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SCRIPTURAL STORYTELLING: USING THE HOMILETIC
THEORY OF EDMUND CLOWNEY FOR CHRIST-
CENTERED PREACHING OF OLD TESTAMENT
NARRATIVES

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To Graham, Clarke, and Quinn,
To Kim,
To the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
I love you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE.....	x
Chapter.....	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Familiarity with the Literature.....	2
Primary Sources.....	2
Secondary Sources.....	4
Void in the Literature.....	8
Thesis.....	10
Outline of Chapters.....	11
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	11
Chapter 2: Analysis of Clowney's Homiletic Texts.....	12
Chapter 3: Analyses of Clowney's Sermons.....	13
Chapter 4: Sermon Craft via the Hermeneutic Template	14
Chapter 5: Evaluations and Other Considerations.....	15
2. ANALYSIS OF CLOWNEY'S HOMILETIC TEXTS.....	17
The Word of God.....	18
The Role and Function of Scripture.....	20
Covenant Understanding and Narrative.....	24
Covenant as History.....	24
Covenant as Story	26
The Text in its Original Historical Period	28

Chapter	Page
The Text in God's Total Revelation.....	29
Covenant and Fulfillment	30
The Person of Christ	30
Symbolism	33
A Biblical Case for Symbolism	33
In Defense of Symbolism	35
Typology.....	36
Conclusion.....	38
 3. ANALYSES OF CLOWNEY'S SERMONS	 40
"Following the Uncrowned King" (1 Sam 26)	41
Sermon Content Summary.....	41
Analysis and Observations ("Uncrowned King").....	42
God's Word as Sovereign Authority in the Narrative.....	42
Scripture as Story.....	44
Covenant Understanding within the Narrative	44
Symbolism, Typology, and Christocentric Connections	45
"God's Blessing of a Faithful Mother" (2 Kgs 4:8-37).....	46
Sermon Content Summary.....	46
Analysis and Observations ("Faithful Mother")	47
God's Word as Sovereign Authority in the Narrative.....	47
Scripture as Story.....	48
Covenant Understanding within the Narrative	48
Symbolism, Typology, and Christocentric Connections	49
"Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9).....	49
Sermon Content Summary.....	49
Analysis and Observations ("Salvation is of the Lord").....	51

Chapter	Page
God's Word as Sovereign Authority in the Narrative	51
Scripture as Story.....	51
Covenant Understanding within the Narrative	52
Symbolism, Typology, and Christocentric Connections	53
"God on Trial" (Exod 17:1-7).....	54
Sermon Content Summary.....	54
Analysis and Observations ("God on Trial").....	55
God's Word as Sovereign Authority in the Narrative	55
Scripture as Story.....	55
Covenant Understanding within the Narrative	56
Symbolism, Typology, and Christocentric Connections	56
"Naaman Healed of Leprosy" (2 Kgs 5:1-27)	58
Sermon Content Summary.....	58
Analysis and Observations ("Naaman")	59
God's Word as Sovereign Authority in the Narrative	59
Scripture as Story.....	60
Covenant Understanding within the Narrative	60
Symbolism, Typology, and Christocentric Connections	61
Additional Sermon Corpus Content Summaries.....	62
"Heaven Opened" (Gen 28:10-22; John 1:45-51).....	62
"Meeting the Captain" (Josh 5:13-15)	63
"See What It Costs" (Gen 22).....	64
"Look and Live" (Num 21:4-9; John 3:1-15)	65
"Water from Bethlehem" (2 Sam 23:13-17).....	66
"Can God be among Us?" (Exod 34).....	67
"Family Devotion" (Ruth 4:1-17).....	68

Chapter	Page
"This is Your Life" (Ps 56:8; 1 Sam 21:10-15)	69
Conclusion	70
4. SERMON CRAFT VIA THE HERMENEUTIC TEMPLATE	72
Steps in Sermon Preparation.....	72
Part 1: Exegetical Work (1 Kgs 21 NASB).....	73
Scene 1: Ahab Covets Naboth's Vineyard (1 Kgs 21:1-4)	73
Scene 2: Jezebel's Plot of Deception (1 Kgs 21:5-16).....	75
Scene 3: Elijah's Confrontation of Ahab (1 Kgs 21:17-29).....	77
Part 2: Application of the Hallmarks	80
God's Word as Sovereign Authority in the Narrative	80
Scripture as Story.....	82
The Backstory of Elijah, Ahab, and Jezebel.....	82
Scriptural Event-Line Summary	83
Covenant Understanding within the Narrative	85
Symbolism, Typology, and Christocentric Connections	87
Christocentric Connection and Eventual Sermon Content	88
The Shepherd Kings in Ezekiel 34	88
The Good Shepherd in John 10	91
Part 3: Sermon Manuscript	93
"Character, Choice, and the Consequences of Sin": Introduction ...	93
Scene 1: 1 Kings 21:1-4.....	94
The Character of Naboth and Ahab	95
Scene 2: 1 Kings 21:5-16.....	96
Character, Choices, and Consequences	98
Scene 3: 1 Kings 21:17-29.....	99
Ahab's Response to God's Character	102

