 76-79.

[2]All Scripture references are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

[3]Some scholars argue that Gen 3:15 merely explains the common human discomfort with snakes. John Skinner, for example, interprets the offspring of the serpent and the woman to be "the whole brood of serpents and the whole race of men." John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 79-80. Likewise, Sigmund Mowinckel writes, "There is no allusion here to the Devil or to Christ as 'born of woman.' . . . It is a quite general statement about mankind, and serpents, and the struggle between them which continues as long as the earth exists." Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (New York: Abingdon, 1954), 11. However, this notion is inconsistent with the internal evidence of the verse and the manner in which its themes are carried across Genesis and the rest of the Bible.

[4]Bruce K. Waltke and Michael Patrick O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 295.

this antithesis, Victor Hamilton observes, "The contrast is not only between *head* and

heel but between *it* and *you*."[5] The enmity between the serpent and the woman and

between her offspring and his is a hostility fundamental to their identities, not a simple

discomfort with one another or a mere dispute that can be reconciled.

The enmity is long in duration. Ezekiel 25:15 speaks of a אֵיבָה that is "never-

ending." Likewise, אֵיבָה is "perpetual" in in Ezekiel 35:5. This sense of long-term enmity

is found also in the combative activity between the two parties of Genesis 3:15, where,

according to Gordon Wenham, "The imperfect verb is iterative. It implies repeated

attacks by both sides to injure the other. It declares lifelong mutual hostility between

mankind and the serpent race."[6] Some commentators incorrectly claim that Genesis 3:15

thus has no end in view. Skinner writes, "No victory is promised to either party, but only

perpetual warfare between them."[7] Gerhard von Rad is even more pessimistic: "There is

no foreseeable hope that a victory can be won by any kind of heroism. . . . The terrible

point of this curse is the hopelessness of this struggle in which both will ruin each

other."[8]

However, the fact that Genesis 3:15 is part of a curse upon the serpent points to

an end result in which the greater harm will come to the serpent.[9] Kenneth Mathews

rightly states that the verse predicts a decisive end to the long-term hostility: "The

conclusion of the matter is made explicit: the serpent has a limited life expectancy that

will come to a violent end."[10] The writer of Genesis describes this victory in terms of the

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[5]Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, 1-17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 197.

[6]Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 80.

[7]Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, 81.

[8]Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 93.

[9]Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 80.

[10]Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1a (Nashville:

location of the blows[11] the serpent and the seed of the woman will deliver to each other. "The location of the blow distinguishes the severity and success of the attack. The impact delivered by the offspring of the woman 'at the head' is mortal, while the serpent will deliver a blow only 'at the heel.'"[12] The long-term hostility will eventually end, and the result will be the defeat of the serpent by the victorious seed of the woman.

The Identity of the Offspring

In its most immediate sense, the enmity depicted in Genesis 3:15 is between the serpent and the woman. This enmity, however, will continue later "between your offspring and her offspring," culminating in a bruising battle between "he" and "you." Since the earliest centuries of Christianity this verse has been called a *protoevangelium* on the basis of a messianic identification of the foretold offspring.[13] Westermann objects, claiming that a messianic interpretation is impossible ". . . because the 'seed' of the woman and the serpent can mean only the generations to come, not an individual (Mary or Jesus)."[14] Likewise, von Rad asserts, "The word 'seed' may not be construed personally but only quite generally with the meaning 'posterity.'"[15] Skinner concedes that זֶרַע sometimes refers to an individual, but he claims that in such cases ". . . it denotes the immediate offspring as the pledge of posterity, never a remote descendant. . . . The

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Broadman & Holman, 1996), 245.

[11]English Bibles vary in their rendering of שׁוּף at Gen 3:15, and some versions render its two occurrences within the verse differently. HCSB, NLT, and NRSV render both as *strike*; ESV, KJV, NASB, NKJV, RSV, and YLT as *bruise*; NAB as *strike at*; NET as *attack*; and NIV as *crush* and *strike*. Commentators likewise express a variety of options. What is more significant than the possible glosses of the verb, however, is the contrast of the locations of the blows delivered.

[12]Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 245.

[13]For example, Irenaeus comments on this verse, "From then on it was proclaimed that he who was to be born of a virgin, after the likeness of Adam, would be on the watch for the serpent's head." Andrew Louth and Marco Conti, *Genesis 1-11*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture OT, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 91.

[14]Claus Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary,* trans. David Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 25.

[15]von Rad, *Genesis,* 93.

Messianic application therefore is not justified in grammar."[16]

However, Jack Collins argues convincingly that an understanding of the woman's זֶרַע in Genesis 3:15 as a future, individual Messiah is consistent with the term's usage in connection with singular pronouns elsewhere in the OT. According to Collins, "When זֶרַע denotes 'posterity' the pronouns (independent pronouns, object pronouns, and suffixes) are always plural. . . . Not surprisingly, when זֶרַע denotes a specific descendant, it appears with singular verb inflections, adjectives, and pronouns."[17] Applying these findings to Genesis 3:15, Collins summarizes, "On the syntactical level, the singular pronoun הוּא in Genesis 3:15 is quite consistent with the pattern where a single individual is in view."[18]

Furthermore, the parallel structure of the phrases of Genesis 3:15 lends itself well to the possibility that collective posterity and a distant individual are both in view. A messianic interpretation does not require the verse to refer only to a distant, future individual to the exclusion of other posterity. Similarly, an understanding of the woman's seed as her collective posterity does not prohibit the possibility that an individual is also anticipated, in whom this posterity will find its climactic culmination. The structure of the verse presents a three-fold view of the conflict with which God curses the serpent as immediate, future, and climactic. In an immediate sense, there is "enmity between you and the woman," a conflict between these two individual beings who are present in the narrative of Genesis 3. Then, in the future, there will be enmity "between your offspring

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[16]Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, 79.

[17]Jack Collins, "A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15): Is the Woman's Seed Singular or Plural?" *Tyndale Bulletin* 48, no. 1 (1997): 143-44. Collins notes that Gen 22:17-18a and 24:60 seem to be exceptions to this rule. T. Desmond Alexander, however, argues that these passages can in fact be understood as referring to a singular seed which would arise from a royal dynasty. T. Desmond Alexander, "Further Observations on the Term 'Seed' in Genesis," *Tyndale Bulletin* 48, no. 2 (1997): 363–67.

[18]Collins, "A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15)," 145.

and her offspring," a conflict which Bruce Waltke notes will play out in the collective posterity present in the rest of Genesis and beyond: "The seed of the serpent refers to natural humanity whom he has led into rebellion against God. . . . Each of the characters of Genesis will be either of the seed of the woman that reproduces her spiritual propensity, or of the seed of the Serpent that reproduces his unbelief."[19] The verse then presents a final level of conflict in parallel to the first two, which may be understood as an individual descendant of the woman climatically defeating the serpent himself: "he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." This individual is messianic in his role as the deliverer of man from the one who lured him into the curse of sin.[20] As Mathews notes, "'Seed' is a resourceful term for speaking of all human history while at the same time permitting a reference to a specific individual descendant. This explains why the individual offspring of the woman ('he,' 'his heel') can be said to do battle with the progenitor serpent ('your head,' 'you')."[21]

Moreover, the NT contains an interpretation of זֶרַע in Genesis as referring simultaneously to plural descendants and to a single descendant. Paul teaches in Galatians 3:16 that Genesis 12:7 ". . . does not say, 'And to offsprings,' referring to many, but referring to one, 'And to your offspring,' who is Christ." This singular interpretation of זֶרַע is followed later in the same chapter with a plural interpretation: "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (3:29). As Jack Lewis observes, "Paul is able to use the promise of descendants (*sperma*) of Abraham (Gen 1:27) as either singular (Gal 3:16) or plural (3:29) as his argument

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[19]Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 93.

[20]According to R. A. Martin, the LXX's use in Gen 3:15 of the masculine pronoun αυτος rather than the neuter αυτο indicates an interpretation of the "seed" as an individual, in which case "the LXX becomes thereby the earliest evidence of an individual messianic interpretation of Gen 3:15." R. A. Martin, "Earliest Messianic Interpretation of Genesis 3:15," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84, no. 4 (1965): 427.

[21]Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 246.

requires." Because the Bible itself explains the "seed" of Genesis 12:7 as having both plural posterity and a singular Messiah in view, the same interpretation may also be rightly used with regard to Genesis 3:15.

**The Typological Pattern Introduced by
Genesis 3:15**

In addition to being a direct prophetic prediction of a coming Messiah, Genesis 3:15 is the basis of a Christocentric, typological pattern. The offspring of the woman will remain in continual conflict with the offspring of the serpent, all while anticipating a final victory by a singular descendant of the woman. This descendant will rise through the elect line of blessing, defeat the serpent and his offspring, and restore blessings in place of the curses of Genesis 3. This pattern flows throughout the book of Genesis and into the remainder of the Pentateuch. It is also evident in much of the rest of the OT, and it finds its culmination in the NT in Jesus Christ and his followers.

The seed of the woman in Genesis. Alexander correctly asserts, "This reference to the 'seed' of the woman must be interpreted in the light of the rest of Genesis which focuses on a single line of seed."[22] The pattern of fulfillment begins immediately with the birth of Cain. As James Hamilton observes, "Eve's statement at the birth of Cain, 'I have gotten a man with YHWH' (Gen 4:1) seems to indicate that she is looking for the birth of the seed who will crush the serpent's head."[23] Cain, however, enters the conflict on the side of the serpent. As Mathews states, "God's forewarning of Cain that 'sin is crouching at your door' (Gen 4:7) may be an allusion to the struggle that 3:15 envisions. But the adversary wins the first battle when Cain yields to sin and murders the woman's

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[22]T. Desmond Alexander, "Genealogies, Seed and the Compositional Unity of Genesis," *Tyndale Bulletin* 44, no. 2 (1993): 267.

[23]James M. Hamilton, "The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham," *Tyndale Bulletin* 58, no. 2 (2007): 257. Hamilton strengthens this claim by pointing out the close correspondence of vocabulary between Gen 3:16 and Gen 4:1.

seed, Abel."[24] Eve then finds hope for the fulfilment of Genesis 3:15 as she gives birth to Seth: "God has appointed for me another offspring [זֶרַע] instead of Abel, for Cain killed him" (Gen 4:25).

Genesis then traces the line of the woman's offspring from Seth to Noah, whom his father Lamech hopes will be the one to bring relief from the curses (Gen 5:28-29).[25] In the immediate aftermath of the flood, it seems briefly that Lamech's hopes have been fulfilled as the cursed line of the serpent's offspring has been wiped out and the elect line of Noah's family is all that is left. God blesses Noah as a type of new Adam (Gen 9:1-7) and establishes a covenant with him and his זֶרַע (Gen 9:8-21). However, Noah soon reveals by his sin that he is not the anticipated singular seed, and the conflict between the elect and cursed lines begins again between his own sons (Gen 9:24-27).[26]

As the world becomes populated and diverse (Gen 10:1-32), the elect line is traced to Abraham, through whom God promises to bless "all the families of the earth" (Gen 12:3). This blessing will come about in his זֶרַע, who will also "possess the gate of his enemies" (Gen 22:17-18).[27] Regarding the ensuing patriarchal period of Genesis, Mathews observes that Genesis 3:15 ". . . foreshadows the tension between the patriarchs and the nations as they experience an uneasy existence in Canaan and Egypt."[28] The elect line of the seed of the woman continues as God repeats the promise of worldwide blessing in the future זֶרַע to Isaac (Gen 26:4), then to Jacob (Gen 28:14). Alexander remarks concerning this line of blessing,

[24]Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 246.

[25]James Hamilton, "The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham," 258.

[26]Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 246.

[27]See the prior discussion of Gal 3:16, in which Paul asserts that זֶרַע in the promise to Abraham refers to Christ, the singular offspring. This singular identity of the future זֶרַע is indicated also by the singular possessive suffix in the final word of Gen 22:17 (אֹיְבָיו).

[28]Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 246-47.

Interestingly, within the patriarchal narratives the power to bless others is linked to those who receive from their father the blessing reserved for the first-born. . . . Thus, although other "seed" exist, the patriarchal narratives associate the mediation of God's blessing with the son who receives the first-born blessing. This observation has important implications for the divine promise that, through the "seed" of Abraham, God's blessing will come to the nations of the earth (22:18). "Seed" in this context probably refers to a single descendant.[29]

The line of blessing continues in Jacob's sons, culminating in the declaration that the scepter will not depart from Judah (Gen 49:10). Thus, the final, singular offspring would arise from the line of Judah and exercise royal reign. As Alexander states, "Jacob anticipates that eventually there will come in the royal line of Judah one to whom the nations will submit in obedience (49:10) and whose reign will be marked by prosperity and abundance (49:11)."[30]

The seed of the woman in the Old Testament. The same pattern continues in the remaining books of the Pentateuch. Mathews states that the hostility between the opposing offspring "comes to full fury when Egypt instigates a purge of Hebrew children, from which baby Moses is delivered, and climaxes with God's tenth plague against Pharaoh's firstborn. It also anticipates Moses' wars and the hostility Israel faces as it migrates to the land of Canaan."[31] The Mosaic community is directly identified as the זֶרַע of the promise to Abraham in Exodus 32:13 and Deuteronomy 11:9, who are to inherit the blessings of Abraham in the Promised Land as they displace their enemies.[32] Within the Pentateuch, James Hamilton notes that the oracles of Balaam in Numbers 24 link together allusions to the prophecies in Genesis of the victorious offspring of the woman, the blessed offspring of Abraham, and the royal offspring of Judah.[33]

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[29]Alexander, "Genealogies, Seed and the Compositional Unity of Genesis," 266-67.

[30]Ibid., 269.

[31]Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 247.

[32]Ibid., 246.

[33]James Hamilton writes, "The blessing of Abraham is firmly linked to the king from Judah as the language of Genesis 49:9 is set next to the language of 27:29 and 12:3 in Numbers 24:9. The scepter of the ruler from Judah mentioned in Genesis 49:10 is then set next to what appears to be an allusion to

Thus, it seems valid to conclude that these texts indicate that the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham would be realized through a triumphant king of Israel, descended from Judah, who would defeat Israel's enemies. These enemies of Israel are regarded as the seed of the serpent, so that their defeat is simultaneously Israel's victory. Israel's victory is God's victory.[34]

In a general sense, all of Israel's history throughout the OT is a story of conflicts between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the serpent, both internally and externally. Within the collective offspring of the woman, the line of the singular, royal offspring from the tribe of Judah is identified in God's covenant with David. In 2 Samuel 7, God declares that he will strike down David's enemies (2 Sam 7:9, 11) and raise up his זֶרַע (2 Sam 7:12), echoing the language of Genesis 3:15 concerning the seed of the woman crushing the head of the seed of the serpent. The promise of raising up David's offspring also places him and his descendants in the elect line of the blessing of Abraham, especially in light of the promise to give David a "great name" (2 Sam 7:9; cf. Gen 12:2).[35] God's declarations concerning the future of David's offspring carry a sense of both collective and singular fulfillment just as with the declarations concerning the offspring of the woman and of Abraham. There is to be a pattern of fulfillment in his collective offspring as a royal "house" (2 Sam 7:16) while also awaiting the establishment of "the throne of his kingdom forever" by one who "shall be to me a son" (2 Sam 7:13-14).[36] It is through David's offspring that Judah will hold the royal scepter forever. James Hamilton concludes, "Thus the seed of David is seed of Judah, seed of Abraham, and the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 show us that he is also seed of

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Genesis 3:15 in Numbers 24:17." James Hamilton, "The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham," 266.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Ibid., 268.

[36]Although in an immediate sense this language of a singular offspring finds fulfillment in Solomon, he does not fulfill the promise in a final sense of eternal rule and sonship. Just as the immediate descendants of Eve began the pattern of fulfillment of Gen 3:15 without bringing it to completion, so Solomon begins the pattern of fulfillment of the Davidic covenant, which is itself a step in the process of the ultimate fulfillment of Gen 3:15.

the woman."[37]

Even apart from passages directly addressing this progression of the elect line of promise, Old Testament authors indicate an awareness of the ongoing pattern of the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15 in Israel's history, anticipating the singular offspring to come. This pattern is evident in the use of imagery alluding to the curse on the serpent in Genesis 3:14-15. As the ongoing conflict between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the serpent plays out, the OT authors speak of God's enemies having their heads crushed (Num 24:17; Judg 5:26; 9:53; 1 Sam 17:49; Pss 68:21; 110:6; Jer 23:19; 30:23; Hab 3:13), being trampled underfoot (Josh 10:24; 2 Sam 22:39; Judg 5:27; Pss 44:5; 60:12; 91:12-13; Isa 28:3; 63:3; Zech 10:5; Mal 4:3), and licking the dust (Ps 72:9; Isa 49:23; Mic 7:17).[38] The future seed of the woman is anticipated as one who will be bruised, but with the final result of justice rather than brokenness (Isa 42:1-4). He will bear the sin of many as he is crushed, resulting not in his final destruction but in his final victory, seeing his זֶרַע and dividing a portion with the many (Isa 53:5-12).[39] As James Hamilton notes, "If the books of the Bible were written by and for a remnant of people hoping for the coming of this person, we would expect to find in these texts various resonations of this promise of God."[40] Victor Hamilton's summary of these typological connections is tentative but apt:

> Would this individual, or these individuals, be among the kings of Israel and Judah who are the 'offspring' of their father (2 Sam. 7:12; Ps. 89:5 [Eng. 4]), who 'crush' their enemies (Ps. 89:24 [Eng. 23]) 'under their feet' (2 Sam. 22:39), so that these enemies 'lick the dust' (Ps. 72:9)? Later revelations will state that it is Jesus who reigns until he puts all his enemies under his feet (1 Cor. 15:25).[41]

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[37]James Hamilton, "The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham," 268.

[38]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): 34-40.

[39]Ibid., 42.

[40]Ibid., 43.

[41]Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, 1-17*, 200.

The seed of the woman in the New Testament. Typological imagery drawn from Genesis 3:15 continues in the NT, where faith is emphasized as the dividing line between the collective offspring of the woman and that of the serpent. John the Baptist identifies insincere baptismal candidates as a "brood [γεννήματα] of vipers" (Luke 3:7), offspring of the serpent. The Pharisees are most especially identified in this way (Matt 3:7; 12:34; 23:33) despite their claim to be the elect offspring of Abraham (Matt 3:9; John 8:39). Just as the firstborn sons Cain, Ishmael, and Esau had not been granted the blessing of the elect line of the seed of the woman, no one may presume to be among Abraham's offspring by way of mere genealogy (Rom 9:6-16). The offspring of the woman through the line of Abraham are instead those who possess the faith of Abraham (Rom 4:16; Gal 3:7-9). With the revelation of the identity of Jesus as the Christ, this Abrahamic faith must rest in him. Those claiming to be offspring of Abraham while rejecting Jesus demonstrate themselves instead to be offspring of the serpent (John 8:44), for Abraham himself rejoiced that he would see Jesus' day (John 8:56). Those who are Abraham's offspring by birth but do not exercise faith in Jesus are "broken off" from the line of promise, while Gentiles who exercise faith in Jesus are "grafted in" (Rom 11:17-20). These truly elect offspring practice righteousness and love one another, while the offspring of the devil make a practice of sinning (1 John 3:8-10). Alluding to Genesis 3:15, Paul foretells that the elect will experience the crushing of the serpent under their feet (Rom 16:20), just as Jesus had given his disciples "authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19). In light of this NT imagery of the collective offspring of the woman and the serpent, Waltke writes, "Humanity is now divided into two communities: the elect, who love God, and the reprobate, who love self (John 8:31-32, 44; 1 John 3:8). . . . The unspoken question to the reader is, 'Whose seed are you?'"[42]

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[42]Waltke, *Genesis,* 93.

In addition to identifying Christians as the collective offspring, the NT

identifies Christ as the final, singular offspring of the woman prophesied in Genesis 3:15.

His genealogy is traced through David to Abraham (Matt 1:1-17) and to Adam (Luke

3:23-38). Jesus is thus demonstrated to be in the elect line from which the OT authors had

anticipated a final, singular, victorious, royal offspring, and through whom all of the

families of the earth would be blessed. Having been "born of a woman" (Gal 4:4),[43] he is

the singular offspring of the promise (Gal 3:16). Although the nations rage against him in

fulfilment of Psalm 2 (Acts 4:25-26), he will rule eternally with his enemies under his

feet (Matt 22:44; Acts 2:35; 1 Cor 15:25; Eph 1:22; Heb 2:8; 10;13),[44] having struck

them down and "tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty" (Rev

19:15). Finally, he will destroy the devil (Heb 2:14), a destruction foretold in Revelation

with imagery borrowed from Genesis 3. According to Mathews,

> The Apocalypse describes the 'red dragon,' who is identified as 'that ancient
> serpent' (Rev 12:9), opposing the believing community (i.e., the woman) and
> plotting the destruction of her child (i.e., the Messiah). Ultimately, 'that ancient
> serpent' is destroyed by God for its deception of the nations (Rev 20:2, 7-10).[45]

**Implications of Genesis 3:15 for
Christocentric Interpretation**

Genesis 3:15 introduces a Christocentric type in the book of Genesis and the

Pentateuch, which later biblical authors also carry throughout the rest of the Bible. The

seed of the woman is traced in the elect line of blessing and contrasted to the seed of the

serpent found in surrounding nations, all in anticipation of a final, singular seed in whom

all the nations of the earth will be blessed. The authors of the NT demonstrate that this

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[43]Christ's supernatural conception by the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin makes him literally the seed of a woman and not of any man. Irenaeus draws this connection. Louth and Conti, *Genesis 1-11*, 90-91.

[44]James Hamilton, "The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham," 272. Hamilton writes that these texts "might also reflect imagery from Genesis 3:15 through the lens of Psalm 110." Ibid.

[45]Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 248.

singular seed is Jesus, and that entry into the elect line of promise comes by faith in him. Genesis 3:15 thus indicates the Christocentric nature of the Bible and establishes one typological lens through which readers may recognize Christ as the subject of all Scripture.

Matthew 2:15

In Matthew 2:15, the Gospel writer cites Hosea 11:1 in a manner that seems at first glance to be inconsistent with Hosea's original intent. Matthew states that the departure of Jesus' family into Egypt and their remaining there until the death of Herod "was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord" in Hosea 11:1. However, Hosea 11:1 does not seem to be a predictive prophecy about the Messiah but a reference to the past history of Israel: "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." The "son" in Hosea is the Israelite people, and God's calling him from Egypt refers to the exodus.[46]

However, Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1 is not an irresponsible handling of the text. On the contrary, Matthew builds upon Hosea's own typological use of earlier biblical narratives and provides insight into the Christocentric, typological hermeneutical methods used by NT authors in interpreting OT texts.