Chapter	Page
God will Fulfill His Word.....	102
Sermon Climax	103
Conclusion	104
5. EVALUATIONS AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS	106
Implications for Preaching Ministry	106
The Word of God as Sovereign Authority of the Truth.....	107
The Word of God as the Source of Scripture	107
Covenantal Understanding and Biblical Reading.....	108
Regarding the Biblical Text in its Historical Period.....	108
Regarding the Biblical Text in God's Total Revelation.....	109
Symbolism, Typology, and Promise/Fulfillment.....	110
Implications for Teaching Ministry	111
Biblical Theology and Exposition	111
Regarding Biblical Narrative and History	113
Biblical Narrative and Caution	114
Implications for Discipleship Ministry	116
The Biblical Essential of Discipleship.....	116
Biblical Literacy	118
Familiarity with Scripture.....	118
An Accurate Understanding of Analogy	118
The Use of Scripture to Explain Scripture.....	120
Missional Considerations.....	121
Considerations for Other Biblical Literary Genres.....	123
The Connection of Narrative to Poetry.....	123
Prophecy and Christocentric Promise/Fulfillment.....	125
Poetry, Prophecy, and Christocentric Fulfillment	126

Chapter	Page
OT Psalm to NT Narrative.....	127
The Legacy of Edmund Clowney	127
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	130

PREFACE

I have always loved stories. Some of my earliest memories of Sunday School were the epic sagas of Noah and Moses. These experiences were in tandem with frequent musings of Arthur S. Maxwell's *The Bible Story* series that I read while fidgeting in the waiting room at the doctor's office. My mother, an English teacher who loves literature and art, told me the stories of Homer's *Odyssey* and read to me the stories and poems of Edgar Allan Poe as a child. H.A. and Margret Rey, the creators of 'Curious George', along with Dr. Seuss and A.A. Milne, taught me how to read. I was able to experience the awesome combination of story and text because of those grocery bags of second-hand Marvel and DC Comics from the 1960's and 70's acquired from yard sales and neighbors' spring cleaning. Due to the influence of comic book authors such as Bill Finger, Gardner Fox, and Stan Lee, my imagination and vocabulary have never been the same.

It has been said that life is a story. Southern Seminary has been a part of my life story since 1994 (my wife Kim and I met during my Master's work). I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in the doctoral program at SBTS and for the professors who have given so selflessly of their time and knowledge during my doctoral study: Michael Pohlman, T. J. Betts, Joseph Harrod, William Cook, David Prince, Robert Plummer, Andrew McClurg, Brian Payne, and Ryan Fullerton.

For Dr. Pohlman, my faculty supervisor, I am extremely grateful for encouragement, direction, and confirmation of my doctoral thesis. For Dr. Betts, I am thankful for additional direction with my thesis. As well, I am thankful for my cohort brothers during our scholastic sojourn: Stephen Conley, Shaun Lewis, Josh Sammons, Steve Stutzman, and Dave Watts—I miss the coffee, barbeque, and conversation.

The story and saga of ministry is not for the faint of heart. I am thankful for spiritual mentors along the way: William Gunter and his wife Becky for their support of my call to ministry in 1993; Steve Russell for encouraging me to “not sweat the small stuff” in balancing seminary, church, and life; Kevin Landgrave for allowing me the privilege of seeing the other side of church music ministry; Darryl Crim for showing me how to make a hospital visit. Their respective churches for which I am grateful to have been a part: First Baptist Church Hillsville, Park Place United Methodist Church, Northeast Christian Church, and North Roanoke Baptist Church. As well, I am thankful for Rick Harris and J. R. Graybill for their friendships, ministries, and investment in my story.