The Context of Matthew 2:15

Matthew begins his Gospel by tracing Jesus' genealogy to David and to Abraham, proving that Jesus is an eligible heir to the covenants God had made with both. After Mary, a virgin, miraculously becomes pregnant with Jesus, an angel appears to Joseph to direct him to take Mary as his wife. Jesus is born in Bethlehem, and magi later

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[46]William Harper skeptically responds, "The use of this phrase in Matthew 2:15 . . . is but one of many instances in which the N. T. interpretation has proceeded upon lines other than those which may be called historical." William Rainey Harper, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea,* International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), 362.

come there from the east to worship him. These magi inform Herod and others that a child had been born King of the Jews. Herod then plans to destroy Jesus, so an angel warns Joseph to take his wife and child to Egypt to escape. It is in the description of this escape to Egypt that Matthew quotes Hosea 11:1.[47]

The Context of Hosea 11:1

Hosea delivers a message from the Lord to Israel, first picturing the nation as an unfaithful wife eager to join herself to other gods (Hos 1:1-2:13). Despite God's impending discipline for her apostasy, he loves her and will restore her (Hos 2:14-3:5). Following this promise of restoration, he provides greater detail concerning Israel's sin, its lack of repentance, and the punishment that is coming (Hos 4:1-10:15). In Hosea 11:1-11, the Lord again follows his warnings with a description of his love for Israel and his intention to grant restoration, this time describing the nation's relationship to himself as a son to a father. The final chapters repeat this cycle of indictment (Hos 11:12-12:14), warning (Hos 13:1-16), and restoration (Hos 14:1-9), with Israel described as an orphan who must find mercy in the Lord (Hos 14:3). Hosea 11:1 thus falls at the beginning of Hosea's second major description of Israel's restoration.

According to Duane Garrett, "This verse self-evidently refers to the exodus event, and in particular to Exod 4:22, where Yahweh declares to Pharaoh, 'Israel is my firstborn son.'"[48] However, the verse is not merely a recounting of past events but an invoking of historical patterns of God's dealings with his people as a basis for expecting parallel patterns to continue. Hosea 11:1 provides a basis for Israel's future restoration by comparing his loving intentions to his historical act of love toward them in the exodus

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[47]Duane Garrett notes that Matthew's translation reflects the original Hebrew of the verse more than the LXX, reading "my son," rather than "his children." He also argues well that Matthew was intentionally quoting Hos 11:1 and not conflating it with the explicitly messianic LXX translation of Num 24:7-8. Duane Garrett, *Hosea and Joel*, New American Commentary, vol. 19a (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 220.

[48]Ibid., 219.

from Egypt. He will not again exile them to Egypt, but he will exile them in like manner to Assyria, a parallel which is explicit in Hosea 11:5. Just as he compassionately rescued them before, he will do so again (Hos 11:8-9). In his promise to release them from Assyrian bondage, the historical parallel to Egypt is again explicit (Hos 11:11). These parallel and escalating historical patterns indicate typological intent. As Thomas Schreiner states, "Hosea draws a typological lesson from Israel's exodus from Egypt. Just as Yahweh delivered Israel from Egypt, so too he would free them from Assyrian rule and fulfill his promises to Israel."[49] Moreover, Hosea's use of typology is likely grounded in earlier OT writings. Michael Rydelnik argues convincingly that Hosea's hermeneutical application of the exodus event to the Assyrian exile can be traced to typology established in the Pentateuch, especially in the Balaam oracles of Numbers 23-24.[50]

Matthew's Use of Hosea 11:1

One proposal for reconciling Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1 with its original context is that Matthew recognized a *sensus plenior*, a fuller meaning in Hosea's words. In this view, the author of the earlier text was divinely inspired to write words that could be used by the later author in ways that are theologically correct but unrecognizable to the first author in his historical context. LaSor writes, "The Spirit led [Hosea] to express his words in a form that was capable of a fuller meaning. The fullness of that prophetic word was seen by Matthew, and he found the fulfilment in Christ."[51] This view correctly identifies God as the ultimate author of the Bible, but it fails to provide modern readers with any hope of learning applicable hermeneutical principles from the interpretive

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[49]Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 435.

[50]Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic?* NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 101-4.

[51]William Sanford LaSor, "Prophecy, Inspiration, and Sensus Plenior," *Tyndale Bulletin* 29 (1978): 58.

techniques of the NT authors. Moreover, it is a view that is unnecessary in light of Hosea's and Matthew's use of typology.

Rather than taking Hosea's words out of context, Matthew is presenting his readers with Christ as the fulfilment of the same typological pattern of the people of Israel to which Hosea draws his readers' attention. The pattern has now escalated and found its climactic fulfilment in the ultimate Son, Jesus. As Schreiner observes,

> Matthew picks up this typological stream. Just as Israel survived Pharaoh's wrath in Moses' day, so also Jesus was shielded from Herod, the offspring of the serpent of this day, Matthew also begins to develop the theme here that Jesus is the true Israel. Just as Yahweh delivered Israel at the exodus, he also delivers Jesus, the true Israelite, from his enemies.[52]

Likewise, G. K. Beale argues that Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1 is "not a perspective understood by Matthew only after the events of Jesus' coming. Rather, there are substantial indications already in Hosea 11 itself and its immediate context that Israel's past exodus out of Egypt was an event that would be recapitulated typologically in the eschatological future."[53] Just as Israel is God's son in a metaphorical sense, Jesus is the Son of God in a literal sense, the one to whom the concept of sonship pointed all along. Just as God placed Israel in Egypt and then delivered them in the exodus, God the Father took his Son Jesus to Egypt and brought him out to accomplish a new and greater exodus. Tracy L. Howard writes, "As Matthew drew these correspondences he saw Jesus as the One who actualizes and completes all that God intended for the nation."[54] D. A. Carson rightly extends Matthew's logic further: "Jesus himself is the locus of true Israel."[55] And as R. T. France explains, "When Jesus 'came out of Egypt,' that was to be the signal for a

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[52]Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 435.

[53]G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 64.

[54]Tracy L. Howard, "The Use of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15: An Alternative Solution," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 (1986): 322.

[55]D. A. Carson, *Matthew,* in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary,* ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 93.

new exodus in which Jesus would fill not the role only of the God-sent deliverer but also of God's 'son' Israel himself."[56]

Matthew's view of Christ as the antitype of Israel is also evident in his Gospel beyond this verse. Matthew emphasizes the parallel patterns of Israel's history playing out in the life of Christ, especially the exodus and wilderness wanderings. Shortly after the account of Jesus' return from Egypt to Nazareth (Matt 2:19-23), Jesus parallels the crossing of the Red Sea as he passes through the waters of baptism (Matt 3:13-17). Once Jesus has come through the water, he immediately goes into the desert to be tempted (Matt 4:1-11). As Israel had wandered for forty years, Jesus wanders for forty days. Whereas Israel's temptations had resulted in grumbling, idolatry, rebellion, and punishment, Jesus' temptations result in spiritual victory over the tempter, demonstrating himself to be not only the true Israel but also the true Adam and the true seed of the woman. Christ then delivers the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:1-7:27), corresponding to Israel's receiving of the law at Sinai. Just as Israel miraculously received manna in the wilderness, Christ miraculously feeds large crowds in the countryside (Matt 14:13-21; 15:32-39). The correspondence between Matthew's presentation of these events in Jesus' life with the history of Israel, together with the direct parallel drawn between Jesus and Israel in Matthew 2:15, indicate that Matthew understands the OT history of Israel to be a typological foreshadowing of Christ.[57]

Implications of Matthew 2:15 for
Christocentric Interpretation

Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1 carries implications for the way in which OT texts may be rightly interpreted as Christocentric even without the presence of any

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[56]R. T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary,* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985), 81.

[57]G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker), 412-22.

explicitly messianic prophecy.[58] Matthew's direct, typological connection between Christ and Israel alerts readers to the possibility of making such a connection, viewing Christ as the singular offspring in whom the whole people of God find their true identity.[59]

Matthew 2:15 is also an example of the way in which the Bible presents and interprets its own prophecies. Garrett rightly argues that Matthew's use of Hosea demonstrates general principles concerning biblical prophecy:

> Hosea, like all biblical prophets, saw prophecy not so much as the making of specific, individual predictions. . . but as the application of the Word of God to historical situations. These patterns or themes have repeated fulfillments or manifestations until the arrival of the final, absolute fulfillment. . . . Thus the application of typological principles to Hos 11:1 is in keeping with the nature of prophecy itself and with Hosea's own method.[60]

Similarly, Matthew 2:15 demonstrates the NT authors' awareness of what Robert L. Plummer calls "God's divine sovereignty and intentionality in history"[61] with respect to the OT, as well as their view of Christ as the climactic focus of these divinely ordained historical patterns. Plummer writes,

> Divine intent can and should be subsumed under an author-oriented approach to interpreting the Bible. The human authors of Scripture shared an understanding that they were on a salvation-historical trajectory that would climax in the coming of the Messiah. God intervened savingly in history in repeated and progressively climactic ways. Old Testament writers who picked up earlier divine interventions to understand their own day (for example, Hosea's allusion to the Egyptian exodus [Hos 11:1]) implicitly allow for later authors to propose a future divine intervention as the climactic counterpart to their own day. Biblical authors were conscious of being part of a larger divine story and expected later chapters to build upon and

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[58]For a contrary view, see Richard N. Longenecker, "Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?" *Tyndale Bulletin* 21 (1970): 3-38. Longenecker concludes that the hermeneutics of the NT can only be modeled in cases "where. . . it treats the Old Testament in a more literal fashion." Ibid., 38.

[59]Walter Kaiser wrongly attempts to use the concept of corporate solidarity to argue for a traditional grammatical-historical interpretation rather than a typological one: "The point of the citation is the corporate solidarity between all Israel being rescued and delivered by God and the One who was God's 'Son' *par* excellence, not the Exodus from Egypt. Had the departure from Egypt been the point of commonality between the two, the citation from Hosea 11:1 should have appeared not in Matthew 2:15, when Jesus went *into* Egypt, but at verse 21!" Walter C. Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 35.

[60]Garrett, *Hosea and Joel*, 221-22.

[61]Robert L. Plummer, "Righteousness and Peace Kiss: The Reconciliation of Authorial Intent and Biblical Typology,*" The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 14, no. 2 (2010): 56.

escalate what they had already related.[62]

Recognition of such interpretive techniques in the NT allows readers to rightly interpret OT passages both with a view toward their parallel, historical correspondence to prior biblical texts and their climactic, future correspondence to the coming Christ.[63]

Luke 24:25-27 and 44-47

Luke 24 contains descriptions of two encounters between Jesus and his disciples in which he explains that the OT Scriptures speak of him. Jesus teaches his disciples to understand the entire OT as a Christocentric foretelling of the gospel.

The Two Encounters

In the first encounter, two of Jesus' disciples are traveling from Jerusalem to Emmaus just after the resurrection. Jesus appears and walks with them, although they do not recognize him. They describe to him the recent events in Jerusalem, their confusion about Jesus' death, and the reports of his resurrection. Jesus responds that that they are "foolish" and "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25). He implies that a proper understanding of Scripture would eliminate their confusion; they would see that the death and resurrection of the Messiah fit well with the writings of the prophets.[64] As I. Howard Marshall writes, "The stranger now states the basic pattern of

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[62]Robert L. Plummer, *Understanding the Bible: A Guide to Reading and Enjoying Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013), 63.

[63]Plummer, "Righteousness and Peace Kiss," 57-59. Plummer draws out three hermeneutical methods from Matthew's use of Hos 11:1 with regard to past historical correspondence, future historical correspondence, and corporate solidarity. First, "Hosea draws lines of correspondence between God's prior interventions and God's interventions in his own day." Second, "Hosea points to a succession of future saving events, climaxing in the coming Messianic king and eschatological age." Third, "Hosea vacillates between individual and corporate entities in the lines of correspondence that he draws out in both the past and the future." Ibid.

[64]"Whether there existed in the Judaism of Jesus' day the concept of a 'suffering Messiah/Christ' is greatly debated. For Luke and the early church, however, this was not an issue because for them God's Son, the Son of Man, the Christ, the Savior, the Servant of Isaiah 53, and the Prophet were one person, Jesus of Nazareth. Any allusion of suffering associated with any of these figures in the OT therefore referred to the suffering of Jesus Christ." Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 612.

experience for the Messiah in a way which implies that the disciples should have been aware of it already."[65] He goes on to explain by way of a rhetorical question that it was "necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory" (Luke 24:26). He then explains this necessity of messianic suffering and glory from the full range of OT writings: "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted[66] to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).

In the second encounter, the apostles and other disciples are speaking with each other about the first encounter and other appearances of the risen Christ. Christ then appears among them, speaks with them, eats with them, and invites them to touch him (Luke 24:33-43). Reminiscent of Luke 16:31, the disciples remain reluctant to believe until Jesus helps them understand Scripture. In Luke 24:44, he reminds them that during his ministry he had spoken with them about his relationship to the Old Testament, "that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."[67] This description of Scripture corresponds to the threefold division of the OT into Law, Prophets, and Writings. Jesus therefore indicates that the entire OT speaks of him. He then opens their minds to understand the Scriptures in the way that he has described them (Luke 23:45). The message of the OT is "that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46-47). Jack Kingsbury summarizes, "Luke insists, in short, that Scripture, to be read aright, must be read 'christologically.' . . . Moreover, to find any other message in Scripture than that

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[65]I. Howard Marshall, *The* Gospel *of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 896.

[66]Some manuscripts contain a textual variant of this word as an imperfect or infinitive rather than an aorist. According to Darrell Bock, "It is hard to be sure of the original reading, but the choice does not really alter the sense." Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 1924.

[67] Luke's record of these prior teachings focuses especially on his impending death and resurrection (cf. 9:22, 44; 17:25; 18:31-33; 22:37). Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1937.

God wills to rule and to save in Jesus, the crucified and risen Messiah, is to misread it."[68]

Luke's Understanding of the
Christocentrism of the Old Testament

Opinions concerning Luke's view of the Christocentric nature of the OT as taught in Luke 24 fall into at least three categories. First, some commentators acknowledge that Luke views the entire OT as Christocentric but disagree with Luke's view. For example, John Nolland writes, "The text reflects an early Christian conviction that the Scriptures witness pervasively to the Christ and, in particular, to the way in which the career of Jesus had unfolded. Such a view has not been generated inductively from a detailed study of the OT."[69] This view has mainly to do with presuppositions about the NT which are not shared for the purposes of this investigation and will not be considered.[70]

A second possibility is that Luke understands Jesus to have drawn his disciples' attention to a set of messianic texts, and that the Christocentric nature of the OT is grounded in the presence of these texts throughout the canon. Marshall, for example, writes, "[Jesus] chose out those passages which might be regarded as 'messianic' and then proceeded to show how they should be understood, so that they could now 'speak' to the disciples."[71] Joseph Fitzmyer likewise takes this view and asserts that Luke's failure to list any of the specific messianic passages resulted in the "later Christian global reading of the OT as *praeparatio evangelica*."[72] Darrell Bock also

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[68]Jack Dean Kingsbury, "Luke 24:44-49," *Interpretation* 35, no. 2 (1981): 173.

[69]John Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 35c (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 1205.

[70]For a helpful interaction with commentators who take this view, see Peter Doble, "Luke 24.26, 44—Songs of God's Servant: David and his Psalms in Luke-Acts," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 28, no. 3 (2006): 267-83.

[71]Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke,* 897.

[72]Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 28 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 1565.

falls within this view but takes a different approach by assuming that Luke reveals elsewhere in his writings which OT passages Jesus interpreted to the disciples. He writes, "The various speeches in Acts where Jesus is proclaimed from the OT indicated what texts are in view here; key among such texts are Deut 18:15; Ps 2:7; 16:8-11; 110:1; 118; and Isa 53:8."[73] According to Bock,

> Jesus appeals to two types of prophetic fulfillment. Texts that are directly prophetic refer only to Jesus, while typico-prophetic texts reflect patterns that Jesus reenacts and escalates to show their fulfillment or their eschatological inauguration at a new level. This combination of texts shows that Jesus fulfills some things now, while he fulfills other things later.[74]

Thus, in Bock's view, texts need not be direct messianic prophecies to speak of Christ, yet Jesus' teaching concerning the Christocentric nature of the OT still only deals with a subset of texts within the whole. This view rightly recognizes that Luke elsewhere emphasizes certain OT texts to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah, but it fails to account for the universal descriptions of the Christocentric nature of the OT in Luke 24:25, 27, and 44.

The third and most preferable view is that Luke correctly understands Jesus to have taught that the entire OT speaks of him. Robert Stein writes, "Jesus did not designate which prophets or where these prophets spoke of him. For Jesus and the Evangelists, 'all' the prophets 'everywhere' spoke of him."[75] This view does not imply that Luke understands every verse of the OT to be equally clear in its relationship to Christ or equally convincing as a proof text for Christianity. Rather, every portion of Scripture is divinely intended to point to Christ. According to Vern Poythress, "Christ enabled the disciples to understand not merely the implication of a few passages of the Old Testament, but 'the Scriptures'—the whole Old Testament. . . . The whole Old

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[73]Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1916.

[74]Ibid., 1918.

[75]Stein, *Luke,* 612.

Testament finds its focus in Jesus Christ, His death, and His resurrection."[76] As Dane

Ortland writes, one way in which this is the case is in the unity of the overarching

narrative of Scripture: "Luke is transparently concerned to communicate that the whole

story of Scripture is a unified narrative, diverse but not disparate, testifying to and

culminating in Christ."[77] In light of Luke's emphasis on Christ's suffering in these verses,

Morris highlights another way in which all Scripture may be viewed as Christocentric:

"Throughout the Old Testament a consistent divine purpose is worked out, a purpose that

in the end meant and must mean the cross. The terribleness of sin is found throughout the

Old Testament and so is the deep, deep love of God. In the end this combination made

Calvary inevitable."[78] These proposals recognize valid aspects of the Christocentric

nature of the OT, but Luke quotes Jesus himself as listing three aspects in particular.

To Suffer, to Rise, and to Be Proclaimed

Luke 24:46-47 identifies three elements of Christ's mission, which the

disciples are to understand as foretold in the OT: παθεῖν ("suffer"), ἀναστῆναι ("rise"),

and κηρυχθῆναι ("be proclaimed").[79] The first two of these elements also parallel the

earlier statement of 24:26.

The concept of a suffering Christ is to be found not only in passages such as

Isaiah 53 directly describing the suffering Messiah but also in the recurring OT type of a

rejected messenger of God. As Green states, "As God's prophet, Jesus must fulfill the

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[76]Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991), 4-5.

[77]Dane C. Ortlund, "'And Their Eyes Were Opened, and They Knew': An Inter-Canonical Note On Luke 24:31," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 53, no. 4 (2010): 727.

[78]Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 339. Morris's proposal here may be a more useful method than typology for understanding wisdom literature as Christocentric since typology depends on historical patterns that are largely absent from much wisdom literature.

[79]Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53,* 1937.

destiny of the prophets: rejection, suffering, and death."[80] This typological correspondence between the suffering of the prophets and the suffering of Christ is apparent throughout Luke's writings. The Jewish leaders' rejection of Christ is correlated to their ancestors' rejection of the prophets (Luke 6:23-24; 11:47-51; 13:33-34), a point made so clear in the parable of the wicked tenants that it is almost fulfilled on the spot as the infuriated scribes and chief priests seek to lay hands on him (Luke 20:9-19). Similarly, when Jesus enters his hometown synagogue, reads aloud from Isaiah, declares himself to be the fulfilment of the prophecy, and compares himself to the prophets Elijah and Elisha, he is driven out of town and nearly thrown from a cliff (Luke 4:16-30). Luke also continues the typological connection between the suffering OT prophets and the rejected Christ in Acts. Stephen's speech in Acts 7, for example, traces this theme across much of the OT and includes the climactic question, "Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute" (Acts 7:52). Stephen is then killed for his Christocentric exposition of the OT, carrying forward the typological pattern he had just explained.[81]

Once messianic suffering is understood to be scriptural, the concept of rising to glory is a logical bridge to messianic exaltation. As Green observes, "By correlating the unremarkable demise of the prophets—unremarkable since suffering and rejection were their presumed destiny—with messiahship, he is able to assert that the Scriptures presage the eschatological king who would suffer before entering his glory."[82] Again, this concept is found throughout the OT—not only in resurrection proof texts such as Psalm 16:10 but also in historical patterns. Moyise explains,

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[80]Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 846.

[81]Richard Dillon has recognized a pattern of rejection in Luke and Acts that involves continuity between Jesus, his predecessors the prophets, and his successors the Christian missionaries. Within this pattern he notes a repeated pattern of miracles followed by suffering. Richard J. Dillon, *From Eye-Witnesses to Ministers of the Word: Tradition and Composition in Luke 24*, Analetcta Biblica: Investigationes Scientificae in Res Biblicas 82 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978), 123-25.

[82]Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 848-9.

Whether it is Israel's history, as exemplified by the exodus (slavery followed by promised land) or the exile (captivity followed by return to promised land), or the experience of an individual, such as David in the Psalms or the servant in Isaiah, the pattern of suffering and deliverance is woven into Scripture. . . . Scripture tells a story of suffering and redemption, which is to be the vocation of the one who represents Israel and acts on behalf of humanity.[83]

The third and final element of OT Christocentrism taught in Luke 24:46-47 is worldwide gospel proclamation. What is to be proclaimed is "repentance and forgiveness of sins," and this is to be done "in his name to all nations." Green here especially recognizes the importance of Isaiah 49:6 to Luke,[84] but this Christocentric element is again a reflection of larger OT patterns not limited to a particular set of texts. Even from the time of Eden God expresses his intent to use human agency to spread the glory of his name across the world (Gen 1:28). God expresses zeal for the glory of his name among the nations as a motivating factor for his work in the world (Ps 96:3; Ezek 38:23; Mal 1:11), with the promised result that "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Hab 2:14). Following the resurrection of Jesus, it became apparent that this worldwide mission of God would be accomplished "in his [Jesus'] name" (Luke 24:47). As Morris writes, "*In his name* connects this repentance and forgiveness with what Jesus is and has done. Men are not called to a repentance based on general principles."[85] Luke will especially carry on this theme in Acts, where Jesus' disciples become his witnesses "in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8), proclaiming as they go that this rejected, crucified, and risen Christ has fulfilled the Scriptures and become the only "name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:10-12).