I am grateful for Beaverdam Baptist Church and anticipate the unfolding of our chapters together. I love going to work. I love serving them. I appreciate the way they have welcomed my family, and look forward to how God will grow our friendships and strengthen our church.

I am blessed and grateful for the continued influence of Godly parents who took me to church (even at those times when I argued that “every sermon seems to be about Moses”). I give thanks to God for the sacrifice, support, dedication, and encouragement my parents give to our family, especially in this season of doctoral work.

As well, I am thankful for in-laws who have always championed me, loved me, and trusted me with being their son-in-law and father to their grandchildren. I appreciate their support and encouragement, as well as the use of their home and Keurig in these days of finishing my thesis.

To Graham, Clarke, and Quinn, I love you, and thank you for the joys that you are to your mother and me. You are the heroes in my story (Ps 127:3-5).

To Kim, I love you, and thank you for being part of my story. Who had any idea—from that day we rehearsed for that music gig in 1997—that our story would have brought us here? Thank you for your godliness, love, sacrifice, support, dedication,

faithfulness, and encouragement that you give to me—whether in sunshine or in shadow
(Prov 31:10-31).

Jake Roudebush

Salem, Virginia

May 2019

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Preaching from Old Testament narrative passages is an intimidating task for many preachers. Preachers, even seasoned expositors, commonly find Old Testament narratives difficult to preach. Because of the various literary types found in the Old Testament and the inherent difficulty in understanding their representative texts, some preachers (and congregants) avoid spending much time and investment in this portion of the Bible. As the preacher is called to proclaim the whole counsel of God, there must be a model developed that will entreat and enable the preacher to engage and proclaim the Old Testament in a Christocentric fashion.

This study focuses on the Old Testament narrative preaching of Edmund Prosper Clowney (1917–2005). Clowney was a longtime pastor and professor of preaching whose approach to preaching Old Testament narrative provides a timely, yet often overlooked, remedy for the contemporary church. A graduate of Wheaton College, Westminster Theological Seminary, and Yale Divinity School, he was ordained in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and pastored in the 1940s before joining the staff at Westminster. At Westminster, Clowney taught practical theology and also served as president of the institution for sixteen years. He was on staff at Westminster Seminary in California, served as an associate pastor of Christ the King Presbyterian Church in Houston, Texas, and was theologian-in-residence at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Charlottesville, Virginia. Clowney was regarded for his love of Scripture, and his desire to tell the story of the Bible. Clowney’s unique ability to handle biblical text, specifically the Old Testament, is the focus of this thesis.

The purpose of this thesis is to present a hermeneutical model for Christ-

centered expository preaching that will equip the preacher to tell the story of the whole Bible. Clowney's theology and hermeneutic can serve as a model to equip pastors for more faithful preaching of Old Testament narrative today. Clowney's narrative preaching demonstrates a synthesis of redemptive/historical theology and expository preaching, as well as a high regard for biblical text (in both its historical period and God's total revelation) and the preaching of Christ in all of Scripture. Christ and his atonement are found throughout the Old Testament, as representative sermons of Edmund Clowney show in their work of exegesis, creative illustration, and application.

Familiarity with the Literature

Primary Sources

Clowney developed his Christ-centered approach to preaching in five key writings over the course of his ministry. In *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (2003), Edmund Clowney provided validation for the use of symbolism and typology in preaching and an argument for them to be undergirded by biblical hermeneutics.¹ This text also details the intertwining history of redemption and revelation and their dual relationship to the words and deeds of God, and to the coming of Christ. He addressed the spiritual activity of preaching and its preparation and process, which encourages the preacher to be aware of the very presence of the Lord and to hear His words. As well, there are over a dozen of Clowney's expository sermons from both Old and New Testaments.

Clowney presented an understanding of the relationship between redemptive/historical theology and expository preaching in his book *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (2002). He promoted the overarching principle of biblical theology, which weds the exposition of the biblical text to the backdrop of the grace narrative of the

¹Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 21.

Bible. In this text, there is an understanding throughout this text that biblical exposition should reinforce scriptural consistency and continuity of the entire Bible.² This hermeneutical approach toward the text has a twofold purpose: the biblical text in its historical setting should frame the initial context of the expository sermon, and the biblical text in the scope of God's total revelation of salvation must be the goal of the expository sermon.³

Clowney's text *The Unfolding Mystery* (2013) urges readers to read the Bible as story. Taking pericopes from Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, and 1 and 2 Samuel, Clowney presented these narrative accounts as episodes. His biblical theology is manifested to a tremendous degree, as he told the story of the Bible in a broader sweeping narrative. In these Old Testament passages, he revealed the presence of Christ, and presented application to the contemporary audience. Clowney showed that the person and work of Jesus is not only foretold, but is central to every turn of the story plot in these narratives.