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[83]Steve Moyise, *Jesus and Scripture: Studying the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 65-66.

[84]Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 857.

[85]Morris, *Luke*, 343.

John 5:39 and 46

John also presents Jesus' teaching of this view of OT Scripture. In John 5:39

and 46, Jesus teaches that all Scripture should be understood as Christocentric.

Context

Jesus' teaching on the topic of Scripture in John 5 is found in the context of his

defense against the accusations of Jewish leaders. He is accused of Sabbath breaking

because of his actions in John 5:1-16 and of blaspheme because of his words in John

5:17. There is no indication that there were formal charges against him, nor is it clear

whether the accusations were even spoken aloud, but the charges become explicit in John

5:18. Jesus then uses language reminiscent of a courtroom trial for the remainder of the

chapter. In a bold reversal, Jesus declares himself not to be the defendant but the divine

Judge of his own accusers (John 5:22, 27, 30). He chooses not merely to bear witness of

himself (John 5:31) but to invoke other witnesses who will both acquit him and condemn

his accusers (cf. Deut 19:15). The first three of these witnesses are John the Baptist (John

5:32-35), Jesus' mighty works (John 5:36), and God the Father (John 5:37-38). John 5:39

and 46 are found within Jesus' calling of the fourth and final witness, which is

Scripture.[86]

The Scriptures Bear Witness

John 5:39 reads, "You search[87] the Scriptures because you think that in them

you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me." There is no question that

Jesus' accusers are committed to diligent study of Scripture. According to Keener,

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[86]Craig Keener proposes that 5:38-47 is a chiasm explaining what is meant by the witness of the Father. The question of whether Scripture is its own witness or part of the Father's witness will not affect this discussion. Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 658.

[87]A. T. Robertson notes that ἐραυνᾶτε could be either an imperative or an indicative but that an indicative is more likely because of the context. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 4th ed. (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 329.

"Searching the Law was an act of piety that often included returning to investigate it and implement what had been neglected. . . . Such study was thought to bring life."[88] Jesus asserts that this quest for life is their motivation, which is reminiscent of the teachings of Hillel, who said, "Add Torah, add life," and, "When you have earned knowledge of Torah you have earned life eternal."[89] However, as Carson states, "By contrast, Jesus insists that there is nothing intrinsically life-giving about studying the Scriptures, if one fails to discern their true content and purpose."[90] The Jews had missed the point of the sacred texts whose study consumed their time and effort. They failed to understand that the power of life found in these texts is the power of Jesus, the one of whom the texts speak. Andreas Köstenberger comments, "What is required, rather, is an understanding of Scripture's true (christological) orientation and purpose. Not merely are individual sayings of Scripture fulfilled in Jesus; Scripture in its entirety is oriented toward him."[91] As J. Ramsey Michaels states, "By rejecting him, they strangle the life-giving power of their own Scriptures."[92]

Moses Wrote of Christ

After making several statements indicting his accusers for their unbelief (John 5:40-44), Jesus returns again to their failure to recognize him as the subject of Scripture. Moses, the human author of the Law, will not stand with them in their accusations against Jesus but will instead become an accuser against them (John 5:45).[93] The reason for this

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[88]Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 659.

[89]Chaim Stern, *Pirke Avot: Wisdom of the Jewish Sages* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1997), 57.

[90]D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 263. Carson also notes three earlier passages in John where Scripture is said generally to speak of Christ: John 1:45; 2:22; and 3:10. Ibid.

[91]Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 193.

[92]J. Ramsey Michaels, *John*, New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 337.

[93]Philipp Bartholomä writes, "This statement must have shocked the Jews, who boasted in

reversal is stated in John 5:46: "If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he

wrote of me." His opening words in this verse consist of a second class conditional

statement, indicating his assumption that they do not believe Moses.[94] Jesus' evidence to

prove this claim is that they do not believe him, which demonstrates their guilt because

Moses wrote of him. C. K. Barrett summarizes, "Though the Jews hope in Moses, they do

not believe what he says."[95]

       Jesus' assertion that Moses wrote of him could be understood to mean that

certain parts of the Pentateuch are about Jesus, such as the prediction of a coming prophet

like Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15-18.[96] However, it is more likely that Jesus means he is

the one to whom the entirety of Moses' writings are intended to direct the reader. As

Keener writes,

> Though Jesus is the 'prophet' [of Deut 18:18], that Christology by itself is
> inadequate in this Gospel (cf. 6:14; 7:40, 50; 9:17). The context of this Gospel
> rather suggests that the reader approach this claim in light of the dominance of the
> prologue's climax: Moses saw the glory of Jesus on Sinai when he received Torah
> (Exod 33-34; John 1:14-18), just as Isaiah the prophet later did (John 12:41). This
> closing appeal to Moses in 5:45-47 paves the way for John's narrative about the one
> greater than Moses who gives new manna, in ch. 6.[97]

The Jews' disbelief of Moses did not consist in a neglect of specific details but in

rejection of the overarching goal of the entirety. As Carson states, "Any accusation

Moses brings will not be based on failure to obey this or that command, this or that

provision of the covenant (cf. Rom 2:12), but on their failure to understand the law-

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their knowledge of and obedience to Scripture and set their hopes on Moses as their intercessor and
advocate." Philipp F. Bartholomä, "John 5,31-47 and the Teaching of Jesus in the Synoptics: A
Comparative Approach," *Biblica* 92, no. 3 (2011): 387-88.

    [94]Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New
Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 663.

    [95]C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and
Notes on the Greek Text* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 270.

    [96] For example, see J. D. Atkins, "The Trial of the People and the Prophet: John 5:30-47 and
the True and False Prophet Traditions," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (2013): 294-95.

    [97]Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 662.

covenant. They take it as an end in itself, the final epitome of right religion, and not, as Jesus insists it was, as witness to Christ himself."[98]

Implications for Christocentric Interpretation

Jesus teaches straightforwardly in John 5:39 and 46 that the testimony of Scripture is about him. Albert Mohler applies the text appropriately: "We do not look to the Old Testament merely to find the *background* for Christ and his ministry, nor even for references that anticipate him. We must find Christ in the Old Testament—not here and there but everywhere."[99] More specifically, Carson states, "What is at stake is 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."[100] Although the Christocentric hermeneutical methods Carson lists are not mentioned in the texts at hand, he is right to infer from Jesus' statements that the proper methods are accessible to believing readers. According to Jesus, the element that was lacking among the Jews was not intellect or effort but belief (John 5:46). Comprehending the full depth and nuance of the ways in which Scripture speaks of Christ may be a lifelong endeavor, but all believers will be able to recognize that it is the case.

In addition to the general teaching that Scripture points to Christ, John 5:39 and 46 warn of the danger of approaching any portion of Scripture without the goal of knowing Christ. If the knowing and keeping of Scripture does not lead us to embrace Christ, who is the central figure of Scripture, then it will produce death rather than life

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[98]Carson, *The Gospel According to John,* 266.

[99]R. Albert Mohler, "Studying the Scriptures and Finding Jesus: John 5:31-47," in *The Scriptures Testify About Me: Jesus and the Gospel in the Old Testament*, ed. D. A. Carson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 19.

[100]Carson, *The Gospel According to John,* 263.

(John 5:39-40) and condemnation rather than acquittal (John 5:45-46). T. Francis Glasson writes, "If they remain short of this climax, then the Law will merely accuse and convict them. . . . This passage harmonizes with one of the main themes of St. Paul, that the Law cannot save but rather awakens men to a sense of need in convicting them, showing their need of Christ."[101]

Conclusion

Because of the direct teachings of Jesus in John 5 and Luke 24, all of Scripture should be viewed as Christocentric. The typological pattern of Genesis 3:15 is an example of the Bible's Christocentric nature, and the use of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15 gives further insight into the apostles' Christocentric interpretation of Scripture. Whether one is reading the OT or the NT, the power of life in the text must ultimately be found in the subject of the text, who is Christ.

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[101]T. Francis Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel,* Studies in Biblical Theology 40 (London: SCM, 1963), 90.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES
OF STUDYING THE BIBLE IN A
CHRISTOCENTRIC MANNER

A broad range of methods have been proposed in recent decades for understanding the messianic nature of the Bible in general and the OT in particular.[1] Within this discussion, many authors have argued for a Christocentric hermeneutic,[2] but few have presented their methods in such a way as to be accessible on a popular level. Edmund P. Clowney, Sidney Greidanus, Bryan Chapell, and Graeme Goldsworthy have offered influential, practical approaches to Christocentric interpretation which may help inform the training of laypersons in Christocentric interpretive methods.[3]

These four authors have been selected because of their efforts to apply Christocentric hermeneutical methods to the practical task of weekly sermon preparation. Because little material on the topic has been published with laypersons in view,[4] the interpretive techniques Clowney, Greidanus, Chapell, and Goldsworthy advocate for use in homiletics may serve as a bridge between scholarly materials and the training of

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[1]For an overview of contemporary methods, see Jason Allen Motte, "A Survey and Analysis of Contemporary Evangelical Hermeneutical Approaches to Understanding Messiah in the Old Testament" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015).

[2]For extensive listings of the most influential contemporary writings on Christocentric interpretation, see Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), 7-8; and Motte, "A Survey and Analysis of Contemporary Evangelical Hermeneutical Approaches to Understanding Messiah in the Old Testament," 38-39.

[3]My selection of these four authors was influenced by David Edward Prince, "The Necessity of a Christocentric Kingdom-Focused Model of Expository Preaching" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011).

[4]Two recent efforts at educating laypersons in Christocentric hermeneutics are David Murray, *Jesus on Every Page: 10 Simple Ways to Seek and Find Christ in the Old Testament* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013); and Iain Duguid, *Is Jesus in the Old Testament?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013).

laypersons. This chapter will summarize and evaluate the Christocentric perspectives and methods proposed by each author and asses how they may be applied to the training of laypersons in Christocentric study of the Bible.

Edmund P. Clowney

Edmund P. Clowney proposes a redemptive-historical approach to Scripture in which progressive epochs and typological symbols are unified in Christ. Clowney served as president and professor of practical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary and continued to write and teach until his death in 2005. Influenced by the interpretive perspective of Geerhardus Vos,[5] Clowney published multiple books on the subject of Christocentric interpretation of the OT, as well as many other works. He published *Preaching and Biblical Theology* in 1961, in which he argues for a redemptive-historical view of the OT and calls on preachers to craft their sermons from this perspective.[6] In *The Unfolding Mystery*[7] Clowney lays out his understanding of the OT by describing it in overview and explaining its Christocentric nature along the way. In *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, he briefly explains his methodology for Christocentric interpretation and sermon preparation, followed by numerous example sermons written from a Christocentric perspective.[8] Finally, near the end of his life Clowney taught a series of Sunday School lessons that were edited and published posthumously as *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments*.[9]

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[5]Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975).

[6]Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1961).

[7]Edmund P. Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1988).

[8]Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ from All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003).

[9]Edmund P. Clowney, *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007).

Clowney's Christocentric Perspective

Clowney views Christ's words to his disciples in Luke 24:25-27, 44-45 as "the key to our interpretation of the Old Testament."[10] All Scripture testifies to him. Because of this conviction, Clowney looks to the NT's use of the OT as an indication of how Christ taught his disciples to interpret the OT. He argues that the NT authors viewed Christ as present everywhere in the OT based partly on their tendency to identify him in the LXX's uses of κύριος.[11] More than simply being present in the OT, however, Christ is also the subject and fulfillment of the OT. Clowney especially understands the OT's unfolding epochs and typological symbols to find their fulfillment in Christ.

For Clowney, the concept of covenant is the starting point for a Christocentric understanding of the OT. The covenant is "God's structuring promise" in the OT.[12] Christ is both the Lord of the covenant and the servant of the Lord.[13] Clowney approaches the concept of covenant as unfolding across the OT in epochs of redemption:

> The witness to Christ unfolds with the progressive epochs of revelation which in turn are grounded in the successive periods of redemption. . . . As we progress in our study of each period in its own context and "theological horizon," if we may so speak, we discover that each epoch has a coherent and organic structure and also that there is organic progression from period to period as the plan of God is revealed.[14]

These epochs are marked by the covenant promises of God. Clowney writes, "The Old Testament, then, in its very structure is formed by God's promise: the promise to Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen 3:15); the promise to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3); the promise to Israel (Deut 30:6); the promise to David (2 Sam 7:12-16)."[15] OT texts may be understood

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[10]Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 39.

[11]Ibid., 13-15.

[12]Edmund P. Clowney, "Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures," in *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art*, ed. Samuel T. Logan (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1986), 166.

[13]Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 11-20.

[14]Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 75.

[15]Clowney, "Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures," 172-73.

as Christocentric because of their locations within these epochs, the promises of which all find their fulfillment in Christ.

Clowney also emphasizes typology as a consistent Christocentric presence across the OT. Understanding this typology begins with a recognition of OT symbolism. Symbols may be direct signs of God's presence like the burning bush, institutional symbols like cultic sacrifices, prophetic symbols like Hosea's marriage to Gomer, or historical symbols like the exodus.[16] OT symbols connect events and institutions with the truths God reveals through them. Subsequently, when the truths symbolized are traced across the history of redemption, they find their typological fulfillment in Christ. According to Clowney, symbolism involves "a vertical reference to revealed truth as it is manifested in a particular horizon of redemptive history. Typology is then the prospective reference to the same truth as it is manifested in the period of eschatological realization."[17]

Clowney's Practical Instructions

For any given text of the OT, Clowney recommends interpreting the text on three contextual levels in order to determine its redemptive-historical connection to Christ. First the text should be interpreted in its immediate context. He writes, "All manner of arbitrariness and irresponsibility enter in when we seek to make a direct and practical reference to ourselves without considering the passage in its own biblical and theological setting."[18] The text should then be considered in the context of the epoch of redemptive history in which it is set.[19] Finally, it should be interpreted "in God's total

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[16]Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology,* 107-9.

[17]Ibid., 110.

[18]Ibid., 88-89.

[19]Ibid., 89.

revelation,"[20] which culminates in Christ.

Clowney also recommends a method for understanding typological connections to Christ. The interpreter should examine the event, person, or institution that is the immediate subject of a text, considering what symbolism might be present in it to point to a revealed truth of God.[21] Next, he should consider how that truth and the symbols pointing to it are carried through the history of redemption and revelation to their eschatological fulfillment in Christ:

> No revealed truth drops by the wayside in the course of God's redemption and revelation. All truths come to their realization in relation to Christ. If, therefore, we can construct a line of symbolism from the event or ceremony to a revealed truth, that truth will lead us to Christ. Here in Christ is that Truth in its fullness. Having constructed the two sides of a triangle in our theological geometry, we have also established the hypotenuse. That line is the line of typology.[22]

Clowney warns against drawing parallels directly between the events and institutions of the OT and their contemporary significance, which will result in allegory without taking into consideration their symbolism, redemptive-historical context, and fulfillment in Christ. Likewise, the interpreter must not fall into moralism by moving directly from the truths revealed by OT symbols to their contemporary significance without discerning their typological fulfillment in Christ.[23] For further specifics of practical methodology in Christocentric interpretation, Clowney recommends consulting Greidanus and interacts somewhat with his ideas.[24]

Additionally, Clowney recommends ongoing study in the life of the interpreter in order to more effectively discern connections between OT texts and Christ. The first of these is regular Bible reading. "No scholarly technique can be substituted for knowledge

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[20]Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology,* 98.

[21]Ibid., 110.

[22]Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 32.

[23]Ibid., 32-33.

[24]Ibid., 35-44.

of the Bible. The New Testament writers commonly assume in their readers a knowledge of the Old Testament beyond that possessed by many of today's ministers."[25] Second, Clowney recommends the ongoing study of archaeology and Bible backgrounds in order to improve recognition of symbols. Third, he recommends study of the original languages in order to detect lexical connections between passages.

Evaluation and Application of Clowney's Method

Clowney's view of the Christocentric nature of the Bible fits well with the Jesus' teachings to his disciples in Luke 24, as well as within the interpretive example set by the NT authors in their use of the OT. His Christocentric understanding of the OT in general and of specific OT texts is clear since the majority of his writings on the topic are exegetical or expositional in nature. The connections he draws to Christ tend to be faithful to the immediate context of the passage and to the greater context of the canon. Only rarely do his connections seem far-fetched.[26]

Clowney may be criticized more for what is not included in his writings on Christocentric interpretation than for what is. His tendency is to move quickly from methodological instructions to expositional examples such that his methods are often left unclear. A layman may be impressed and persuaded by Clowney's exposition but lost when trying to emulate his interpretive practice. For example, immediately after asserting that "the layman as well as the preacher can study biblical theology," Clowney writes that "knowledge of Bible history is particularly important," and that study of biblical

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[25]Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 112.

[26]For example, see the sermon on 2 Sam 23:13-17 in Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 109-16. Keith Essex writes, "The reader of Clowney's message may rightly ask, what biblically allows both David and his warriors to be seen as 'types' of Christ in the Scripture. The answer is not clear in the sermon." Keith Essex, review of *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, by Edmund P. Clowney, *Master's Seminary Journal* 16, no. 2 (2005): 334.

languages is "essential."[27] Not only laypersons but many pastors will thus be left with the impression that only scholars such as Clowney can rightly understand the Christocentric nature of the Bible. As David Prince observes, "He did not emphasize a rigid methodology for exposing how the entire Scripture bears witness to Christ . . . but he kept insisting and showing that it did. Consequently, the preacher reading Clowney might be convinced of what he should do but frustrated in its execution."[28] Clowney also focuses almost entirely on the Christocentric nature of the OT, potentially leaving readers with the faulty assumption that the Christocentric nature of NT texts will always be obvious.

However, Clowney provides several insights into his methodology that will be useful for laypersons, given that they are willing to grow consistently in their scriptural knowledge through regular Bible reading. They may study a given text in its immediate, epochal, and eschatological contexts in order to trace the fulfillment of covenantal promises to Christ. They may look for symbols pointing to revealed truths of God and consider how those symbols are patterned throughout redemptive history, with Christ as their ultimate typological fulfillment. Through his frequent expositions, Clowney also demonstrates the usefulness of learning Christocentric interpretation by example from preachers and authors who are committed to practicing it.

Bryan Chappell

Bryan Chapell proposes a redemptive-historical approach to the Christocentric interpretation of scriptural texts through recognizing a text's place in God's redemptive plan in relation to Christ and through identifying its focus on man's need for divine redemption. Chapell is president of Covenant Theological Seminary. His scholarly expertise is homiletics, so his writings focus primarily on the crafting and presentation of

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[27]Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 112-13.

[28]Prince, "The Necessity of a Christocentric Kingdom-Focused Model of Expository Preaching," 93.

sermons. He approaches the task of expository preaching from a Christocentric

perspective and provides practical instructions for understanding the relationship of

biblical texts to Christ. Chapell became a prominent proponent of Christocentric

exposition with his publication of *Christ-Centered Preaching* in 1994, a second edition of

which was released in 2005.[29] The book has to do mainly with the philosophy of

preaching and the mechanics of sermon preparation but also includes a section on

Christocentric interpretive methods. Chapell followed up in 2013 with *Christ-Centered*

Sermons, which begins with another explanation of his Christocentric perspective and

methods before providing example sermons for the remainder of the volume.[30]

Chapell's Christocentric Perspective

Chapell approaches Scripture from a similar perspective as Clowney,

convinced that all biblical texts point to Christ. According to Chapell,

> Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Author and Finisher
> of our faith. He is the culminating message of Scripture, but the word about this
> Eternal Word is also woven throughout the biblical text. . . . The redemptive
> message of God's provision radiates throughout the Bible, and no portion of it can
> be properly expounded without disclosing its relationship to his redemptive nature
> and work.[31]

Chapell's perspective is based on his understanding of Jesus' words about the

Scriptures and the interpretive examples and statements of the apostles in the NT. "Thus,

if we interpret any portion without relating it to him, we fail to say the very thing that he

and his apostles say it is about."[32] Every passage of Scripture leads to Christ either

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[29]Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005).

[30]Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Sermons: Models of Redemptive Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013).

[31]Bryan Chapell, "The Future of Expository Preaching," *Presbyterion* 30, no. 2 (2004): 73.

[32]Ibid.

through direct reference, typology, or context.[33] Direct reference includes NT passages

referring directly to Jesus and OT passages directly predicting the Messiah. Typology is

not necessarily limited to the types clearly specified in the NT, but Chapell is reluctant to

recommend the use of typology in other cases.[34] Within the category of context, the

redemptive-historical context will establish it as predictive, preparatory, reflective, or

resultant of the work of Christ.[35] Each text will fall into at least one of these categories,

and often more than one.

Chapell consistently emphasizes that each text also contains a "fallen condition

focus," which is "the mutual human condition that contemporary believers share with

those to or about whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage for

God's people to glorify and enjoy him."[36] Thus, Chapell takes the scriptural indications

of the effects of the fall to indicate humanity's need for Christ as Savior.

Chapell's Practical Instructions

Chapell does not view the task of Christocentric interpretation as a quest for

references to Christ in every text. Instead, interpreters should seek to place each text in its

proper redemptive-historical context with Christ as the gracious Redeemer. He writes,

> The goal is not to make a specific reference to Jesus magically appear from every
> camel track of Hebrew narrative or every metaphor of Hebrew poetry (leading to
> allegorical errors) but rather to show how every text contributes to the unfolding
> revolution of the grace of God that culminates in the person and work of Christ.[37]

In order to do this, preachers and other interpreters should begin by discerning

the redemptive context of the passage. This involves considering the content of the

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[33]Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 281-82.

[34]Ibid., 281.

[35]Ibid., 282-84.

[36]Ibid., 50.