In *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments* (2007), Clowney shared his view of the connection between the Ten Commandments and Christianity and the relationship between salvation through the Law and salvation through the Gospel. He addressed points such as Jesus as God's Image and fulfillment of the Law; legalism and the Sabbath; and marriage, adultery, and divorce. According to Clowney, the Ten Commandments are fleshed out with a Christian worldview perspective due to Christ's covenant with the believer.

Clowney addressed the identity of the church and her covenant relationship with the Lord in his ecclesial text *The Church* (1995). In the Old Testament, she is the chosen one of God, rescued from Egypt, assembled at Sinai, and is dwelt with in

²Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 87.

³Ibid., 92.

Jerusalem. With the fulfillment of Jesus and the coming of the Kingdom in the New Testament, he dwells as the Word made flesh among his people—the assembly of the New Israel. Clowney’s understanding of Scripture directed his theology of the Church. In this volume, he addressed other tenets of the Body, with regard to worship, ministry, and mission.

Secondary Sources

The texts in this section represent other voices in the study and practice of homiletics; many of whom have cited Clowney as an influence, mentor, and friend. Their presence in this thesis is due to their influence on my formal education, critical thinking skills, and language regarding homiletics. They have contributed significantly in the shaping of my own theological foundation for expository preaching; in addition, they have helped me to understand Clowney’s preaching theology.

Peter Adam, in his text *Speaking God’s Words*, establishes the baseline of his book with preaching foundations, such as the dependence on a speaking God, whose words have been captured as Scripture for the purpose of His ongoing revelation and communication to humankind.⁴ These words of God are the source for preaching, explanation, encouragement, and response.⁵ Adam also indicates that God continuously reveals Himself through any means, but does not always necessarily use the spoken word giving the example of the revelation of Jesus.⁶ Adam presents the challenge of preaching to the contemporary audience—with all of the burdens, expectations (conscious or not), and media oversaturation they bring to the pew. He urges a change in preaching—not the

⁴Peter Adam, *Speaking God’s Words: A Practical Theology of Preaching* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1996), 15-17.

⁵Ibid., 37.

⁶Ibid., 23.

end of expository preaching—but an awareness of where the people of God are in relation to the things of God.⁷

In his book *Christ-Centered Preaching*, Bryan Chapell assures preachers that even in their preparation they can rely on the authority of the Word and its inherent power for life change in order to determine the prescriptive focus of the message. Chapell states that biblical text needs to set the direction of the sermon and all of its parts. Sermon research, therefore, must be prompted by questions such as “What does this passage REALLY say to my people, and what would some of their appropriate responses be?”⁸ Chapell’s other tenet of his thesis is the premise that the redemptive work of Christ is found throughout the whole of Scripture.⁹ He promotes a duality of the process of God’s revelation and the action of Christ’s redemption.¹⁰ According to Chapell, the goal of Christ-centered preaching should have the authority of the Word as the subject, and Christ’s offering of redemption as the object.

Tim Keller, in his recent *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, stresses the importance of expository preaching, as it espouses truth through the entire Bible (not just certain themes), promotes scriptural authority coming from God (not the preacher), and enables the biblical text to set direction for both church and preacher. Keller presents a communication apologetic, which is a primary focus of the book. He describes five different cultural narratives (the “unthoughts” of the late-modern mind) about perception of reality with regard to *rationality, history, society, morality, and identity*.¹¹ Keller provides an insightful and gracious counterpoint to the skeptic.¹² For

⁷Adam, *Speaking God’s Words*, 168-69.

⁸Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 212.

⁹Ibid., 276.

¹⁰Ibid., 18.

¹¹Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 127.

each of the five narratives, Keller builds a bridge from Christian origin, winds through the “cracks” in each (late) modern argument, and arrives at the place of sharing Gospel examples (from both Old and New Testament). By casting these five themes, he covers every variation of skeptical argument. Keller’s text is invaluable to the reader for knowing how to anticipate an argument and how to *articulate* a biblical response.