[37]Chapell, *Christ-Centered Sermons*, xv.

passage and its place in redemptive history to determine "how the passage predicts, prepares for, reflects, or results from the person and work of Christ;" these categories "are not—and should not be—rigidly segregated."[38]

Next, the interpreter should discern the "dead ends" or "bridges" of the passage in relation to Christ's redeeming grace. Dead ends are trajectories within a passage or its larger context that "do not lead to spiritual safety" but rather serve "the purpose of turning us from human to divine dependence."[39] Alternatively, "some aspects of Scripture function as redemptive bridges that allow the covenant people to progress in their understanding of redeeming grace."[40] Although not every passage may be rigidly categorized as either a dead end or a bridge, identifying these traits will help the interpreter understand the necessity of the grace of Christ in each passage. Chapell explains, "The primary reasons to be aware of these differing categories are so that (1) we will not try to make every portion of Scripture a positive expression of grace; sometimes God saves by saying, 'Don't go down this path!,' and (2) we will not try to make a passage a final statement of God's salvation plan, if it is only a bridge."[41]

The interpreter may then also discern macro-interpretations and micro-interpretations of redemption. A macro-interpretation involves identifying the redeeming nature of God as revealed in the text, whereas a micro-interpretation involves identifying the fallen nature of humanity as revealed in the text.[42] Macro-interpretations and micro-interpretations may especially be discerned by identifying doctrinal statements and

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[38]Chapell, *Christ-Centered Sermons*, xiv.

[39]Ibid., xiv-xv.

[40]Ibid., xv.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Ibid., xvi.

relational interactions between God and man contained within the passage.[43] The

redeeming nature of God and the fallen nature of man will then point the interpreter to

Christ, the Redeemer.

Across all of his practical methods of Christocentric interpretation, Chapell

urges the interpreter to find and emphasize the fallen condition focus of the text.

"Attention to such a pattern in Scripture not only exposes the human predicament that

requires God's relief but also forces the preacher to focus on a divine solution."[44]

Identification of the fallen condition focus points the interpreter to the need for the grace

of Christ rather than to "legalistic, moralistic, self-help" applications of the text.[45]

**Evaluation and Application of Chapell's
Method**

Chapell's perspective on the Christocentric nature of all Scripture remains

within the bounds of the teachings of Christ and the apostles on the subject. He especially

directs preachers and other interpreters to maintain a focus on God's gracious redemption

of sinful man even in passages which, if taken in isolation, could easily be interpreted

moralistically. Chapell does not ask more of an interpreter than he will able to do without

scholarly training. His instructions are manageable, and his example sermons provide

even further insight and motivation.

The weakness of Chapell's method is that he is reluctant to encourage

preachers and other interpreters to make full use of the hermeneutical methods modeled

by the writers of the NT, especially typology. He seems not to want to risk the misuse of

those methods, which would result in unscriptural allegory. He writes, "Christ-centered

exposition of Scripture does not require us to unveil depictions of Jesus by mysterious

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[43]Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*., 307.

[44]Chapell, *Christ-Centered Sermons*, xvii.

[45]Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 299.

alchemies of allegory or typology."[46] He warns against the "interpreter's overactive imagination"[47] in recognizing biblical typology and only briefly concedes that typology "may prove to be a profitable avenue for redemptive exposition, particularly when other alternatives seem remote."[48] Chapell's method for identifying the "Christ focus" of a given text contains almost no instructions, instead opting for multiple pages of warnings against using allegory to force a connection with Christ.[49]

This unwillingness to place the interpretive techniques of the apostles into the hands of contemporary interpreters could also result in a form of interpretation that leads to recognition of God's redemption but not necessarily to the person and work of Christ as the Redeemer. For example, Chapell writes, "How is the Holy Spirit revealing in this text the nature of God that provides redemption? And how is the Holy Spirit revealing in this text the nature of humanity that requires redemption? As long as we use these lenses, we will interpret as Christ did when he showed his disciples how all Scripture spoke of him."[50] However, it is conceivable that Jewish interpreters could use the same questions and come to similar conclusions about the need for God's redemption without finding any need for a crucified Christ to mediate that redemption. Christ and the apostles explain the Christocentric nature of all Scripture not merely as a general idea of the divine redemption of fallen man but as the foreshadowing specifically of "the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories" (1 Pet 1:11; cf. Luke 24:26, 46; Acts 17:2-3). Sidney Greidanus does not specifically mention Chapell but offers a fitting critique:

> As seen in the New Testament, preaching Christ is to preach not God in general, but the Word made flesh, that is, Christ incarnate. According to the New Testament,

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[46]Chapell, *Christ-Centered Sermons*, xii.

[47]Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 281.

[48]Ibid., 282.

[49]Ibid., 300-303.

[50]Chapell, *Christ-Centered Sermons*, xvi.

"preaching Christ" is preaching Jesus of Nazareth as the climax of God's revelation of Himself. As John explained, "No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known" (1:18).[51]

Related but not identical to this weakness, Chapell rarely points his readers toward eschatological consummation in Christ as the end goal of redemption. As Prince rightly observes,

> Although Chapell recognizes that the biblical text is marked by historical progression and epochs that all relate to Christ, he never points his reader toward the vertical or eschatological dimension, the dimension that reminds the preacher that Scripture is a narrative always headed somewhere—toward Christ and the consummation of his kingdom (Rev 1:8, 17; 21:6, 8; 22:13).[52]

As serious as these critiques may be, Chapell's work provides valuable insight into the nature of Scripture as not only Christ-centered but gospel-centered, pointing mankind toward the grace of the Lord and not toward self-reliance. When paired with other authors' methods that allow more freely for emulation of NT hermeneutical techniques, Chapel's methods will be useful to pastors and laypersons alike to aid in proper Christocentric interpretation. His methods are clear and provide simple steps that a wide range of believers can follow.

Sidney Greidanus

Sidney Greidanus proposes a Christocentric, redemptive-historical approach to Scripture through the use of seven ways of connecting any given OT text to Christ. Greidanus is professor emeritus of preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary and has devoted much of his scholarly work to issues of expository preaching of the OT. His doctoral dissertation was published in 1970 as *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts*,[53] in which he surveys the 1930s-era controversy in

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[51]Sidney Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161 (2004): 5.

[52]Prince, "The Necessity of a Christocentric Kingdom-Focused Model of Expository Preaching," 100.

[53]Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1970).

Holland over exemplary versus redemptive-historical preaching. He objects to the exemplary approach and proposes a Christocentric, redemptive-historical approach to preaching historical texts. In 1988 Greidanus published *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, which applies the same approach not only to the genre of narrative history but also to prophetic literature, Gospels, and epistles.[54] While these previous books deal with a wide variety of hermeneutical and homiletical issues, Greidanus focuses specifically on the topic of Christocentric interpretation and preaching in his 1999 book *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament.*[55] He has since followed up with homiletical commentaries on Genesis,[56] Ecclesiastes,[57] and Daniel,[58] all written from this Christocentric perspective.

Greidanus's Christocentric Perspective

Greidanus argues based on Luke 24:27 and John 5:39 that the OT testifies to Christ and that interpreters must therefore recognize this witness.[59] The apostles likewise interpreted the OT with Christ as its subject matter.[60] "Jesus of Nazareth [is] the climax of God's revelation of himself."[61] He warns against the allegorical method of finding

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[54]Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988).

[55]Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

[56]Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

[57]Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

[58]Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

[59]Sidney Greidanus, "The Necessity of Preaching Christ Also from Old Testament Texts," *Calvin Theological Journal* 34, no. 1 (1999): 195.

[60]Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament," 8.

[61]Sidney Greidanus, "The Necessity of Preaching Christ Also from Old Testament Texts," 191.

Christ in the OT used by Justin Martyr and others in the early centuries of Christianity.[62]

Instead, the OT should be understood in light of the NT because of the progress of redemptive-historical revelation into the NT and because of the literary consistency of the canon.[63] Additionally, in light of the momentous nature of the coming of Christ, he cannot be ignored even in the texts that do not directly mention him: "We cannot ignore this summit of redemptive history: God has fulfilled his promises; his salvation has become a reality; the kingdom of God has broken into this world in a wonderful new way; the King has come!"[64]

Greidanus argues that a theocentric understanding of OT texts is too broad to be considered Christocentric in the manner the NT models but that an attempt to locate Christ's crucifixion in every text is essentially a "hermeneutical straightjacket" that is too narrow, leading to allegory and other forced interpretations.[65] Understanding OT texts to point to the person and work of Christ is better, yet still too narrow: "In Old Testament wisdom literature most texts cannot be linked legitimately to the person or work of Christ. We need a broader definition of 'preaching Christ,' a definition that encompasses also the *teaching* of Jesus."[66] Therefore, a proper interpretation of OT texts ". . . includes not only the person and work of Christ, but also His teaching—His teaching on such topics as God, the kingdom of God, Jesus Himself and His mission, salvation, God's law, and believers' responsibilities and mission. This opens up a whole new range of links from the Old Testament to Christ in the New Testament."[67]

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[62]Greidanus, "The Necessity of Preaching Christ Also from Old Testament Texts," 191.

[63]Ibid., 193-94.

[64]Ibid., 196.

[65]Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament," 5-6.

[66]Ibid., 7.

[67]Ibid.

OT texts should be understood in their context within the canon and within redemptive history. Having first established the meaning of the text with respect to Israel as its original audience, the interpreter should then interpret it in light of redemptive history.[68] This larger context of interpretation includes the connection of the text to Christ because Christ is at the center of redemptive history as it moves from creation to new creation.[69]

In order to connect texts to Christ, Greidanus writes, "We must consciously look for a way, a road, from the message of this Old Testament text to Jesus Christ in the New Testament."[70] He proposes seven such "ways" to Christ that may be possible in a given OT text, which will often overlap with each other. The first is the way of redemptive-historical progression, which "links Christ to Old Testament redemptive events which find their climax in him;" it is "the way on which all the other ways depend."[71] Second, there is the way of promise-fulfillment. The promises of God "fill up" progressively across the OT and find their ultimate fulfillment in Christ.[72] Third is the way of typology, in which "God's provision of redemption in Christ was foreshadowed in Old Testament events, persons, and institutions that prefigured the person or work of Jesus Christ at his first and/or second comings."[73] Fourth, the way of analogy "exposes parallels between what God taught Israel and what Christ teaches the church; what God promised Israel and what Christ promises us; what God demanded of Israel (the Law) and what Christ demands of us."[74] Analogy differs from typology in that it does not exhibit

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[68]Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament," 9.

[69]Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 195.

[70]Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament," 9.

[71]Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 234.

[72]Ibid., 242.

[73]Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament," 11.

[74]Ibid., 12.

historical escalation. Greidanus contends that the way of analogy is especially useful in connecting wisdom literature to Christ. Fifth, there is the way of longitudinal themes, which are biblical-theological themes that can be traced across Scripture from OT to NT.[75] Sixth, there is the way of NT references to OT texts, which can be found most easily using reference materials.[76] Finally, there is the way of contrast between OT realities and their fulfillment in Christ. "However," writes Greidanus, "since contrast focuses on discontinuity rather than continuity, it is usually preferable to use one or more of the positive ways to move to Christ in the New Testament."[77]

Greidanus's Practical Instructions

Much of Greidanus's manner of presenting his Christocentric hermeneutic is already geared toward practical implementation. Additionally, he outlines ten "steps from Old Testament text to Christocentric sermon," five of which apply to any interpreter of the text regardless of whether he intends to preach.

After selecting a text to study, the interpreter should "read and reread the text in its literary context" in order to familiarize himself with the "big picture."[78] The next step is to outline the structure of the text.[79] He should then interpret the text in its own historical setting, seeking to understand its literary interpretation with respect to grammar and syntax, its historical interpretation as it relates to the original hearers, and theocentric interpretation with respect to its revelation about the nature of God.[80] The next step is to

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[75]Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 266.

[76]Ibid., 269.

[77]Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament," 13.

[78]Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 282.

[79]Ibid., 283.

[80]Ibid., 284-86.

formulate the text's theme and goal.[81] Finally, the interpreter should interpret the text's message in the contexts of canon and redemptive history, including use of his seven recommended ways from the text to Christ.[82]

Evaluation and Application of
Greidanus's Method

As with the first two authors surveyed, Greidanus's view of the Christocentric nature of the Scripture is based in the teachings of Christ and the apostles and fits well within the parameters of the NT. His seven ways of connecting any given text to Christ are not only practical but are consistent with NT examples of interpretation. He has provided a method that is faithful to the text and accessible to a wide variety of believers.

By way of critique, Greidanus does not explain how to determine which of the seven ways applies to a particular text. Interpreters may thus misappropriate these methods. It would also be helpful if Greidanus would explain more fully how these ways are interconnected through the history of redemption and revelation. As Goldsworthy remarks of Greidanus's ways, "His analysis is incontrovertible, as each proposal can easily be demonstrated from Scripture. What I do propose, however, is that we can go further to identify a structural unity into which all these different aspects fit."[83]

Of Greidanus's seven ways from an OT text to Christ, two in particular could be further refined. The way of analogy does not seem well rooted in the text. Also, his way of redemptive-historical progression is more closely related to typology than he acknowledges; it is a recognition of symbolism in events and institutions progressing across redemptive history and finding fulfillment in Christ. When Greidanus does speak

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[81]Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 286-87.

[82]Ibid., 287-88.

[83]Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 107.

of typology, he speaks of it mainly with respect to persons and objects,[84] not with respect to events or epochs. In so doing, Greidanus limits the use of typology mostly to small-scale types of the person of Christ and neglects large-scale events and epochs typifying the work of Christ.

Greidanus's interpretive methods, though not perfect, are directly applicable and useful to pastors and laypersons alike. His perspective and his methods will help many to rightly understand the Christocentric nature of the Bible.

Graeme Goldsworthy

Graeme Goldsworthy proposes a Christocentric, redemptive-historical approach to Scripture with the kingdom as the overarching theme and with macro-typology of epochs finding fulfillment in Christ. Goldsworthy was a lecturer at Moore Theological College in Australia in the areas of biblical theology, hermeneutics, and Old Testament and is now retired. Influenced heavily by the theological perspective of Donald Robinson, Goldsworthy has been publishing books and articles on biblical theology and Christocentric hermeneutics for over thirty years. His first book on the subject was *Gospel & Kingdom* in 1981.[85] Ten years later he published *According to Plan*, which identifies itself as "an introductory biblical theology."[86] In 2000 he published *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, in which he applies his Christocentric biblical theology to expository preaching from various biblical genres.[87] Goldsworthy has

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[84]In one article Greidanus's examples of types are lambs, the bronze serpent, Adam, Aaron, Moses, Joshua, Melchizedek, and "other Old Testament figures as well as sacrifices." No events are included. Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament," 11-12.

[85]Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel & Kingdom: A Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Exeter, England: Paternoster, 1981).

[86]Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991).

[87]Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

since published *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*[88] and *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*,[89] both of which interact with historical and contemporary scholars and explain his views in further detail.

Goldsworthy's Christocentric Perspective

Goldsworthy presupposes that the NT's teachings and hermeneutical examples are correct and authoritative for interpreting the whole Bible, rejecting approaches that require empirical evidence from OT texts to prove the validity of NT interpretation. He writes, "The New Testament provides the only evidence we have for the hermeneutical procedures of Jesus and the apostles. It is not only the attitude of Jesus to the Old Testament as his authoritative Scripture that concerns us, but also the way he employed it as the Scripture that he himself fulfilled."[90] Although the Bible contains a diversity of genres and emphases, the entire canon forms a unified whole. The way to understand its unified message is through the use of biblical theology, which Goldsworthy defines as "the study of the Bible done in such a way as to take account of the unity of its message within its diversity."[91] Based on NT teachings, Goldsworthy understands the Bible's unified message to be Christocentric: "The centrality of Christ for understanding the Bible and, for that matter, the whole of reality can be seen in many parts of the New Testament."[92] All of the texts of the Bible are about Christ because the NT says they are, and they may be rightly interpreted as such by appealing to their place within the unified canon. Goldsworthy writes,

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[88]Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006).

[89]Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology.*

[90]Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 248.

[91]Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 28.

[92]Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 249. To support this assertion he cites Acts 13:32-33; Rom 8:19-23; 1 Cor 1-2; 2 Cor 1:20; 5:17; Eph 1:10; 2:13-22; Col 1:15-20; 2:2-3; 1 Pet 3:1-13; Rev 21-22.

Christ defines the unity of the biblical message. The unity of the canon is a dogmatic construct stemming from Christology. Unity is a theological presupposition, not an empirically based construct. When biblical theologians think they see a real point of unrelieved disunity, or cannot see the overall unity, it is a problem with the theologians, not a problem with the Bible.[93]

In pointing to the crucified and risen Christ, the whole Bible may be understood not only as Christocentric but as gospel-centered: "We can say that, while not all Scripture is gospel, all Scripture is related to the gospel that is its center."[94] According to Goldsworthy, Jesus saw this gospel "in terms of fulfillment of the Old Testament, and of the coming of the kingdom of God which demands our submission."[95] The apostles and NT authors, in turn, proclaimed Christ and his gospel as the goal of all Scripture and of all creation, with all things summed up in Christ (Eph 1:10). Goldsworthy heavily incorporates Ephesians 1:10 and the concept of all things being summed up in Christ in his Christocentric hermeneutic.[96] He explains, "The gospel is the hermeneutical norm for the whole of reality. All reality was created by Christ, through Christ and for Christ (Col 1:15-16). God's plan is to sum up all things in Christ (Eph 1:9-10). In him are all the treasures of wisdom and understanding (Col 2:2-3)."[97]

Goldsworthy proposes that there is a single, controlling theme to the Bible, which is the kingdom of God. The kingdom, according to Goldsworthy, involves "God's people in God's place under God's rule."[98] Within this overarching view of the kingdom, he delineates three major epochs of Scripture, which escalate to fulfillment in Christ. These are "the kingdom of God revealed in Israel's history" as Israel rises from Abraham to Solomon, "the kingdom of God revealed in prophetic eschatology" as Israel declines

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[93]Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 251.

[94]Ibid., 63.

[95]Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 72.

[96]Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 248-57.

[97]Ibid., 63.

[98]Goldsworthy, *Gospel & Kingdom*, 47.

after the building of the temple, and "the kingdom of God revealed in the fulfillment of promise and prophecy in Jesus Christ."[99] Goldsworthy is critical of the epochal approaches of Vos, Clowney, and others, which he considers to exhibit too rigid a distinction between periods of biblical history.[100]

Within this epochal framework of the kingdom, typology serves in Goldsworthy's view as an essential means of understanding all Scripture as Christocentric. He defines typology as "the principle that people, events, and institutions in the Old Testament correspond to, and foreshadow, other people, events, or institutions that come later."[101] This typology is discernable not only on the small scale (microtypology), but also on the scale of entire epochs corresponding to their fulfilment in Christ (macrotypology). He writes, "When we understand a typology that sees whole stages of revelation as typological . . . we are in a better position to find lateral interconnections within themes that otherwise might be restricted by distinguishing the varieties of connections between the Testaments."[102] Macrotypology allows biblical interpreters to follow the hermeneutical example of Christ and the apostles not only in the specific instances in which the NT's use of typology is clear (explicit typology), but also in other instances (implicit typology):

> Implicit typology is the recognition that the whole of the Old Testament is the testimony to Christ. While some texts may be more peripheral to the main message, no text is totally irrelevant. Thus, an event or person in the historical narratives of the Old Testament may never be specifically mentioned again. But it functions theologically within its own epoch, even if only to be one of the less prominent events or people in the outworking of God's plan. . . . Typology simply means that this event or person functions as part of the larger foreshadowing of the later theological function as it comes to have its fuller significance in Christ.[103]

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[99]Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 139.

[100]Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 113.

[101]Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 111.

[102]Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 189.

[103]Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 256.

Through the use of this implicit macrotypology within an epochal, kingdom framework finding its fulfillment in Christ, every text[104] may be rightly understood to foreshadow the person, work, glorification, or Spirit of Christ.[105]

Goldsworthy's Practical Instructions

Goldsworthy affirms what he calls "the Protestant ethos of the Bible for the people," that a proper interpretation of Scripture is possible for the layman as well as the scholar.[106] As a practical strategy for Christocentric Bible study, he recommends beginning with the establishment of the regular disciplines of systematic Bible reading and prayer, the cultivation of a conscious recognition of one's presuppositions about the text, and a commitment to improve one's understanding of the overall narrative structure of the Bible.[107] When making contact with a specific text for study, the interpreter should first "prayerfully sit under it, letting it speak in its own way to us," examining it in the original language if he has been trained in it, followed by consideration of the extent and nature of the literary unit in its genre, immediate context, and canonical context.[108] Next, one should engage in a close reading of the text that employs all the skills and tools available, refining the understanding of its context along the way.[109] Before the final step of considering the text's application, one should consider "all the dimensions of the biblical revelation, and especially biblical theology" to relate the text to the person and work of Christ, which is "the main hermeneutical goal."[110] Christocentric biblical

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[104]Goldsworthy defines a "text" as "a meaningful portion of any given book understood as part of that book and its overall message." Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics,* 251.

[105]Ibid., 296-308.

[106]Ibid., 308.

[107]Ibid., 310.

[108]Ibid., 310-11.

[109]Ibid., 311-12.

[110]Ibid., 312.

theology should thus be widely preached and taught in homes, churches, and seminaries. According to Goldsworthy, when studying a text, "The prime question to put to every text is about how it testifies to Jesus. Only then can we ask how it makes real his rule over us, and makes real his presence with us so that we are conformed more and more to his image."[111]

In drawing connections from a specific text to Christ, Goldsworthy lists three possible paths.[112] The first is "type-antitype," which includes the sorts of typology to which he elsewhere refers as explicit microtypology. Secondly, there is the path of "promise-fulfillment," which has mainly to do with "the claim in the New Testament that promises and prophetic predictions made in the Old Testament have been fulfilled."[113] Third is the path of "salvation history-eschatological goal," which involves the use of implicit macrotypology. He explains its use:

> When a person or event in the Old Testament, either in history or prophecy, is given no explicit reference in the New Testament, the typology is implicit. How are we to interpret its significance and apply it to ourselves? To answer this we have to be able to perceive the theological significance of this event in its own epoch. . . . We may need to look at it as part of a larger whole before we can say what its significance is.[114]

Elsewhere he gives three specific steps for the process of doing macrotypology. First, the interpreter should "Identify the way the text functions in the wider context of the kingdom stratum in which it occurs."[115] Second, he should "proceed to the same point in each succeeding stratum until the final reality in the gospel is reached."[116] Finally, "Show how the gospel reality interprets the meaning of the text, at the same time as

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[111]Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics,* 252.

[112]Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 76-80.

[113]Ibid., 78.

[114]Ibid., 256.

[115]Goldsworthy, *Gospel & Kingdom*, 105.

[116]Ibid.

showing how the gospel reality is illuminated by the text."[117]

**Evaluation and Application of
Goldsworthy's Method**

Goldsworthy's method is based on a commitment to interpret the Bible as it interprets itself, particularly with respect to the example of the NT authors' use of the OT. Based on Christ's teachings, NT example, and NT statements of the preeminence of Christ in summing up all things, Goldsworthy's commitment to Christocentric interpretation is unwavering. His approach is the most thorough and systematic of the four authors surveyed. His use of macrotypology to view all texts within the greater context of their epochal fulfillment in Christ is a convincing emulation of the viewpoint of the NT authors.

Goldsworthy's approach could still be improved. His delineation of biblical epochs from Abraham to Solomon to Christ, although helpful, is difficult to reconcile with the Bible's emphasis on the Sinai covenant as a turning point and the relative importance of David over Solomon. Also, with the first of Goldsworthy's three epochs essentially beginning at Genesis 12, he must often assert the importance of Genesis 1-11 despite its lack of prominence in his epochal scheme. Additionally, Goldsworthy resists what he calls "multiplex" approaches to discerning connections from texts to Christ such as Greidanus's seven ways,[118] but in his practical instructions for interpreting texts he occasionally resorts to similar instructions.[119] This tension reflects the reality that even a thorough understanding of the Bible's unified message cannot ensure that a single approach to Christocentric interpretation will always fit with any given text.

Goldsworthy's practical instructions require the ongoing discipline of Bible

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[117]Goldsworthy, *Gospel & Kingdom*, 105.

[118]Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 100-110.

[119]Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 76-80.

intake from a Christocentric perspective. However, this discipline ought to be present in every Christian's life, and there truly are no simple steps to Christocentric interpretation that can compare with the value of a thorough knowledge of the Bible. Combined with this commitment to disciplined Bible intake, Goldsworthy's method is of great value for training laypersons to interpret the Bible as Christocentric.

Conclusion

Clowney, Chapell, Greidanus, and Goldsworthy all approach the Bible similarly, and their views are consistent with the NT's interpretive propositions and examples. Christ and the apostles viewed all of Scripture as Christocentric, and each of these authors provides valuable information and instructions for understanding and emulating their perspectives. Four observations are in order concerning the application of these views to the training of laypersons in Christocentric Bible study.

First, systematic and disciplined Bible intake are of greater value for the understanding of Scripture's fulfillment in Christ than any single interpretive technique. Laypersons who wish to know Christ through all parts of Scripture must be continually encouraged to maintain this discipline.

Second, all Christocentric hermeneutics depend on the unity of the metanarrative of Scripture, which finds its fulfillment in Christ. Even when connections from a text to Christ are difficult to discern on a small scale, every text can be viewed within the larger context of the history of redemption, which has Christ as its end. Laypersons should be consistently guided in recognizing the framework of biblical metanarrative and showed how it is relevant to understanding individual texts.

Third, while no single interpretive technique is the silver bullet of Christocentric hermeneutics, it is still appropriate to develop, implement, and refine such techniques. If Christ is correct in John 5:39 that the Scriptures testify of him, then discerning their Christocentric testimony is important for anyone who wishes to grow in

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the knowledge of him. The potential spiritual benefits far outweigh the risk of discovering that a particular technique needs improvement.

Finally, despite the depth of scholarly research and debate on the topic, we must not fear placing tools for Christocentric interpretation into the hands of laypersons and encouraging them to interpret the Bible like Jesus and the apostles. As saints are discipled in their use of the Bible, their interpretive skills will improve even as they will surely make mistakes. Faith, not any scholarly credential, is the primary qualification for a Christocentric understanding of all Scripture (Luke 24:25, 45; John 5:46-47; 2 Cor 3:16).

CHAPTER 4

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

Chapter 2 has argued that the Bible ought to be interpreted in a Christocentric manner because it teaches that Christ is the subject of all its writings. Chapter 3 has examined and evaluated four authors' Christocentric perspectives and their practical instructions for Christocentric interpretation. If the Bible is Christocentric, and if Christocentric interpretation of the Bible is possible for believers, then any believer should benefit from learning how to study the Bible in a Christocentric manner. Doing so will enable him to know Christ more deeply through all portions of the Bible.

In order to help the congregants at First Baptist Church to study the Bible in a Christocentric manner, I spent fifteen weeks developing and teaching a course on this subject. This chapter presents a week-by-week description of the ministry project.

Week 1: Surveying the Congregation

In the first week of the ministry project I surveyed the congregation regarding their personal Bible study habits and their understanding of the Christocentric nature of the Bible. I asked the church's ushers to distribute copies of the congregational questionnaire to every adult in attendance during the announcement time in the Sunday morning worship service (see appendix 1). They also distributed pencils to anyone who needed a writing utensil. From the pulpit, I requested that all adults present fill out the questionnaire, fold it in half to maintain anonymity, and return it to the ushers at the end of the service. A total of forty-seven questionnaires were returned complete.

During the week I recorded the responses from the questionnaires and examined the data. There was little noticeable difference in responses between

demographic categories. In the overall data, there was a high agreement with the final five statements, which gauged respondents' understanding that the Bible is Christocentric in nature. However, congregants' agreement was noticeably lower with the first statement, "I know how to study the Bible for myself."[1] This difference demonstrated that the congregation's knowledge of the Christocentric nature of the Bible was higher than their confidence in interpreting it. Thus, I decided to design the course curriculum to focus mainly on providing Christocentric interpretive methods.

Weeks 2 to 6: Developing the Curriculum

The second through sixth weeks of the project were spent developing the teaching curriculum for the course (see appendix 4). In order to accurately summarize the subject matter of the course for those who might consider participating, I titled it *Knowing Christ through All the Scriptures*.

Week 2: Outlining the Six Sessions

In light of the research presented in chapters 2 and 3 and the data collected from the congregation, I next made an outline of the six-week course curriculum. I determined that each session would present participants with one interpretive tool for understanding particular passages as Christocentric, as well as one typological theme that can be detected across the Bible to help understand it as a unified narrative pointing to Christ. Each week's material would also include four recommended passages of Scripture for participants to study at home with questions to help guide them in understanding those passages in a Christocentric manner. Each week's passages for home study would draw from four different portions of the Bible: the Pentateuch; OT history; OT prophecy, poetry, or wisdom; and the NT.

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[1] The average responses to the six scaled questions on the congregational questionnaire (see appendix 1) were, in order: 4.07, 5.18, 5.24, 5.63, 5.40, and 5.13.

I decided to include an overall introduction to the course and to the Christocentric nature of the Bible in the material for the first week of the course. I then decided to present typology as the interpretive tool for the first week because I understand it to be an underlying assumption of most Christocentric interpretive methods and the primary method by which the NT authors interpret the OT as Christocentric. After introducing typology, the course would then present the idea of suffering and subsequent glory as a Christocentric, typological theme found throughout the Bible. The passages for home study for the first week would be Exodus 3:1-22; 2 Chronicles 24:17-22; Psalm 77:1-20; and Acts 27:13-44.

The second session would present the concept of the Bible's unified narrative as the interpretive tool for the week, helping participants understand Jesus as the main character and hero of the larger story into which every biblical text fits. The Christocentric biblical theme would be the Kingdom of God. The home study texts would be Genesis 11:1-9; 2 Kings 25:22-30; Isaiah 35:1-10; and Luke 19:11-28.

As the interpretive tool for the third session, the material would present the concept that each biblical text can be understood in relation to Christ as either preparation, fulfillment, or result. The biblical theme of covenants would also be summarized this week. The home study texts would be Leviticus 4:13-21; 2 Chronicles 26:14-23; Ezekiel 42:1-20; and Matthew 5:21-48.

The fourth session would present Brian Chapell's concept of the fallen condition focus of each portion of Scripture as the week's interpretive tool. The theme of the week would be fourfold, recognizing Christ as the ultimate prophet, priest, king, and wise man of the Bible. The passages for home study would be Numbers 16:1-50; Judges 19:1-30; Proverbs 26:1-28; and James 3:13-18.

The fifth session would present OT quotations and allusions found in the NT as an interpretive tool for Christocentric Bible study. The Christocentric biblical theme would be the offspring of the woman predicted in Genesis 3:15. The passages for home

study would be Genesis 12:1-7; Ruth 4:9-22; Hosea 11:1-12; and Romans 16:17-20.

The sixth and final session of the course would present the OT's direct messianic prophecies and pre-incarnate appearances of Christ as tools for Christocentric understanding of the Bible. I decided to place these concepts at the end of the course because I have anecdotally noticed them to be tools laypersons commonly expect to use to recognize Christ in the OT. The Christocentric Bible theme for the sixth week would be the dwelling place of God. The home study passages would be Deuteronomy 18:9-22; 1 Samuel 13:1-23; Psalm 2:1-12; and 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

Weeks 3 to 6: Writing the Curriculum

Once the course had been outlined, I proceeded to write the curriculum itself. I first included an introductory page for participants. It begins by listing six reasons why it is worth their time and effort to learn to study the Bible in a Christocentric manner. Next, the introductory page describes what this study cannot provide for participants. It cannot cover every way in which the Bible points to Christ or provide any one Christocentric hermeneutical method that will apply to every text. The study also cannot provide the kind of knowledge that comes through the spiritual discipline of regular Bible reading, so participants should begin following a Bible reading plan if they do not already. Lastly, the introductory page describes what the study does provide for participants. Each week it provides at least one interpretive tool and one Christocentric biblical-theological theme to help equip participants to study the Bible in a Christocentric manner. It also provides a weekly set of four Scripture passages to study at home in light of what has been taught.

For all six sessions of the course I wrote bulleted teaching notes, which I designed to be easily converted into handouts for participants by removing the text between bullet points. For my own benefit in weekly lesson preparation and as a point of information for those who would evaluate the curriculum, I included a reminder at the top of each week's teaching notes that the student handouts would not contain the text written

between bullet points.

In the first session's notes I included a section introducing participants to the Christocentric nature of the Bible. Although the congregational questionnaire had indicated that most congregants already agreed that the Bible is Christocentric, I wrote this section to clarify why we believe this to be the case. I also included an encouragement based on John 5:46 and Luke 24:25 that all believers are capable of perceiving Jesus to be the focus of Bible.

I sought to follow a consistent format in writing the remainder of the teaching notes for all six sessions. The notes present at least one interpretive tool and one biblical-theological theme in each session, as had been planned and outlined during the second week of the project. I also included a final page in the student handouts each week listing the four passages for participants to study at home with questions to consider and space to record observations.

Some portions of the teaching notes could be drawn directly from the research conducted in preparation for the project, such as the theme of the offspring of the woman. However, most required significant additional study despite being closely related to the preparatory research. Thus, the development of the curriculum took more time than I had originally planned.

Weeks 7 to 9: Evaluation and Participant Recruitment

Due to the unanticipated amount of time spent developing the curriculum, the process of evaluating the curriculum took place at the same time as the process of recruiting congregants to participate in the course. Because the curriculum had not yet been deemed acceptable for use, this overlap created the risk that the course would need to be rescheduled and that the project would not be completed within the delimited time period of fifteen weeks. Thankfully, the two processes both proceeded smoothly and no delay was necessary in beginning the course.

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**Week 7: Contacting Evaluators and
Advertising the Course**

In the seventh week of the project I recruited other evangelical pastors to evaluate the curriculum. In order to avoid sparking significant theological debate in the evaluation process, I did not contact any pastors whom I understood to approach the Bible from a Dispensationalist perspective. Most of those contacted serve churches in northern New Jersey, while one serves a church in Virginia. Because the stated goal for the curriculum required receiving four evaluations, I contacted a total of six pastors with the expectation that some would not be able or willing to provide an evaluation in a timely manner. All six agreed to serve as evaluators, and I sent them electronic copies of the curriculum and the curriculum evaluation rubric (see appendix 2). However, I did not receive two of their evaluations until after I began teaching the course, so only four pastors' responses were used to determine whether the curriculum was acceptable for use. These four pastors were Ryan Boys of Green Pond Bible Church in Newfoundland, New Jersey; Matthew Carpenter of Franklin Lakes Baptist Church in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey; Tom Detamore of Ardena Baptist Church in Freehold, New Jersey; and Brent Hobbs of New Song Fellowship in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Also that week I scheduled the course and began advertising it. Because First Baptist Church's Sunday School program does not meet during the summer months, the course could meet during the hour prior to the Sunday morning worship service. I advertised the course with a bulletin insert that included a form for participants to fill out and return to me as a commitment to attend. I also announced the upcoming course to the congregation during the worship service.

**Week 8: Communicating with Evaluators
and Continuing to Recruit Participants**

Early the following week, two of the pastors evaluating the curriculum contacted me with questions. Both evaluators' questions were related to their sense that the curriculum was not accessible to laypersons. During both conversations I came to

understand that these pastors were approaching the curriculum from the perspective that it was intended for wide publication. I clarified to them that this curriculum was written specifically for me to use to teach congregants of First Baptist Church and that I would design it differently if I intended it to be published for wider use. After these two conversations I sent an email to all of the evaluators clarifying that point.

Also in the eighth week I again advertised the course to the congregation by the same means as the previous week. Participants began returning written commitments to attend. Some participants mentioned that they would not be able to attend all six sessions because of travel or work schedules. I encouraged them to sign up and to participate in as many sessions as they could. I began planning to make audio recordings of the sessions for them and for any other participants who would need them.

Week 9: Reviewing Evaluations and Final Participant Recruitment

In the ninth week of the project I received four completed curriculum evaluation rubrics from the course evaluators. 100 percent of the evaluation indicators on all rubrics were marked at sufficient or above, exceeding the goal of 90 percent and allowing the course to proceed with the curriculum as written.

The first six evaluation indicators were marked as exemplary in all of these rubrics. The comments on these markers indicated that the pastors evaluating the curriculum found it to be biblically and theologically sound. However, in each of the completed rubrics some or all of the final six evaluation markers were marked only as sufficient. These final six evaluation markers have to do with accessibility to laypersons. The comments on these markers consistently indicated concerns that the curriculum may be too difficult for laypersons to understand. In response, I began considering how to present the material clearly and accessibly for all those in attendance.

During this same week I also completed the process of recruiting course participants. In addition to the use of the bulletin insert and an announcement from the

pulpit, I contacted congregants personally to ask if they would participate. The number of commitments to attend reached seventeen, surpassing the goal of fifteen. I sent an email to all committed participants asking them to arrive on time to fill out the pre-course questionnaire (see appendix 3). I also recruited workers to provide childcare during the course sessions.

Weeks 10 to 15: Teaching the Course

The final six weeks of the project were spent teaching the course. In preparation for each session, I printed the session's teaching notes for myself. As student handouts, I printed another version of the same notes with the text between bullet points removed. Each course session began promptly at the scheduled time with prayer. I presented the material in a lecture format, asking participants to save questions and comments for the end so that I would be able to cover all of the material. I set aside time at the end of each session for questions and for discussion of the home study passages. Each session closed with prayer. The first and last sessions of the course also included data collection using the pre- and post-course questionnaire (see appendix 3). Each week I made an audio recording of the teaching sessions. Between each session I sent an email to course participants with links to download the audio recordings and handouts from previous sessions, allowing those who had missed a session to catch up.

Week 10: First Week of the Course

During the first ten minutes of the first week of the course, participants filled out the pre-course questionnaire (see appendix 3). I emphasized the need for each participant to place a four-digit number on the questionnaire that he or she would be able to remember on the last week to identify any changes in responses. Eighteen adult participants returned completed questionnaires. There were also adolescent children in attendance who were not surveyed.

After the completed questionnaires had been collected, I began the course

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instruction with the introductory page of the curriculum, which was included in the student handout. I then taught through the first week's material. As I taught, I was cautious about presenting the material in a simple manner because of the feedback I had received from the curriculum evaluators. I also encouraged participants not to be intimidated by new concepts. As a point of illustration I told the story of a trapeze class my wife and I had recently attended. We were intimidated at first, but by listening closely and following directions we were comfortable doing backflips from a swinging trapeze in less than an hour. I asked participants to listen closely and to trust that they would be able to use these concepts. Participants appeared to remain engaged with the material throughout the session.

The verbal feedback after the first session was all positive. One man said that I had explained the concepts in a way that was simple to understand. A new believer told me that she had been nervous to come because the course content might be too difficult for her but that she enjoyed it and could follow what I taught. An elderly woman told me she hoped I would start teaching this material regularly every few years.

Later in the week, one participant contacted me and said that he planned to stop attending the course because the home study assignments would take too much time away from his daily Bible reading schedule. I encouraged him to attend the course sessions even if he did not study the assigned passages at home. He agreed that he would continue to attend.

Week 11: Second Week of the Course

Attendance at the second course session was similar to the first. The session began on time with prayer, followed by two minutes of review of the previous week's material. I then taught through the course material written for the session. I followed the teaching notes closely, pausing occasionally to explain concepts in simpler language or to gauge how well participants were following along. The last ten minutes of the hour were

used to discuss two of the four passages that had been assigned the previous week for home study. Most participants did not seem to have studied the assigned passages. Those who had studied the passages contributed insightful comments.

I received feedback after the session from two participants who were both new to the Christian faith. Both responded positively and said they found the material understandable and helpful.

Week 12: Third Week of the Course

The attendance at the third course session was slightly lower than the first two because some participants were traveling. The session followed the same schedule and format as the other sessions. I perceived that participants followed along well.

Near the end of the session a participant asked a question about the relationship between law and gospel. I perceived his question as an accusation of antinomianism and responded by defending myself. I spoke with the participant afterward and apologized, and I learned that I had misunderstood the intention of his question.

In the discussion of the passages for home study, only three participants seemed to have studied the passages. These three expressed helpful insights into those passages and their connections to Christ. Others who participated in the discussion of these passages, however, seemed to confuse Christocentric interpretation with practical life application. I emphasized to the participants that we were specifically seeking to understand the connection of biblical texts to the person and work of Christ, not merely to Christian living.

Week 13: Fourth Week of the Course

Attendance at the fourth course session was again steady. Four people were absent due to vacations or health concerns, but others had returned since the previous week. The session proceeded as planned, and participants indicated that they understood the material. The presentation of the fallen condition focus of the Bible seemed to engage

participants' emotions more than most of the previous material. During the consideration of the home study passages, I only allowed people who had studied the passages to contribute to the discussion. This method produced a more focused discussion with more relevant responses.

Week 14: Fifth Week of the Course

When I opened the fifth session of the course with prayer, only four participants were in the room. Others continued to arrive late until attendance was again at a level comparable to previous weeks. I sensed that it would be important to ask participants to arrive on time to the final course session the next week.

I taught through the material for the day, again following the teaching notes closely. The biblical-theological theme of the offspring of the woman sparked more questions and discussion than usual. One participant asked how Genesis 4:1 proves that Eve expected Cain to be the promised offspring. I responded that by itself this verse does not compellingly make such a point but that it can be understood in this way in its context within Genesis. I also noted that the theme of the offspring of the woman does not stand or fall on this verse. Two other participants asked questions about specific OT passages that had come to their minds and how those passages fit into the theme of the offspring of the woman. In both cases I encouraged them to study those passages more deeply during the week.

A participant again confused Christocentric interpretation with Christian life application during the discussion of one of the passages for home study. Participants demonstrated a sounder understanding of Christocentric interpretation when discussing the other passages.

Week 15: Sixth Week of the Course

Attendance at the final course session reflected a slight overall decline since the first session. Sixteen adults were present, as were several adolescent children. I

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opened the session on time, prayed, and taught through the final session's course material. There were no questions or comments about the material. When discussing the assigned passages for home study it was apparent that only one person had studied the passages.

With about ten minutes remaining in the hour, I handed out copies of the post-course questionnaire (see appendix 3). I asked that only adult participants fill it out and that they write the same four-digit number on their questionnaire as they did in the first session. Several participants expressed that they were not sure they could remember their four-digit number, so I asked them to do their best to remember and to write down what they thought it was. I left the room as participants filled out the questionnaire. At the end of the hour I collected sixteen completed questionnaires.

After the final session several participants approached me with verbal feedback about the course. The woman who had said on the first day that I should teach this course regularly every few years repeated this request and said she had benefited from it. Another elderly woman told me she enjoyed the course and that it had opened up the Bible to her in new ways she had never thought about. A man with seminary training told me he enjoyed the course and that it was a good reminder of concepts he had learned earlier in his life.

In the remaining days of the final week of the project I tabulated and analyzed the data collected from course participants using the pre- and post-course questionnaire. Due to a small decrease in attendance and possibly also due to participants forgetting their four-digit numbers, four questionnaires returned at the first session of the course could not be matched to any of those returned at the end of the course. Likewise, two questionnaires returned at the last session could not be matched to any of those returned at the first session. Only the data collected from the fourteen matching pairs of questionnaires were analyzed.

Summary of Questionnaire Responses

I first tabulated the responses to the twenty questions that used a six-point Likert scale. I performed a t-test for dependent samples to compare the sums of pre- and post-course responses to the twenty scaled questions, which demonstrated that there was a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post-course scores. The teaching of the course to participating congregants resulted in the increase of their understanding of the Bible as Christocentric ($t_{(9)} = 2.516$, $p < .026$). The following table contains the results of all pre- and post-course scaled questions.

Table 1. Responses to all pre- and post-course scaled questions

Participant	Pre-Course Total	Post-Course Total	% Increase
1	120	119	-0.8
2	104	113	8.7
3	110	112	1.8
4	120	120	0.0
5	98	112	14.3
6	110	103	-6.4
7	109	115	5.5
8	113	116	2.7
9	58	111	91.4
10	88	107	21.6
11	94	100	6.4
12	98	99	1.0
13	83	118	42.2
14	105	115	9.5

I then tabulated the responses of only the final four questions, which measure participants' confidence in their ability to interpret the Bible in a Christocentric manner. I performed another t-test for dependent samples to compare the pre- and post-course responses to these four confidence-related questions. This t-test also demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post-course scores. The

teaching of the course resulted an increase in participants' confidence in their ability to interpret the Bible in a Christocentric manner ($t_{(9)} = 5.037$ p < .0002). The following table contains the results of the four questions measuring confidence.