Walter Kaiser, in his book *Toward An Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*,¹² shares in detail the history of exegesis from the Apostolic Age to the twentieth century, proving that the tension between biblical textual exegesis and personal allegorical eisegesis is not a new conflict. Kaiser develops the practice of exegesis from the principle of the hermeneutic.¹³ The representation of the biblical text through the exhaustive work of higher criticism is the responsibility of the expositor, not a platform of personal or contemporary preconceptions.¹⁴ With Kaiser, the goal of preaching, regardless of era, is the focused and distilled proclamation of the text, with authorial intent intact.¹⁵

The tensions of historical context and comprehension between the authors of biblical text and the modern day audience are obvious, and D. A. Carson, in *Exegetical Fallacies*, says that it is essential to first clarify the author's intent, and then to subordinate our understanding to that.¹⁶ True understanding of the Word of God and the clear explanation of the Word in its proclamation are non-negotiables in preaching. With Carson, even catechetical history and tradition have to follow close behind

¹²Keller, *Preaching*, 133.

¹³Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 47.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁶D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 24.

Scripture. Without intending to, theological shift can (and will) take place over time if precedence is given to non-scriptural moorings.¹⁷

Biblical Preaching, by Haddon Robinson, also addresses the foundational importance of biblical text. Robinson states that the preacher must strive past such fundamentals as grammar study in order to wrestle with the text on the plane of ideas.¹⁸ According to Robinson, sermons develop from the concept of the idea, and that concept comes solely from the text.¹⁹ Robinson gives directives and warning to the preacher, as he admonishes the preacher to be more concerned with listening to God, rather than speaking for God.²⁰ The importance of audience awareness is brought out by Robinson, as knowledge of “those people in the pew” is essential to effectively communicate the message.²¹ However, the sermon is not to be conformed to culture, as God’s Word is timeless, eternally relevant, and brings conviction beyond any certain generation or circumstance.²²

Sidney Greidanus calls attention to the biblical narrative in *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*. He states that “the narrative form allows for a great variety of options in sermon construction: it can present the biblical narrative, a contemporary narrative, or both; it can be with or without them; it can be developed inductively or deductively; it can follow the story line of the text or use another line of development.”²³ Greidanus does see the advantages of preaching narrative as the form

¹⁷Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 17.

¹⁸Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 23.

¹⁹Ibid., 24.

²⁰Ibid., 27.

²¹Ibid., 28.

²²Ibid., 30.

²³Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 148-49.

follows the direction of the biblical text, builds momentum and interest, as well as engages the hearer holistically.²⁴ He does see inherent risks in the preaching of narrative, such as misapplication of text and context.²⁵ Greidanus argues that a narrative must have a theocentric focus that calls for faith in Yahweh, as opposed to an anthropocentric direction.²⁶ Greidanus ascertains that “a genuine theocentric interpretation will take the pressure off attempts to force ‘lines to Christ,’ for from the New Testament perspective theocentric interpretation is already Christocentric since Christ is the eternal Logos.”²⁷ However, Greidanus seems to either contradict himself or reposition his views on theocentric interpretation in *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*. He states that “to appeal to Christ as the eternal Logos is to sidestep the real issue for preachers, for the challenge is to preach Christ incarnate (ital.) as the climax of God’s revelation.”²⁸ Greidanus continues his argument against a theocentric interpretation using the NT itself as the warrant for his position: “The NT offers the corrective that Christian preaching must be Christ-centered. Some have argued that God-centered preaching meets this requirement because Christ is God. But . . . this position sidesteps the NT principle that preaching Christ is preaching Christ incarnate.”²⁹

Void in the Literature

Edmund Clowney’s influence is obvious in the writings of theologians such as Peter Adam, Bryan Chapell, and Tim Keller. Unlike Clowney, other homileticians such as Sidney Greidanus have developed concise hermeneutical models that focus on

²⁴Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher*, 151.

²⁵Ibid., 153.

²⁶Ibid., 216-17.

²⁷Ibid., 220.

²⁸Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 54.

²⁹Ibid., 182-83.