Table 2. Responses to pre- and post-course questions measuring confidence

Participant	Pre-Course Total	Post-Course Total	% Increase
1	24	24	0.0
2	17	22	29.4
3	18	19	5.6
4	24	24	0.0
5	17	21	23.5
6	21	22	4.8
7	18	21	16.7
8	19	22	15.8
9	15	17	13.3
10	13	19	46.2
11	16	19	18.8
12	17	20	17.6
13	16	22	37.5
14	20	21	5.0

Conclusion

The course curriculum was developed, evaluated, and taught in fifteen weeks. The course proved to be accessible to laypersons despite the initial concerns to the contrary. The data gathered using the pre- and post-course questionnaire demonstrated that participants increased in their understanding of the Christocentric nature of the Bible and in their confidence to interpret the Bible in a Christocentric manner.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The ministry project involved the development and teaching of a course to train congregants to study the Bible in a Christocentric manner. Chapter 4 has described the implementation of the project, which involved surveying the congregation, writing the course curriculum, evaluating the course curriculum, recruiting participants, teaching the course, surveying the participants, and analyzing the data collected from the surveys. This chapter evaluates the project's purposes, goals, strengths, and weaknesses. It also describes what I would have done differently and includes theological and personal reflections on the project.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of the project was to train congregants at First Baptist Church of Matawan, New Jersey, to study the Bible in a Christocentric manner. In order to accomplish this purpose, I wrote a curriculum on this subject and taught it over the course of six Sunday mornings to congregants who volunteered to participate.

Other than one man who expressed that the home study material was too time consuming, all of the verbal feedback about the course from participants was positive. This feedback included expressions of appreciation, of desire to learn the material presented, and of fresh insights into the Bible's teachings. Despite my concerns that the material would be difficult for lay participants, they consistently stated that they were able to follow along and understand.

Eighteen adults were present at the first session of the course, and most participated until the end. Sixteen were present at the final session. Fourteen of these

participants completed the pre-and post-course questionnaire (see appendix 3) in such a way that their responses could be tabulated and analyzed (see table 1 and table 2). As reported in chapter 4, the teaching of the course to participating congregants resulted in the increase of their understanding of the Bible as Christocentric and the increase of their confidence in their ability to interpret the Bible in a Christocentric manner.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The first goal of this project was to evaluate the congregation's knowledge of the Christocentric nature of the Bible. The congregational questionnaire was distributed to the congregation on the first Sunday morning of the project and completed by adult congregants (see appendix 1). This goal was regarded as successful when the responses had been analyzed. As reported in chapter 4, these responses reflected a general affirmation of the Christocentric nature of the Bible but a low level of congregants' confidence in their ability to study the Bible for themselves.

The second goal of this project was to develop a six-week discipleship course on studying the Bible in a Christocentric manner (see appendix 4). This goal was measured by four pastors from other evangelical churches. These pastors completed a rubric measuring biblical faithfulness, theological content, practical content, and accessibility to participants (see appendix 2). This goal was regarded as successful when 100 percent of the evaluation indicators on all four rubrics were marked at sufficient or above, exceeding the goal of 90 percent. However, the evaluators expressed reservations about the practicality and accessibility of the curriculum for laypersons. I took their concerns into consideration when teaching the course.

The third goal of the project was to recruit fifteen to twenty adult congregants to participate in the discipleship course. Participants were recruited through verbal announcements from the pulpit, written notices in the church bulletin, and personal invitations. This goal was considered successful during the ninth week of the project

when the number of written commitments surpassed fifteen. Actual attendance was similar to the number of commitments.

The fourth goal of the project was to increase knowledge of studying the Bible in a Christocentric manner. This goal was achieved by developing and teaching the six-week discipleship course. It was measured using the pre- and post-course questionnaire, which used a Likert scale to measure participants' understanding of the Christocentric nature of the Bible (see appendix 3, table 1, and table 2). As presented in chapter 4, this goal was considered successful when a t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-course responses ($t_{(9)} = 2.516$, $p < .026$). Within these results, the four questions measuring participants' confidence in their ability to interpret the Bible in a Christocentric manner also demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post-course responses ($t_{(9)} = 5.037$ $p < .0002$).

Strengths of the Project

Although the course curriculum was not comprehensive in its scope or indisputable in its content, the pastors who provided evaluations consistently commented that the biblical and theological concepts communicated in the material were its greatest strength. Course participants' verbal feedback about the content of the material was also positive. At least two participants commented that the course had helped them recognize aspects of the Bible's message that they had not understood from many years of personal Bible study.

Participants also gave positive feedback about the usefulness of the course. This feedback came partly through the pre- and post-course questionnaires, the results of which demonstrated an increase in participants' confidence in their ability to study the Bible in a Christocentric manner. Verbal feedback also supported the usefulness of the course as a strength. One participant had asked me on several past occasions how to

understand the OT as Christocentric, and after the course she expressed that she now is able to study her Bible in the way she had desired. Another participant expressed that she had a general idea of the Christocentric nature of the Bible before but that now she has practical methods she can use to understand how various passages point her to Christ. This participant also expressed that the inclusion of interpretive tools and Christocentric themes each week was particularly helpful to her.

Weaknesses of the Project

The project could have been stronger in a number of ways. The written material did not always work well as teaching notes for a spoken presentation. I found myself often editing and clarifying the notes as I taught. I spoke differently in person to the participants than the way that I wrote the notes because I could sense the need to explain difficult concepts more simply.

Another weakness was the requirement that participants remember a four-digit number to identify their pre-course questionnaire with their post-course questionnaire. Despite telling participants to pick a number on the first day that they would remember on the last, some still forgot.

Additionally, the initial plan to implement the project did not account adequately for the length of time it would take to develop the written curriculum. This weakness would have created considerable difficulty if the pastors who evaluated the curriculum had not deemed it to be acceptable for use without revision.

A theological weakness in the curriculum was noted by one of the two pastors whose evaluations I received after I had already begun teaching the course. This pastor pointed out that I did not clearly or thoroughly present the ways in which Christ fulfilled the OT Law.

Another weakness of the project was apparent in some of the discussion times during the course when participants described their understanding of the passages

assigned to them for home study. In multiple instances, participants described practical life applications or connections to NT concepts rather than describing connections to the person or work of Christ. The curriculum did not state clearly enough the distinction between Christocentric interpretation and other aspects of a text's relevance to Christians.

Finally, the home study portion of the written curriculum needed improvement. It was formatted like homework rather than as devotional material, and most participants did not use it. The questions asked of each text were too general and did not adequately lead participants to grasp the Christocentric nature of many passages.

What I Would Do Differently

If I were to do this project again, there are several things I would do differently. First, I would teach the discipleship course in the fall or spring rather than in the summer. Many congregants travel in the summer months. Had the course been held at another time of year, the number of participants and the number of sessions attended by each participant could have both been higher.

I also would use a different system to identify the pre- and post-course questionnaires. One possibility would be to provide small cards on which participants could write their four-digit number. They could then keep the cards in their wallets until the end of the course in order not to forget their numbers. Having all questionnaires properly identified would increase the amount of useable data, which would then increase the accuracy of the measured results.

In the course curriculum I would include charts and illustrations of difficult concepts. Several concepts found in the material could have been presented more clearly in a visual format than in paragraph form.

I also would practice teaching the course sessions aloud before writing down the teaching notes. This would improve the clarity of the written notes and allow them to flow more naturally into a spoken presentation.

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I would plan for more time to revise the curriculum after receiving evaluations from fellow pastors. The evaluators provided valuable insights, which I took into consideration as I taught the course. I could have also made changes in the written material based on those insights had I allotted time for revision.

I would seek to improve some aspects of the course content. I would include a more thorough discussion in the curriculum of the ways in which Christ fulfilled the OT Law. I would also include a section in the curriculum to clarify that a text has not necessarily been interpreted in a Christocentric manner simply because one has discovered its relevance to Christian living or to Christian doctrine.

I would also write the home study portion of the notes differently. In addition to general questions for participants to answer of the passages, I would have included specific questions for each passage to help guide participants more clearly to apply what they had learned in the course sessions to their personal study. I would also have arranged the personal study guides in a way that seemed more like daily devotional material than homework, which might help persuade more participants to use the material between sessions.

I would add at least two more resources to the written material for participants. One would be a list of recommended reading for further study. Another would be a one-page summary of the course, which would help participants remember the interpretive tools and Christocentric themes they learned in the course. I would recommend that they keep this page in their Bibles as a tool for quick reference as they seek to understand various passages in light of Christ.

Finally, I would write the curriculum in such a way that it could be used easily by other teachers. Because of the specific setting of this project, I designed the curriculum for my own use as a teacher and for congregants of First Baptist Church as the students. However, the subject matter of the course has sparked interest from members of other churches who have asked about my academic work. In its current form, the

curriculum is not likely to be useful for any teachers who do not have prior theological training in biblical theology or hermeneutics.

Theological Reflections

This project has been an explicitly theological endeavor from start to finish, so most of my theological reflections have already been mentioned. I am grateful to have been involved in a Doctor of Ministry program that allowed me to focus my project on biblical and theological matters.

The Bible continues to astound me in the countless ways it proclaims the lordship of Christ. Biblical themes I had hardly considered now stand out to me throughout the Scriptures. Chief among these is the pattern of suffering and subsequent glory, which I now regard to be the most prominent OT type of the death and resurrection of Christ (Luke 24:25-27; Acts 7:2-39, 51-60; 1 Pet 1:10-11). The depth and breadth of the biblical witness to Christ makes it impossible to produce a comprehensive curriculum describing all of the ways in which the Scriptures speak of him. I hope to continue to engage in Christocentric Bible study for the remainder of my earthly life, and I look forward also to continuing to read scholarly insights into this subject. I am confident that I will never run out of treasures to uncover in the process of seeking to know Christ in all of Scripture.

Despite the inexhaustible nature of the subject matter, I have been simultaneously struck by the accessibility of this sort of study to every believer. Anecdotally, I was pleasantly surprised when two relatively new believers in the discipleship course both expressed that they had no trouble understanding the material. Theologically, I ought not to have been surprised by their understanding after having studied Luke 24:25 and John 5:46. Jesus did not diminish the value of disciplined Bible study or theological training, but he taught that anyone who believes in him will be able to understand that the Scriptures speak of him. Even as I am motivated to invest further

energy into the academic study of Christocentric hermeneutics, I am encouraged to know that such glorious truths are available to every believer.

Personal Reflections

I do not remember what role pride may have played in my decision to pursue a doctorate, but this process has been the opposite of an ego boost. God has chosen to use it for my good and for his glory as a means of sanctification in my life. My greatest spiritual weaknesses have been laid bare as I have simultaneously sought to shepherd church members, to lead my family, and to complete this work. There were times when I thought I would not finish. He has been gracious to me and has surrounded me with gracious and supportive people. I am thankful.

My hope and prayer is that my study in the area of Christocentric biblical hermeneutics will serve to benefit others and not only myself. As one of the course participants suggested, I plan to teach a course on this subject at church every few years. I also hope it will benefit believers outside of First Baptist Church, whether through the electronic publication of this project or through other means.

Conclusion

The project had a number of weaknesses, and there are ways in which I would go about it differently if I were to repeat it, but it achieved its purpose and all its goals. The curriculum evaluators and course participants indicated that the project's greatest strength was its biblical and theological content. Participants found the course to be understandable and useful. The completion of the project involved significant theological and personal growth. I hope that this project will continue to bear fruit in my own study of Scripture and in the lives of other believers.

APPENDIX 1

CONGREGATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your personal Bible study habits and your understanding of the Bible as Christ-centered. Daniel Wiginton is conducting this research for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential,* and at no time will your name be identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

1. Circle your age group:
   Under 18   18-25   26-30   31-40   41-50   51-60   61-70   71+

2. Circle your gender: Male   Female

3. How long have you been attending First Baptist Church of Matawan? (circle one)
   Less than 1 year   1-5 years   6-10 years   11-15 years   16-20 years   20+ years

5. In a typical week, how many times do you read the Bible? _____

6. When you study the Bible, which of these best describes your method? (circle one)
   a. I read it but I do not study it in depth.
   b. I spend time figuring out what it means for myself.
   c. I use a devotional guide to help me understand it.
   d. I use tools like study Bibles and commentaries to help me understand it.
   e. Other: _____

Read each statement, then indicate your level of agreement using the scale below. Circle the number that most accurately reflects your answer at the end of each statement.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. I know how to study the Bible for myself.   1 2 3 4 5 6

2. Every passage I read in the Bible points to Jesus.   1 2 3 4 5 6

3. I understand how the whole Bible fits together as one big story.   1 2 3 4 5 6

4. Jesus is the main point of the Bible.   1 2 3 4 5 6

5. Every part of the New Testament is about Jesus.   1 2 3 4 5 6

6. Every part of the Old Testament is about Jesus.   1 2 3 4 5 6

APPENDIX 2

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

Christ-Centered Bible Study Methods Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
After reviewing the curriculum for the course on Christ-centered Bible study, please rate the curriculum according to the criteria below using the following scale. You may also leave comments.					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The Bible is consistently presented as the basis for the curriculum's teachings.					
The curriculum demonstrates a high view of the Bible's authority.					
Overall, the curriculum is faithful to the Bible.					
The theological content of the curriculum accurately represents Christian truth.					
The theological content of the curriculum is oriented toward the gospel.					
Overall, the curriculum is theologically sound.					
The curriculum presents practical tools for use in personal Bible study.					
The curriculum presents practical tools for discovering the Christ-centeredness of Bible passages.					
Overall, the curriculum is practical for use by Christians.					
The curriculum presents the Bible in ways Christian lay persons can understand.					

The curriculum presents theological concepts in ways Christian lay persons can understand.					
Overall, the curriculum is accessible to Christian lay persons.					

PRE- AND POST-COURSE QUESTIONNAIRE

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your personal Bible study habits, your knowledge of the Christ-centered nature of the Bible, and your confidence in your ability to study the Bible in a Christ-centered manner. Daniel Wiginton is conducting this research for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential,* and at no time will your name be identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Before you begin:

Please write a four-digit number that is memorable to you. You will provide this same number both at the beginning and the end of this course. It will be used to match your responses before the course to your responses after the course without using your name. Your four-digit number: _____

1. Circle your age group:
   Under 18   18-25   26-30   31-40   41-50   51-60   61-70   71+

2. Circle your gender: Male   Female

3. How long have you been attending First Baptist Church of Matawan? (circle one)
   Less than 1 year   1-5 years   6-10 years   11-15 years   16-20 years   20+ years

5. In a typical week, how many times do you read the Bible? _____

6. When you study the Bible, which of these best describes your method? (circle one)
   a. I read it but I do not study it in depth.
   b. I spend time figuring out what it means for myself.
   c. I use a devotional guide to help me understand it.
   d. I use tools like study Bibles and commentaries to help me understand it.
   e. Other: _____

Read each statement, then indicate your level of agreement using the scale below. Circle the number that most accurately reflects your answer at the end of each statement.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. Every passage I read in the Bible points to Jesus.   1 2 3 4 5 6

2. I understand how the whole Bible fits together as one big story.   1 2 3 4 5 6

3. Jesus is the main point of the Bible.   1 2 3 4 5 6

Please continue to the next page.

Read each statement, then indicate your level of agreement using the scale below. Circle the number that most accurately reflects your answer at the end of each statement.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. Every part of the New Testament is about Jesus.   1 2 3 4 5 6

5. I know how the New Testament points to Jesus   1 2 3 4 5 6

6. Every part of the Old Testament is about Jesus.   1 2 3 4 5 6

7. I know how the Old Testament points to Jesus.   1 2 3 4 5 6

8. Jesus is the focus of the Old Testament Law (first five books).   1 2 3 4 5 6

9. Jesus is the focus of the Old Testament historical books.   1 2 3 4 5 6

10. Jesus is the focus of the Psalms.   1 2 3 4 5 6

11. Jesus is the focus of Proverbs and other wisdom writings
    in the Old Testament.   1 2 3 4 5 6

12. Jesus is the focus of the Old Testament prophets.   1 2 3 4 5 6

13. Jesus is the focus of the New Testament Gospels (first four books). 1 2 3 4 5 6

14. Jesus is the focus of the book of Acts.   1 2 3 4 5 6

15. Jesus is the focus of the New Testament letters (Romans to Jude). 1 2 3 4 5 6

16. Jesus is the focus of the book of Revelation.   1 2 3 4 5 6

17. I know how to study the Bible for myself.   1 2 3 4 5 6

18. I am confident that I could determine how most parts of
    the Bible point to Jesus, even when he is not mentioned.   1 2 3 4 5 6

19. I know some specific ways I could show that the Old
Testament is Christ-centered.   1 2 3 4 5 6

20. I could explain to my Catholic and Jewish neighbors how the Bible
is more about Jesus and his grace than about following rules.   1 2 3 4 5 6

This is the end of the second page. Please make sure you have also filled out the first
page before returning this questionnaire.

COURSE CURRICULUM

Knowing Christ through All the Scriptures
A 6-Week Study of the Christ-Centered Nature of the Bible

This study is designed to help you interpret the Bible in Christ-centered way. Why is such a thing worth our time and effort?

- As Christians, we want to know Christ more deeply, and Christ said he can be known through all parts of the Bible.
- As Christians, we want to have an accurate knowledge of the Bible, and Christ said it is all about him.
- As Christians, we believe we are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ, not by works. We want to keep the gospel at the forefront of our minds, not moralism.
- As Christians, we want to follow the example of Jesus and the apostles, who interpreted the whole Bible as Christ-centered.
- As Christians, we want to stand in awe at the glory of God, which is on display in the way he has crafted the whole Bible to point us to Christ.
- As Christians, we want to more effectively share the gospel with people such as our Jewish friends and neighbors who have not yet recognized Christ in the Scriptures.

What this study cannot provide you

This study cannot cover every way in which the Bible points us to Christ, nor can it give you any one silver bullet approach to understanding every text as Christ-centered. Instead, it is a starting point to encourage you to pursue a lifetime of growth in Christ-centered Bible study.

This study also cannot provide you with the kind of knowledge that can only come from the daily discipline of Bible reading. As Edmund Clowney put it, "No scholarly technique can be substituted for knowledge of the Bible."[1] If you do not currently follow a plan to regularly read through the Bible, now is a great time to start. Whether you have been a believer for many years or are brand new to the Christian faith, you are much more likely to enjoy this study if you will engage in regular, systematic, thoughtful, prayerful Bible reading. Talk to your pastor if you need help finding a reading plan.

What this study will provide you

Each week this study will provide at least one interpretive tool and one theme to help you recognize the centrality of Christ in any given passage of the Bible. Each tool is an interpretive technique that can be used to recognize connections to Christ in Scripture.

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[1]Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1961), 112.

Each theme is a Christ-centered idea or motif that runs throughout the Bible, helping connect passages containing that theme to the big picture of redemption through Christ.

You will also be encouraged to connect what you learn in class to your own personal study of the Bible during the week. You will take home questions directing you to apply what you have learned to four specific passages of Scripture each week: one from the Pentateuch (Genesis through Deuteronomy); one from Old Testament history (Joshua through Esther); one from Old Testament prophecy, poetry, or wisdom literature (Job through Malachi); and one from the New Testament.

*Note for teaching: Student handouts will contain only the **bold** print.*

Week 1 – Introduction, Typology, Suffering, and Glory

Introduction: The Christ-Centered Nature of the Bible
- **Stop trying to figure out which parts of the Old Testament are about Jesus.** The whole Bible is about Jesus.

Often when Christians think of this concept, they think of a handful of Old Testament passages such as Genesis 3:15 and Isaiah 53 that can be identified as prophetic predictions of Jesus and his saving work. They may also think of ways that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament Law, such as doing away with animal sacrifices by dying for us as the true Lamb of God (John 1:29). Maybe you have a desire to find all of the passages in the Old Testament that predict or prefigure Jesus.

As we begin this study, we will seek to dispel the notion that we need to find the parts of the Old Testament that are about Jesus. Instead, we can rightly view the entire Bible as being about Jesus because that is what Jesus himself said about it. If you want to know where you can find Jesus in the Old Testament, the answer is *everywhere*. The passages that are often pointed out as direct prophecies about him are simply the most visible peaks in the Christ-exalting mountain range of the Old Testament.

Also, the *whole* Bible is about Jesus, so we must also view the New Testament as Christ-centered. That may sound obvious, but too often we assume that opening our Bibles to a New Testament text automatically means we are placing our focus on Christ and the gospel. Without intentionally focusing on Christ in the New Testament, we can fail to see the Christ-centered nature even of "red letter" quotations from the mouth of Christ, confusing the gospel with moralism.
- **Jesus said "all the Scriptures" speak of him (Luke 24:25-27; John 5:39).**

In Luke 24, two of Jesus' disciples are traveling from Jerusalem to Emmaus just after his resurrection. Jesus appears and walks with them, although they do not recognize him. They describe to him the recent events in Jerusalem, their confusion about Jesus' death, and the reports of his resurrection. Jesus responds that that they are "foolish" and "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25). In other words, a proper understanding of Scripture would eliminate their confusion; they would see that the death and resurrection of the Messiah fit well with the writings of the Old Testament. As they walked together, Jesus explained to them how "all the Scriptures" speak of him from beginning to end (Luke 24:27).

Jesus teaches something similar in John 5:39 as he interacts with Jewish leaders who do not believe he is the Messiah: "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me." The Jewish leaders had missed the point of the sacred texts whose study consumed their time and effort. They failed to understand that the power of life found in these texts is the power of Jesus, the one of whom the texts speak. John 5:39 shows us that we haven't properly understood a passage of Scripture if we haven't understood it to point to Christ. According to Albert Mohler, "We do not look to the Old Testament merely to find the

background for Christ and his ministry, nor even for references that anticipate him. We must find Christ in the Old Testament—not here and there but everywhere."[2]

- **The New Testament treats the Old Testament as a Christ-Centered book.**
    The way the New Testament is written shows that Jesus' early followers took his teachings about the Christ-centered nature of the Old Testament seriously. Virtually every page of the New Testament makes direct or indirect references to the Old Testament in a way that points to Christ. A few of the clearest examples are Acts 3:22-24; 10:43; 13:27-29; 28:23; Colossians 2:17; 1 Peter 1:10-12. A large part of the aim of this study is to learn to interpret the Bible the same way that it interprets itself, which is with Christ as its subject.