Christocentric preaching from the Old Testament. Greidanus argues that there are several major ways to preach Christ from the Old Testament (but only through the interpretive lens of the writers of the New Testament): redemptive-historical progression, promise-fulfillment, typology, analogy, longitudinal themes, and contrast.³⁰ Expositors such as Jason Allen provide comparative analysis of Clowney's redemptive/historical approach to Greidanus, in addition to Walter Kaiser. Allen writes of Clowney's challenge to Greidanus' hermeneutical model:

Though Greidanus and Clowney share much in common in their respective redemptive-historical approaches, Clowney critiques Greidanus for loitering too much in the immediate context of the passage. According to Clowney, Greidanus' seven ways of preaching Christ from the Old Testament are helpful, but in applying his methodology, one might miss an imbedded reference to Christ in the passage.³¹

Kaiser's minimalist approach to Christocentric preaching and typology is also contested by Clowney. Allen states that "Clowney finds Kaiser's restricted understanding of typology as limiting, and he expresses frustration with those who necessitate such New Testament confirmation."³²

Currently, there is not a work that establishes Clowney's method as a hermeneutical model for expository Christ-centered preaching. David Prince contends that "for Clowney, the organic unity of the Bible, a diverse collection of writings, means that observing intertextual connections (patterns, types, allusions, analogies, recapitulation) is fundamental for faithful interpretation and proclamation."³³ Clowney did not create a hermeneutical model that could be both applicable and transferable.

³⁰Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 203.

³¹Jason Keith Allen, "The Christ-Centered Homiletics of Edmund Clowney and Sidney Greidanus in Contrast with the Human Author-Centered Hermeneutics of Walter Kaiser" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), 77.

³²*Ibid.*, 80.

³³David Edward Prince, "The Necessity of a Christocentric Kingdom-Focused Model of Expository Preaching" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), 119.

Prince continues that “Clowney’s approach was focused on learning how to read the Bible as redemptive history in light of Christ, not on nuanced hermeneutical methodology.”³⁴ This work provides a template for preachers, as it adheres to a biblical theology, views the biblical text in both historical and total revelation, presents Christ in all of Scripture, and facilitates creative use of narrative storytelling to explain the biblical text in the light of Christ.

Thesis

The homiletic theory of Edmund Clowney presents a helpful and rich hermeneutical model for Christ-centered expository preaching of Old Testament narratives. The current state of conversation regarding Christocentric preaching recognizes Clowney as influential, but his theological considerations have not been systematized into a hermeneutical method. This thesis first presents a summation of Edmund Clowney’s biblical theology, his regard for the biblical text in both its historical context and scope of God’s total revelation, and his preaching of Christ throughout all of Scripture. Secondly, analysis has been done of the homiletic texts of Clowney for consistent use of principles, such as Clowney’s biblical theology, his high regard for biblical text, and his preaching of Christ throughout all of Scripture. Results of the analysis are synthesized into a hermeneutic template for the building of Christocentric sermons. Thirdly, application of the hermeneutic template is made against five of Clowney’s Old Testament narrative sermons to test for consistency. Fourthly, a sermon on an OT narrative text has been developed using the Clowney hermeneutic template. Lastly, conclusions have been drawn and implications have been noted for preachers, teachers, and church discipleship programs. In addition, there are considerations made for other biblical literary genres in both the OT and NT.

³⁴Prince, “The Necessity of a Christocentric Kingdom-Focused Model,” 182.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1: Introduction

Because of the various literary types found in the Old Testament and the inherent difficulty in understanding their representative texts, some preachers (and congregants) avoid spending much time and investment in this portion of the Bible. As the preacher is called to proclaim the whole counsel of God, there must be a model developed that will entreat and enable the preacher to engage and proclaim the Old Testament in a Christocentric fashion.

Intent and introduction to subject. The purpose of this thesis is to present a hermeneutical model for Christ-centered expository preaching that will equip the preacher to tell the story of the whole Bible. Edmund Clowney's theology and hermeneutic can serve as a model to equip pastors for more faithful preaching of Old Testament narrative.

Familiarity with literature. Clowney's narrative preaching demonstrates a synthesis of redemptive/historical theology and expository preaching. Clowney was renowned for his preaching of Christ in all of Scripture. In addition to a preacher, Clowney was an educator and writer. Some of his homiletic texts that are discussed in chapter 1 are *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, *The Church*, and *Preaching Christ in all of Scripture*. Clowney has influenced many preacher/teachers, such as Tim Keller and Bryan Chapell. Clowney's biblical theology is contrasted with Walter Kaiser and Sidney Greidanus. These, and other voices, are explored in chapter 1.

Void in literature. Currently, there no systematic manual with Clowney's preaching theology. Clowney did not create a hermeneutical model that could be both applicable and transferable. This work provides a template for preachers to produce Christocentric sermons from OT narrative texts.