- **As a believer, you are capable of understanding the Christ-centeredness of the Bible.**
    In addition to telling us plainly that the whole Bible is about Jesus, Luke 24 and John 5 also offer us encouragement that the Christ-centered nature of the Bible is not too hard for any believer to understand. Jesus says in John 5:46, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me." If Jesus' opponents had genuinely believed the Old Testament, they would have seen that Jesus was its subject and embraced him. The element that they lacked was not intellect or effort but belief.
    In Luke 24, Jesus' own disciples initially demonstrate a similar lack of faith as they are "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25). Later, Jesus would solve this problem when **"**he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45). What this group of blue collar fishermen shared in common with the highly educated leaders was a reluctance to believe Scripture. What changed the disciples' ability to understand the Bible as Christ-centered was not a particular study method but God-given faith. If you believe the Christian gospel, then God has also granted this faith to you. As a believer, you are capable of taking hold of the true source of life in all the Scriptures, which is Christ.
    Comprehending the full depth and nuance of the ways in which the Bible speaks of Christ is a lifelong endeavor, but all believers will be able to recognize that it is the case. If you do not yet believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord, pray that God would open your mind to believe the Scriptures. If you do believe, pray that he would further open your mind to grasp the Christ-centered nature of the Bible.

Interpretive Tool for Week 1: Typology
    Biblical typology is the most common way in which the authors of the New Testament interpret the Old Testament as Christ-centered, so that is where we will start.

- **Biblical types are "divinely intended patterns of historical correspondence and escalation in significance in the events, people, or institutions of Israel, and these types are in the redemptive historical stream that flows through the Bible."[3]**

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[2]R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "Studying the Scriptures and Finding Jesus: John 5:31-47," in *The Scriptures Testify About Me: Jesus and the Gospel in the Old Testament*, ed. D. A. Carson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 19.

[3]James M. Hamilton, Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 42.

In other words, God arranged history such that events, people, and institutions found in the Bible would correspond to later events, people, and institutions also found in the Bible. There are called types, and they escalate until at last we come to the end point, which is called the antitype. Christ and the realities he is bringing about in his kingdom are the antitypes of biblical typology.

- **Or, biblical types are like staircases that God has built into the grand story of the Bible, where each step is parallel to and higher than the last, with Jesus and his eternal kingdom at the top step.**

- **Typology is not allegory.**
  We must not confuse typology with allegory. Allegory simply makes a comparison between two things and says they are alike. For example, comparing the red color of the rope Rahab hung from her window to the red color of Jesus' blood is allegory. Unlike allegory, typology involves not just comparison but historical correspondence and escalation. Another difference is that allegorical comparisons can be made purely on the intentions and speculations of the interpreter, whereas typological comparisons depend upon the intentions of God as perceived in the text of the Bible.

- **Typology of small things: microtypology**
  Most of the typology in the Bible falls into the category that Graeme Goldsworthy calls "microtypology." [4] This is the recognition that Christ is foreshadowed in the Bible's presentation of a particular event, person, institution, or object. Most of the Old Testament types explicitly mentioned in the New Testament fall into this category. For example, when John the Baptist declares that Jesus is the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), we can rightly infer that Old Testament sacrificial lambs had been types of Christ, and that the institution of animal sacrifice had been a type of Christ's saving work on the cross.

- **Typology of entire epochs of history: macrotypology**
  We can also view typology in terms of entire epochs corresponding to their fulfilment in Christ, which is what Graeme Goldsworhy calls *macrotypology*. Macrotypology allows us to follow the interpretive example of Christ and the apostles not only in the specific instances in which the New Testament's use of typology is clear, but also in other instances. According to Goldsworthy:
  > . . . The whole of the Old Testament is the testimony to Christ. While some texts may be more peripheral to the main message, no text is totally irrelevant. Thus, an event or person in the historical narratives of the Old Testament may never be specifically mentioned again. But it functions theologically within its own epoch, even if only to be one of the less prominent events or people in the outworking of God's plan. . . . Typology simply means that this event or person functions as part of

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[4]Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 189.

the larger foreshadowing of the later theological function as it comes to have its fuller significance in Christ.[5]

Example: All of the passages in 1 Samuel are found within a period of Israel's history in which the nation was poised to rise to prominence under King David. That period of Israel's history points us to the ultimate rise of the kingdom of God under King Jesus. Thus, even if we have trouble linking the specifics of a passage in 1 Samuel to Christ, we can rightly understand it in context as pointing us to the coming of Christ in his kingdom.

- **Typology as a category into which other interpretive tools will fall**
  Most of the ways in which biblical texts point to Christ have to do with typology, even when we may classify them differently. Today's short discussion is only an introduction to the concept. Typology will show up again and again in this study as many of the other tools and themes are essentially either examples of typology or ways to recognize types.

Christ-Centered Bible Theme for Week 1: Suffering and Subsequent Glory

- **Jesus states the content of the theme: "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead" (Luke 24:26).**
  Here, in one of the key places where Jesus explains the Christ-centered nature of all Scripture, he states that the theme of his suffering and resurrection is found throughout the Old Testament.

- **Jesus tells a parable drawing attention to the repeated suffering of God's messengers and its culmination in himself (Luke 20:9-19).**

- **New Testament authors use this theme to teach that Christ is the subject of the Old Testament (1 Peter 1:10-11; Acts 7:2-53)**

- **Biblical patterns of suffering followed by deliverance point us to the death and resurrection of Christ.**

  "Whether it is Israel's history, as exemplified by the exodus (slavery followed by promised land) or the exile (captivity followed by return to promised land), or the experience of an individual, such as David in the psalms or the servant in Isaiah, the pattern of suffering and deliverance is woven into Scripture. . . . Scripture tells a story of suffering and redemption, which is to be the vocation of the one who represents Israel and acts on behalf of humanity."[6]

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[5]Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 256.

[6]Steve Moyise, *Jesus and Scripture: Studying the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 65-66.

Take-Home Passages for Week 1

Read through each of these passages carefully and pray that God would help you to know Christ more deeply through them. You may prefer to spread them out over your devotional times throughout the week. For each text, consider the following questions, then write down your observations about how it points to Christ.

1) What does the text say? What is it communicating in a basic, straight-forward way?
2) How does the context of the passage affect the way we should think of it? How does it fit into the book? How does it fit into the grand narrative of the Bible?
3) How can this week's interpretive tool (typology) and/or this week's Christ-centered Bible theme (suffering and subsequent glory) help you see Christ in this passage?
4) What else about this passage helps you more deeply understand and appreciate the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Passage #1: Exodus 3:1-22

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Passage #2: 2 Chronicles 24:17-22

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Passage #3: Psalm 77:1-20

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Passage #4: Acts 27:13-44

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*Note for teaching: Student handouts will contain only the **bold** print.*

Week 2 – The Big Picture of the Bible and the Kingdom of Christ

Interpretive Tool for Week 2: The Big Picture of the Bible

- **The Bible all fits together as one big story with Jesus as the hero.**
  The Bible is more than a collection of books or an instruction manual for life. It tells us the big story of God's work in the world, and especially about God's work of redemption. Understanding how a passage fits into the big story of the Bible helps us understand how it points to Christ because Christ is the Redeemer, the hero of the entire Bible.

- **Each passage is a tile in the Bible's mosaic.**
  Imagine that you are examining a brown square. You learn that it is a ceramic tile about an inch wide, that it is not perfectly square, and that it is slightly darker in its center than on its edges. You have gained accurate knowledge about the brown square, but you are missing a critical piece of information that can't be learned by examining it: it is only one tile in a mosaic made up of thousands of pieces. Even with detailed information about the tile, until you step back and look at what is around it, you do not know the most important thing about it. It was placed there to help make a big picture come together.

  In the same way, you are more likely to understand a verse or passage correctly if you take into account the larger context of the grand narrative of the Bible and how that passage fits into the big picture. We can better understand how a passage points to Christ when see that the Bible's big picture is about Christ and understand how the passage fits into the big picture.

- **The big picture of the Bible: Creation, Fall, Redemption, New Creation**
  The Bible shows us the history of all reality and the way in which we should view the world. Regardless of how we break down the Bible's narrative, it all falls within a framework with four components.

  - **Creation: Christ Is the Creator**
    The first two chapters of the Bible tell us that all things came into being out of nothing as an act of God, and all of it was good. As the second person of the Trinity, Christ was active in creating all things (John 1:3; Col 1:16) and continues now to uphold all of creation (Col 1:17). God created human beings in his image (Gen 1:27), and Christ is the perfect image of God (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15).

  - **Fall: The Need for a Redeemer**
    Genesis 3 records the Fall of mankind into sin. Satan successfully tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God. Their sin brought about curses upon Satan, human beings, and the creation itself. Death became a reality. The world God created had become tainted, and his image bearers had become rebellious against him. With God now the Creator of a broken creation, it became necessary for him to intervene for the sake of his own glory. All of the sin and brokenness in the Bible (and in the world around us) points to the need for Christ as Redeemer.

  - **Redemption: Christ is the Redeemer**
    In Genesis 3:15 God promises that there will be an offspring of the woman who will crush Satan's head, one who will reverse the curses brought about by the Fall. That offspring is Christ, who will reconcile all things to God by the cross (Col 1:20). God ordained to accomplish his work of redemption over a long

period of time before and after the cross. Most of the Bible is the story of this redemption, most especially the redemption of humanity as his image bearers. Every aspect of this story of redemption points to Christ as the Redeemer and his death and resurrection as the way he would accomplish that redemption.

- o **New Creation: Christ Making All Things New**
  Revelation 21-22 is not only the end of the Bible but the ultimate future for which Christians long. Christ will finish his work of redemption once and for all by returning, making all things right, and establishing a new creation where the curses of Genesis 3 have been reversed. Believers will dwell with him there forever. Even before he returns, all who are united to Christ by faith are already part of this new creation (2 Cor 5:17), having been born again by the Spirit (John 3:6) and "created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph 2:10).

Any given passage of Scripture falls within either creation, fall, redemption, or new creation. Some reflect more than one of these big-picture realities. Most are found within the period of redemption.

- **The Big Picture of Redemption**
  Within the period of redemption, it is helpful to consider the ways that redemption is carried out across history. The entire history of God's redemption culminates in the person and work of Christ, so considering a passage's placement within that history can help to identify how it points to Christ. This is called a redemptive-historical approach.

- **Identifying Epochs of Salvation History**
  God's redemptive work plays out in the Bible in a number of historical periods, which are often called epochs. There is no perfect way to identify and classify these epochs of salvation history. Here are three different proposals to consider:

  - o **Covenant Periods**
    In another session of this study we will look at the covenants of the Old Testament as a theme that is fulfilled in Christ. For now, we can think of the covenants as one way to mark out the following epochs of salvation history:

    - ▪ **Adam to Noah**
      The period of time between God's covenant with Adam and his covenant with Noah establishes the universal need of humanity for Christ to be our Redeemer.

    - ▪ **Noah to Abraham**
      The period of time between God's covenant with Noah and his covenant with Abraham shows us that humanity cannot save itself even with a fresh start. We need Christ's intervention from outside.

    - ▪ **Abraham to Moses**
      The period of time between God's covenant with Abraham and his covenant with Moses pictures God's preservation of a chosen people for himself and his promise that a blessing will come to the whole earth through them. That blessing will ultimately come through Christ, who is the true head of God's chosen people.

    - ▪ **Moses to David**
      The period of time between God's covenant with Moses and his covenant with David shows the inability of man to follow God in holiness

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even with clear, written guidelines. God's people need a king who will lead them in righteousness.

- **David to Christ**
  The period of time between God's covenant with David and the coming of Christ shows a growing need for and expectation of a king who will restore the kingdom. That king is Christ.

- **New Covenant in Christ**
  God establishes a new covenant in Christ. All of the needs and expectations of the prior periods of salvation history find their fulfillment in him. We are now awaiting his return, when everything he has accomplished in his death and resurrection will become visible forever.

o **Epochs of Revelation (Geerhardus Vos)**[7]
Another way to break down the history of redemption is in the ways that God revealed himself and his plan of salvation throughout history. Each revelatory epoch also contains smaller units of redemptive history, and each points to Christ as its goal.

- **Mosaic Epoch**
  Geerhardus Vos's approach to epochs of revelation starts with the mosaic epoch of the first five books of the Bible, where the need for redemption and the promise of a conquering seed of the woman leads up to the giving of the Law through Moses.

- **Prophetic Epoch**
  Second, the prophetic epoch encompasses the remainder of the Old Testament and represents the period of time when God was actively revealing himself through many prophets.

- **New Testament**
  Finally, the New Testament epoch is the time when God has revealed himself through the sending of his Son, Jesus Christ.

o **Kingdom Epochs (Graeme Goldsworthy)**[8]
Graeme Goldsworthy traces the epochs of the Bible in terms of the rise and fall of the kingdom, with the ultimate kingdom of Christ as its goal. Each passage of Scripture can be viewed as pointing to Christ as king when understood in the context of the history of the kingdom.

- **The kingdom of God revealed in Israel's history**
  Goldsworthy identifies this period as the rise of the kingdom of Israel from God's promise to make Abraham a great nation to the reign of Solomon, the son of David, who built the temple in Jerusalem.

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[7]Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975).

[8]Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel & Kingdom: A Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1981).

- ▪ **The kingdom of God revealed in prophecy**
  The kingdom declines after Solomon all the way to the point of being conquered by Assyria and Babylon. God speaks through the prophets of a coming Son of David who will establish a lasting kingdom.

- ▪ **The kingdom of God revealed in Jesus Christ**
  God fulfills his promises and his prophecies by sending Christ. The kingdom of God has come in Christ and will come fully when he returns.

- • **Focus on the Christ-centered unity of the big picture of the Bible, not on drawing sharp distinctions between epochs of salvation history.**
  There are also many other ways we could divide and classify the various portions of the Bible. The goal is not to view these epochs as divided but as connected into a big picture with Jesus as its subject.

Christ-centered Bible Theme for Week 2: Kingdom
The theme of the kingdom runs throughout the Bible and points us to Jesus as the King.

- • **Three elements of the kingdom[9]**
  Defining God's kingdom in the Bible can be tricky. Graeme Goldsworthy has pointed out three elements of the kingdom as it is presented in the Bible. Each of these three aspects is emphasized to different degrees in different portions of the Bible. The book of Revelation is a good place to see all three elements:

  - o **God's people (Rev 1:6)**

  - o **God's place (Rev 11:15)**

  - o **God's rule (Rev 12:10)**

- • **The kingdom throughout the Bible**

  - o **The kingdom in God's creation design**
  God is the supreme Creator. He created mankind (God's people), put them in the garden (God's place), and commanded them to exercise dominion over creation in his name (God's rule).

  - o **Preparation for the kingdom of Israel from Abraham to Moses**
  God began building up what would become the kingdom of Israel when he promised to make a great nation of Abraham's offspring.

  - o **The kingdom of Israel established in the exodus from Egypt and conquest of Canaan**

  - o **The downward spiral of the kingdom of Israel without a king (Judges 21:25)**

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[9]Goldsworthy, *Gospel & Kingdom*, 47.

- The rejection of God as king, leading to the disastrous rule of King Saul (1 Sam 10:19)

- The prosperous rule of King David, a man after God's own heart

- The covenant with David anticipating an eternal King from his line

- Times of health and decline under good and bad kings

- The exile of Israel, but with David's royal line not destroyed (2 Kings 25:27)

- Prophecies of a descendant of David who would to restore the kingdom (Isa 11:1)

- Return from exile to rebuild the kingdom, but with no king

- Jesus born from the line of David in the city of David as King of the Jews (Mat 2:2)

- "The kingdom of God is at hand" in Christ (Mark 1:15)

- Jesus crucified for claiming a kingdom, though not of this world (John 18:36-37)

- Believers in Christ as a "royal priesthood" (1 Pet 2:9)

- Christ returning as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19)

- Christ's eternal rule with his saints at New Jerusalem (Rev 21-22)

Take-Home Passages for Week 2

Read through each of these passages carefully and pray that God would help you to know Christ more deeply through them. You may prefer to spread them out over your devotional times throughout the week. For each text, consider the following questions, then write down your observations about how it points to Christ.

1) What does the text say? What is it communicating in a basic, straight-forward way?
2) How does the context of the passage affect the way we should think of it? How does it fit into the book? How does it fit into the grand narrative of the Bible?
3) How can this week's interpretive tool (the big picture of the Bible) and/or this week's Christ-centered Bible theme (kingdom) help you see Christ in this passage?
4) What else about this passage helps you more deeply understand and appreciate the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Passage #1: Genesis 11:1-9

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Passage #2: 2 Kings 25:22-30

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Passage #3: Isaiah 35:1-10

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Passage #4: Luke 19:11-28

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*Note for teaching: Student handouts will contain only the **bold** print.*

Week 3 – Preparation, Fulfillment, Result; and Covenant Theme

Interpretive Tool for Week 3: Preparation, Fulfillment, and Result
This week's interpretive tool is simpler to explain than most of the concepts covered so far in this study. In seeking to understand how a given text of Scripture points to Christ, we can understand that every text in the Bible is either preparation, fulfillment, or a result of Christ and his work.

- **A tool to keep our minds on Christ in both testaments**
This interpretive tool reminds us of the Christ-centered nature of the Old Testament, but it is less specific than others in determining how Old Testament passages relate to Christ. Its greater strength is in its application to texts in the New Testament. Promises are fulfilled there in Christ, and commands are a result of Christ.

- **Preparation for Christ**
Every portion of the Old Testament and some portions of the New Testament are preparation for the coming of Christ and the work he would accomplish:

    o **Historical narratives leading up to Christ**

    o **Laws that will be fulfilled in Christ**

    o **Prophetic promises that will be kept in Christ**

    o **Covenants that will be upheld in Christ**

    o **People, places, objects, events, and epochs patterned as types of Christ**

    o **Human failures showing the need for Christ**

    o **Descriptions of evil that Christ will conquer**

    o **Descriptions of God's nature that will be seen in Christ**

    o **Wise principles that Christ will embody**

    o **Prophets preparing the way for Christ**

- **Fulfillment in Christ**
As we look at what the New Testament tells us about the person and work of Christ, we can think of it as the fulfillment of what came earlier.

    o **"All the promises of God find their yes in him" (2 Cor 1:20)**

    o **Christ's coming into the world fulfills prophetic promises**

    o **Christ's miracles demonstrate his identity as Creator and Lord**

    o **Christ's perfect life of obedience fulfills the Law**

    o **Christ's death is the once-for-all sacrifice for sin**

- o **Christ's resurrection and ascension establish his identity as king**

- o **Christ's Second Coming will perfectly fulfill every promise**

- **Results of Christ's coming**
    Sometimes way may forget how much Christ has accomplished for us. As we read the New Testament, we can better know and appreciate Christ by considering that much of its contents are the result of Christ's having come and accomplished his work. Here are a few of the kinds of results of Christ's ministry we find in the New Testament:

    - o **The sending of the Holy Spirit to indwell believers**

    - o **Gifts of the Spirit**

    - o **The fruit of the Spirit**

    - o **The inclusion of the Gentiles**

    - o **No longer required to keep Jewish Law**

    - o **No need for priests since Christ is the one mediator between God and man**

    - o **Good works not as law-keeping but as walking by the Spirit**

    - o **The establishment and ordering of the church**

    - o **Baptism**

    - o **The Lord's Supper**

    - o **God's people identified by faith, not family lineage**

    - o **Marriage as a picture of Christ and the church**

    - o **The "new commandment" that we love one another**

    - o **And much more**

Christ-centered Bible Theme for Week 3: Covenant
As we mentioned briefly last week, one way to understand the history of redemption is by marking off the periods between covenants. The concept of covenant is itself also a theme that runs throughout Scripture and finds its fulfillment in Christ.

- **A covenant is an agreement between God and his people**
    The concept of a covenant was well known in the Ancient Near East. A covenant was something like a contract between two parties. Some covenants in the ancient world were between a suzerain (feudal lord) and his vassals (feudal tenants), and covenants in the Bible often reflect the structure of those suzerain covenants. Most basically, a covenant in the Bible is an agreement between God and his people. Some of the most common elements are:

    - o **Promises from God**

- o **Obligations of his people**

- o **Blessings for obedience**

- o **Curses for disobedience**

- **Summary of covenants in the Bible and how Christ fulfills them**

  - o **Covenant with Adam**
    The word "covenant" is not present in the opening chapters of Genesis, but the elements of a covenant are present. Adam is to work and keep the garden. He and his posterity are to function as agents of God to spread his glory across the world as mankind multiplies, fills the whole earth, and subdues it. He is promised life for obedience. The only possible act of disobedience is to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the curse for doing so is death. Adam fails and brings the whole human race into a state of sin and misery.

    - ▪ **Christ is the new Adam**
      Christ was born of a virgin as the start of a new humanity. Whereas Adam failed and brought death, Christ succeeded and brought life. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:22, **"**For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."

  - o **Covenant with Noah**
    After God floods the earth and destroys all humanity except for Noah and his family, he makes a covenant with Noah in Genesis 9. This covenant is very similar to the covenant with Adam, but built into it is a recognition of the reality of sin and death.

    - ▪ **Christ, again, is the new Adam—the new beginning Noah could not be**
      Noah's father Lamech seems to have understood that God would use Noah as a kind of a fresh start to humanity (Gen 5:29). However, Noah was flawed and could not undo the curses of sin like his father hoped. Christ must come and do it.

  - o **Covenant with Abraham**
    In Genesis 17, God establishes a covenant with Abraham, promising to make him the father of a multitude and to give him and his offspring the land of Canaan. Abraham and his posterity are required to practice circumcision as the sign of this covenant.

    - ▪ **Christ is the offspring of Abraham (Gal 3:16)**
      Galatians 3:16 tells us that Christ is the offspring of Abraham in whom all the promises of the Abrahamic covenant are fulfilled. All who have faith in Christ are counted as sons of Abraham and are blessed along with him (Gal 3:7-9).

  - o **Covenant with Israel (through Moses)**
    Following the exodus from Egypt under the leadership of Moses, God establishes a covenant with the people of Israel starting in Exodus 19. God agrees to be their God and to dwell among them. As a holy God, he requires them to dwell with him in holiness and reverence. He establishes his law for the people to

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keep, which includes commandments about ceremonial worship, moral behavior, and civil matters. The obligations of the covenant stretch across multiple books. There are blessings for obedience (Lev 26:1-13) and punishments for disobedience (Lev 26:14-46). After a generation of Israelites dies in the wilderness, the book of Deuteronomy is mostly a reiteration and renewal of this covenant for a new generation of Israel.

- **Christ fulfilled the law, bore its curses, and earned its blessings, to be received by faith**
  Much of the New Testament is devoted to explaining Christ's fulfillment of the covenant with Moses, especially Paul's letters and Hebrews. As Paul writes in Galatians 3:13-14, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith."

- **Covenant with David**
  In 2 Samuel 7, God delivers a covenant with David through the mouth of Nathan the prophet God promises to give David a son who would build a temple. Through this son, David's kingdom and throne would be established forever. 1 Kings 2:4 makes explicit that this covenant is with the whole line of David's offspring: "If your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel."

  - **Christ is the King, the Son of David**
    The first verse of the New Testament introduces Jesus as the Son of David (Mat 1:1), and this title follows him throughout his ministry. Christ is born into the family of David in the city of David and is known as King of the Jews from his birth (Mat 2:2) to his death (Mat 27:37). He is the obedient son (Heb 5:8), the builder of the true temple (John 2:19-21), and the one who will sit on the throne forever (Rev 22:3) as the "root and descendent of David" (Rev 22:16).

- **New Covenant**
  Jeremiah 31:31-34 contains God's promise of a new covenant unlike the one he had given through Moses. Whereas the people broke the law of the old covenant, in this new covenant he will write the law on their hearts. He will forgive their sin and be their God. They will be a new kind of people to him because they will all know him.

  - **Christ is the mediator of the new covenant**
    The new covenant promised in Jeremiah 31 has come in Christ (Heb 8:6-13) by his blood (Luke 22:20). He is the mediator of the new covenant (Heb 9:15; 12:24).

- **The narrowing of the covenants down to the singular person of Christ**
  Each covenant in the Old Testament becomes progressively more narrow in its scope. The covenant with Adam is with all mankind. The covenant with Noah is likewise with all the inhabitants of the earth, but those inhabitants have been limited to Noah's offspring by the flood. The next covenant is not with all mankind but only with the offspring of Abraham. The mosaic covenant is not with all of Abraham's offspring but only with the offspring of his grandson Jacob. The covenant with David is the narrowest

of all, granted only to the royal line of David. All of these covenants funnel down to the singular person of Christ, who alone inaugurates the new covenant.

- **The worldwide blessing of the new covenant in Christ**
Through Christ's fulfillment of all the previous covenants, the new covenant contains the broadest blessings and the broadest scope of all. In this new Adam, people from every tribe and nation are invited to be God's people by faith in him.

Take-Home Passages for Week 3
Read through each of these passages carefully and pray that God would help you to know Christ more deeply through them. You may prefer to spread them out over your devotional times throughout the week. For each text, consider the following questions, then write down your observations about how it points to Christ.

1) What does the text say? What is it communicating in a basic, straight-forward way?
2) How does the context of the passage affect the way we should think of it? How does it fit into the book? How does it fit into the grand narrative of the Bible?
3) How can this week's interpretive tool (preparation, fulfillment, and result) and/or this week's Christ-centered Bible theme (covenant) help you see Christ in this passage?
4) What else about this passage helps you more deeply understand and appreciate the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Passage #1: Leviticus 4:13-21

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Passage #2: 2 Chronicles 26:14-23

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Passage #3: Ezekiel 42:1-20

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Passage #4: Matthew 5:21-48

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*Note for teaching: Student handouts will contain only the **bold** print.*

Week 4 – Fallen Condition Focus; Christ as Prophet, Priest, King, and Wise Man

Interpretive Tool for Week 4: Fallen Condition Focus (FCF)

- **Bryan Chapell's definition of the FCF of a passage: "the mutual human condition that contemporary believers share with those to or about whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage for God's people to glorify and enjoy him."** [10]

- **Every passage shows us something about the fallen nature of man, to which Christ is the only solution.**

- **"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23)**

- **Whole sections of the Bible are intended to show that sinful man needs a redeemer.**
  The book of Judges is a prime example. It is arranged to show the downward spiral of rebellion in God's people as "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6).

- **Every hero in the Bible is flawed except Jesus.**
  Even when we most want to hold up a character of the Bible as an example, they inevitably have some flaw. They need Christ to redeem them just as we do.

- **Some Bible characters are anti-heroes pointing typologically to Christ as the true hero.**
  For example, Abimelech in Judges 9 establishes himself as king by murdering all his brothers, whereas Christ establishes himself as king by laying down his life for his sheep.

- **Every villain in the Bible exposes our sinful tendencies and need for a redeemer.**
  We must not read the Bible with an attitude of, **"**God, I thank you that I am not like other men" (Luke 18:11), not even when those men are Pharisees or other biblical villains. Instead, we can look for the FCF of each passage and see that it exposes our own hearts. Then we can be moved to pray, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13). That mercy comes only through the person and work of Christ.

- **Every law in the Bible exposes our sinful rebellion and need for a redeemer.**
  As Paul wrote in Romans 3:20, "through the law comes knowledge of sin."

- **Every wise saying in the Bible exposes our foolishness and need for a redeemer**
  See 1 Corinthians 3:18.

- **Every mention of the grace of God shows us we don't deserve what Christ has done.**

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[10]Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 50.

Christ-Centered Bible Theme for Week 4: Prophet, Priest, King, and Wise Man

- **The FCF of each passage reminds us that someone better must accomplish our redemption.**

- **Christ fulfills the Old Testament roles of prophet, priest, and king**

- **A better prophet than Moses**

    o **Moses sinned against God (Num 20:11-12).**

    o **The other prophets sinned against God (1 Kings 13:11-31).**

    o **Christ perfectly fulfills the role of prophet (Heb 1:1-2).**

    o **Every prophet in the Bible points us to Christ as the greatest prophet.**

    o **Westminster Shorter Catechism (WSC): "Christ executeth the office of a prophet, in revealing to us, by his word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation."[11]**

- **A better priest then Aaron**

    o **Aaron sinned against God (Exod 32:1-6).**

    o **The other priests sinned against God (1 Sam 2:12-17).**

    o **Christ perfectly fulfills the role of priest (Heb 10:11-12).**

    o **Every priest in the Bible points us to Christ as the greatest priest.**

    o **WSC: "Christ executeth the office of a priest, in his once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God; and in making continual intercession for us."[12]**

- **A better King than David**

    o **David sinned against God (2 Sam 12:9).**

    o **The other kings sinned against God (2 Kings 21:20-22).**

    o **Christ perfectly fulfills the role of king (Rev 19:16).**

    o **Every king in the Bible points us to Christ as the greatest king.**

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[11]Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 24.

[12]Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 25.

- o WSC: "Christ executeth the office of a king, in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies."[13]

- **Another aspect of Christ as King: a better wise man than Solomon**

  - o **David's son Solomon left a royal legacy of wisdom (1 Kings 5:7).**

  - o **Wisdom literature points us to the "wise man" like Solomon (Ecc 1:1; 7:19).**

  - o **We need a better wise man than sinful Solomon (1 Kings 11:6).**

  - o **Christ is "greater than Solomon" in his wisdom (Luke 11:31).**

  - o **Only Christ walked in perfect, sinless wisdom.**

  - o **Knowing Christ involves abandoning pretenses of wisdom (1 Cor 3:18).**

  - o **The wisdom of God is known through the foolishness of the cross (1 Cor 1:18-25).**

  - o **Every wise saying in the Bible points us to Christ as the greatest wise man.**

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[13] Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 25.

Take-Home Passages for Week 4
Read through each of these passages carefully and pray that God would help you to know Christ more deeply through them. You may prefer to spread them out over your devotional times throughout the week. For each text, consider the following questions, then write down your observations about how it points to Christ.

1) What does the text say? What is it communicating in a basic, straight-forward way?
2) How does the context of the passage affect the way we should think of it? How does it fit into the book? How does it fit into the grand narrative of the Bible?
3) How can this week's interpretive tool (Fallen Condition Focus) and/or this week's Christ-centered Bible theme (Christ as prophet, priest, king, and wise man) help you see Christ in this passage?
4) What else about this passage helps you more deeply understand and appreciate the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Passage #1: Numbers 16:1-50

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Passage #2: Judges 19:1-30

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Passage #3: Proverbs 26:1-28

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Passage #4: James 3:13-18

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*Note for teaching: Student handouts will contain only the **bold** print.*

<u>**Week 5 – The New Testament's Use of the Old Testament; the Offspring of the Woman**</u>

Interpretive Tool for Week 5: the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament
Much of what we have already done in this study has been an effort to help interpret the Old Testament in the same way that the authors of the New Testament do. In this session, we will consider how to use the New Testament's explicit references to the Old Testament to point us to Christ.

- **Most basically: How does the New Testament say *this* passage points to Christ?**

    o **Use resources to check whether the New Testament mentions your passage**

        ▪ **Cross-references (many available online)**

        ▪ **Study Bibles**

        ▪ *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament[14]*

    o **The way the New Testament uses the passage is always right.**
    Our own understanding is what must be critiqued and adjusted. Any desire we have to critique the New Testament usage of an Old Testament passage indicates that we have not yet properly understood the Old Testament passage.

    o **The New Testament use of the passage may point explicitly to Christ (Acts 2:25-32)**
    In these cases, the New Testament directly shows us how to view the passage as Christ-centered. For example, the interpretation of Psalm 16:8-11 in Acts 2:25-32 is that David's words about not being abandoned to Sheol point forward to the Son of David who would rise from the dead.

    o **The New Testament use of the passage may point indirectly to Christ (1 Tim 5:18).**
    In these cases, the New Testament does not use the passage to directly point to Christ but still uses it on the basis of Christ and his completed work. For example, Deuteronomy 25:4, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain," is quoted in 1 Corinthians 9:9 and 1 Timothy 5:18 as evidence that pastors deserve to be paid. There are a number of ways to understand the Christ-centered nature of Deuteronomy 25:4 through this usage, such as the law being fulfilled in Christ rather than set aside completely; it is still useful for teaching and for upholding principles of justice among the new covenant people of God.

- **Less Basically: How does the New Testament use the Old Testament in general?**

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[14]G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

- o **Much of this entire study is seeking to answer this question.**

- o **Something to think about as you read the Bible for years to come**

- o **Some of the most common ways:[15]**

  - ▪ **Old Testament prophecy directly fulfilled (Mat 2:5-6)**

  - ▪ **Old Testament prophecy typologically fulfilled (Mat 2:15)**

  - ▪ **Affirmation that Old Testament prophecy will be fulfilled (2 Pet 3:11-14)**

  - ▪ **Illustrative use of the Old Testament (1 Cor 9:9-10)**

  - ▪ **Symbolic use of the Old Testament (Rev 13:1-2)**

  - ▪ **Indicating the abiding authority of the Old Testament (Rom 3:4)**

Christ-Centered Bible Theme for Week 5: the Offspring of the Woman

Genesis 3:15 is often called the *protoeuangelion*, the first gospel. It establishes a Christ-centered theme that runs throughout the entire Bible. A singular offspring will rise up through the elect line of the woman

- • **Genesis 3:15: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."**

- • **The meaning of the verse**

  - o **Context**
    In response to their sin, God pronounces a series of curses upon the serpent, the woman, the man, and the ground (Gen 3:14-19). Within these curses are the words from God to the serpent in 3:15.

  - o **Enmity**
    The enmity God places between the serpent and the woman is violently hostile in nature. The other biblical uses of the word (Num 35:21-22; Ezek 25:15; 35:5) are all found in connection with violence, whether committed by an individual or an army. The enmity between the serpent and the woman, and between her offspring and his, is a hostility fundamental to their identities, not a simple discomfort with one another or a mere dispute that can be reconciled.

  - o **Bruises to head deadly, not to the heel**
    Kenneth Mathews writes, "The location of the blow distinguishes the severity and success of the attack. The impact delivered by the offspring of the

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[15]G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 55-93.

woman 'at the head' is mortal, while the serpent will deliver a blow only 'at the heel.'"[16]

- o **Many offspring leading up to one "he"**
  The structure of the verse presents a three-fold view of the conflict with which God curses the serpent as immediate, future, and climactic. In its most immediate sense, the enmity depicted in Genesis 3:15 is between the serpent and the woman. This enmity, however, will continue later "between your offspring and her offspring," culminating in a bruising battle between "he" and "you."

  In an immediate sense, there is "enmity between you and the woman," a conflict between these two individual beings who are present in the narrative of Genesis 3. Then, in the future, there will be enmity "between your offspring and her offspring," a conflict which will play out in their collective offspring. The verse then presents a final level of conflict in parallel to the first two, which may be understood as an individual descendant of the woman climatically defeating the serpent himself: "he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." This individual is messianic in his role as the deliverer of man from the one who lured him into the curse of sin.

- **The Typological Pattern of Genesis 3:15 throughout Scripture**
  The messianic offspring will rise through the elect line of blessing, defeat the serpent and his offspring, and restore blessings in place of the curses of Genesis 3. This pattern flows throughout the book of Genesis and into the remainder of the Pentateuch, is evident in much of the rest of the OT, and finds its culmination in the NT in Jesus Christ and his followers. Genesis 3:15 thus indicates the Christ-centered nature of the Bible and establishes one typological lens through which readers may recognize Christ as the subject of all Scripture.

  - o **The Focus of Genesis on the elect line of the offspring of the Woman**

    - ▪ **Eve's initial hope that Cain is the promised offspring (Gen 4:1)**
      Instead, Cain proves himself to be offspring of the serpent by killing Abel.

    - ▪ **Seth is "another offspring instead of Abel" (Gen 4:25)**

    - ▪ **Lamech hopes Noah will be the one to reverse the curses of sin (Gen 5:28-29)**

    - ▪ **Despite the flood, enmity between offspring continues (Gen 9:24-27)**

    - ▪ **Elect line traced to Abraham, whose offspring will bring blessings to "all the families of the earth" (Gen 12:3) and will "possess the gate of his enemies" (Gen 22:17-18)**

  - o **Promise of worldwide blessing repeated about offspring of Isaac and Jacob (Gen 26:4; 28:14)**

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[16]Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1a (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 245.

- The line of blessing continues in Jacob's sons, culminating in the declaration that the scepter will not depart from Judah (49:10).

- **The offspring of the woman throughout the Old Testament**

  - Possible to view all of Israel's history as conflicts between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the serpent, leading up to Christ

  - Hostility between Egypt and the offspring of the Hebrew people (Exod 1:22)

  - The Mosaic community is the offspring of the promise (Exod 32:13)

  - Promise to strike down David's enemies and raise up his offspring (2 Sam 7:9, 11-12)

  - The final offspring will bear the sin of many as he is crushed but will divide a portion with the many (Isa 53:5-12).

- **The language of Genesis 3:15 throughout the Old Testament**

  - Enemies with crushed heads (Num 24:17; Judg 5:26; 9:53; 1 Sam 17:49; Ps 68:21; 110:6; Jer 23:19; 30:23; Hab 3:13)

  - Enemies trampled underfoot (Josh 10:24; 2 Sam 22:39; Judg 5:27; Ps 44:5; 60:12; 91:12-13; Isa 28:3; 63:3; Zech 10:5; Mal 4:3)

- **Christ as the offspring of the woman in the New Testament**

  - Christ's genealogy traced through the elect line (Matt 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38)

  - "Born of a woman" (Gal 4:4)

  - The singular offspring of the promise (Gal 3:16)

  - The nations rage against him in enmity (Acts 4:25-26).

  - His enemies will be placed under his feet (Matt 22:44; Acts 2:35; 1 Cor 15:25; Eph 1:22; Heb 2:8; 10:13; Rev 19:15). [17]

  - He will destroy the devil (Heb 2:14), "that ancient serpent" (Rev 12:19).

- **Believers in Christ also as the offspring of the woman**

  - John's insincere baptismal candidates a "brood of vipers" (Luke 3:7)

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[17]James Hamilton, "The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham," *Tyndale Bulletin* 58, no. 2 (2007): 272. Hamilton writes that these texts "might also reflect imagery from Genesis 3:15 through the lens of Psalm 110."

- The Pharisees are offspring of the serpent (Matt 3:7; 12:34; 23:33).

- Jesus gives his disciples "authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19).

- The offspring of the woman in the elect line of Abraham are those with the faith of Abraham (Rom 4:16; Gal 3:7-9).

- Offspring of God practice righteousness and love one another; offspring of the devil make a practice of sinning (1 John 3:8-10).

- God will crush Satan under believers' feet (Rom 16:20).

Take-Home Passages for Week 5

Read through each of these passages carefully and pray that God would help you to know Christ more deeply through them. You may prefer to spread them out over your devotional times throughout the week. For each text, consider the following questions, then write down your observations about how it points to Christ.

1) What does the text say? What is it communicating in a basic, straight-forward way?
2) How does the context of the passage affect the way we should think of it? How does it fit into the book? How does it fit into the grand narrative of the Bible?
3) How can this week's interpretive tool (the New Testament's use of the Old Testament) and/or this week's Christ-centered Bible theme (the offspring of the woman and the elect line of promise) help you see Christ in this passage?
4) What else about this passage helps you more deeply understand and appreciate the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Passage #1: Genesis 12:1-7
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Passage #2: Ruth 4:9-22
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Passage #3: Hosea 11:1-12
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Passage #4: Romans 16:17-20
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*Note for teaching: Student handouts will contain only the **bold** print.*

Week 6 – Direct Prophecy, Christophany, and the Dwelling Place of God

Interpretive Tools for Week 6: Direct Prophecy and Christophany
This week we will look briefly at two interpretive tools you may have already had in mind before you started this course. Hopefully the previous sessions have helped you see that these need not be the primary tools used for understanding how all of Scripture points to Christ, but they do still have a prominent place in that understanding. We will also look briefly at the theme of the dwelling place of God among man. Because this is the last session, the material is shorter to allow more time for questions.

- **Direct Prophecies**

  - **Straight-forward predictions of Christ in the Old Testament with little or no symbolism or abstraction involved**

  - **Most direct prophecies of Christ are quoted in the New Testament.**

  - **Examples: Isaiah 53:1-12; 61:1-2; Zechariah 9:9**

  - **Be careful! They may not be as direct as they first appear.**

    - **Example: Isaiah 7:14 seems to be fulfilled in Isaiah 8:3**

    - **Multiple fulfillments of prophecy are to be expected.**

    - **Even in direct prophecies, look for typological patterns of fulfillment with Christ at the climax.**

- **Christophany**

  - **A Christophany is a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ in the Old Testament.**

  - **John 12:41 indicates that Isaiah experienced a Christophany in Isaiah 6.**

  - **It is possible, but not certain, that some Old Testament appearances of an "angel of the Lord" are Christophanies (Gen 16:7-13; 22:11-18; Judg 13:3-23; Dan 3:24-28).**

  - **Caution: Do not expect to see Christophanies often.**
    They are rare. Hopefully by now you have learned some better ways to see Christ in the Old Testament!

Christ-Centered Bible Theme for Week 6: the Dwelling Place of God Among Men
God reveals throughout the entire Bible his plan to dwell with his people. This plan finds its fulfillment in Christ.

- **Eras of God's dwelling among men[18]**

  o **Earth initially intended to be God's dwelling with man; marred by sin**
  God placed mankind on earth as his image-bearers (Gen 1:27), commissioned them to carry out a world-wide mission of advancing his glory (Gen 1:28), and walked among them in person (Gen 3:8). Man was banished from the garden as a result of sin (Gen 3:24), away from the presence of God and the tree of life.

  o **God's presence then associated with heaven, occasionally descending**

  o **Tabernacle becomes God's dwelling place after Sinai covenant**
  The glory of God fills the tabernacle in Exodus 40:34. The law functions as a guideline for holiness so that God could live among the people: "I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people" (Lev 26:11-12).

  o **Temple then takes tabernacle's place; God dwells among people of Jerusalem**
  The glory of God fills the temple in 1 Kings 8:11. As the city where God dwells, its people are called to holiness (Isaiah 52:1).

  o **The glory of God departs (Ezek 10), people sent into exile, temple destroyed**

  o **Second temple built after return from exile; unclear whether God dwells there**

  o **Jesus' incarnation brings God's dwelling to earth; he is himself a temple**
  Note the similarities between the filling of the tabernacle and temple with the glory of God and the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus like a dove at his baptism (Mat 3:16-17)

  o **Holy Spirit comes upon believers at Pentecost; God's presence now in the church**

  o **In Revelation 21-22, God with man in a rejuvenated earth**
  See especially Revelation 21:3. The end is like the beginning, but better.

  o **Christ as the focus of God's dwelling among men throughout Scripture (John 2:19-21)**

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[18]T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 13-73.

Take-Home Passages for Week 6

Read through each of these passages carefully and pray that God would help you to know Christ more deeply through them. You may prefer to spread them out over your devotional times throughout the week. For each text, consider the following questions, then write down your observations about how it points to Christ.

1) What does the text say? What is it communicating in a basic, straight-forward way?
2) How does the context of the passage affect the way we should think of it? How does it fit into the book? How does it fit into the grand narrative of the Bible?
3) How can this week's interpretive tool (direct prophecies and Christophanies) and/or this week's Christ-centered Bible theme (the dwelling place of God) help you see Christ in this passage?
4) What else about this passage helps you more deeply understand and appreciate the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Passage #1: Deuteronomy 18:9-22

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Passage #2: 1 Samuel 13:1-23

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Passage #3: Psalm 2:1-12

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Passage #4: 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

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ABSTRACT

TRAINING CONGREGANTS AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
OF MATAWAN, NEW JERSEY, TO STUDY THE BIBLE
IN A CHRISTOCENTRIC MANNER

Daniel Ian Wiginton, D.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Robert L. Plummer

The purpose of this project was to train congregants at First Baptist Church of Matawan, New Jersey, to study the Bible in a Christocentric manner. Chapter 1 introduces the project by presenting its purpose, goals, context, rationale, definitions, limitations, delimitations, and research methodology. Chapter 2 presents a biblical and theological justification for studying the Bible in a Christocentric manner by examining four key biblical texts. Chapter 3 considers theoretical and practical issues of studying the Bible in a Christocentric manner by examining the Christocentric interpretive methods of Edmund P. Clowney, Bryan Chappell, Sidney Greidanus, and Graeme Goldsworthy. Chapter 4 describes the implementation of the project, in which a six-week discipleship course on Christocentric Bible study was developed and taught at First Baptist Church of Matawan, New Jersey. Chapter 5 provides an evaluation of the project, including strengths, weaknesses, theological reflections, and personal reflections.

VITA

Daniel Ian Wiginton

EDUCATION
        B.E., Vanderbilt University, 2003
        M.Div., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006

MINISTERIAL
        Pastoral Intern, Inglewood Baptist Church, Nashville, Tennessee, 2003
        Minister of Youth, Sand Spring Baptist Church, Lawrenceburg, Kentucky,
            2004-2008
        Minister of College and Singles, Vista Grande Baptist Church, Colorado
            Springs, Colorado, 2008-2013
        Pastor, First Baptist Church, Matawan, New Jersey, 2013-