Thesis statement. This thesis first presents a summation of Edmund Clowney's biblical theology, his regard for the biblical text in both its historical context and scope of God's total revelation, and his preaching of Christ throughout all of Scripture. Secondly, analysis has been done of the homiletic texts of Clowney for consistent use of principles, such as Clowney's biblical theology, his high regard for biblical text, and his preaching of Christ throughout all of Scripture. Results of the analysis are synthesized into a hermeneutic template for the building of Christocentric sermons.

Chapter 2: Analysis of Clowney's Homiletic Texts

In order to creating a hermeneutic template, Clowney's theology must be examined and synthesized. In this chapter, Clowney's homiletic texts are reviewed and four hallmarks of Clowney's preaching theology are presented. In this chapter, I analyze Clowney's homiletical writings in order to develop a sermon-building template for preaching Old Testament narrative passages. I address hallmarks of Clowney's preaching theology, textual and redemptive/historical considerations, Christocentric concerns, and use of imagery and creative process.

The Word of God and function of Scripture. Clowney's theology of reading of the story of the Bible is based on his understanding of God's Word as the sovereign authority of truth. This chapter discusses Clowney's redemptive/historical theology, based on an understanding of God's Word—and its unfolding revelation—joined to the history of redemption. The role and function of the inscripturated Word of God and its authority for preaching and teaching is given extensive treatment in chapter 2.

Covenantal understanding and the narrative. The presence of covenant, in regard to both history and story, is examined. Clowney's practice of viewing the biblical

text in both its original historical period and in God's total revelation is discussed, in addition to covenant and promise/fulfillment as they pertain to the person of Christ.

Symbolism. Clowney's use of symbolism and allegory is well-noted and has its critics. This thesis defends Clowney's practices. There is a biblical case for symbolism and its defense in this chapter, as well as some of Clowney's insights on typology.

Chapter 3: Analyses of Clowney's Sermons

As the subject of this thesis is a study of Clowney's homiletic theory, this chapter contains both summaries and analyses of a corpus of Clowney's OT narrative sermons. A total of thirteen OT narrative sermon content summaries provide the corpus for this thesis. Five of the sermons have been analyzed in order to show the four hallmarks of Clowney's preaching theology.

Application of the sermon template. In this chapter there is application of the hermeneutic template from chapter 2 to five of Clowney's sermons from Old Testament narrative passages. This application will test the consistency of Clowney's hallmarks of preaching theology to his own OT narrative sermons.

Sermon analysis. The five sermons that are analyzed provide a consistent representation of the four preaching hallmarks from chapter 2. All of the sermons undergoing analysis are OT narrative sermons from audio sources.

Additional sermon corpus content summaries. The eight unanalyzed sermons are given summary at the end of the chapter. Readers will be able to ascertain some of Clowney's hallmarks in the summary information culled from these remaining audio sermons. Several of these audio sermons have written variations that can be found in Clowney's texts.

Chapter 4: Sermon Craft via the Hermeneutic Template

The natural outflow of an in-depth study of a theologian's sermon craft is for a preacher to build his own sermon using results from the study. This chapter presents the construction of an OT narrative sermon observing the four hallmarks of Clowney's preaching theology. In this chapter I craft an original expository sermon of an OT narrative passage using the homiletical model created from chapter 2. This chapter consists of three sections: (1) my exegesis of the OT narrative text; (2) the application of the Clowney hermeneutic template; and (3) a sermon manuscript consisting of a synthesis of both the exegetical work of the passage and the Clowney hermeneutic template.

Steps in sermon preparation. The OT narrative that is used for the sermon is the story of Naboth's vineyard in 1 Kings 21. Part 1 contains the exegetical work for the sermon, and presents the text for the sermon in three scenes: Scene 1—Ahab covets Naboth's Vineyard (1 Kgs 21:1-4); Scene 2—Jezebel's plot of deception (1 Kgs 21:5-16); and Scene 3—Elijah's confrontation of Ahab (1 Kgs 21:17-29).

Application of the hallmarks. The second part of sermon preparation is applying the hermeneutic template from chapter 2 to the exegetical work done with the biblical text. The four Clowney hallmarks are administered, and results are shown: (1) God's Word as sovereign authority in the narrative; (2) Scripture as story; (3) Covenant understanding within the narrative; and (4) symbolism, typology, and Christocentric connections to promise/fulfillment. There is also a summary of events culled from the biblical text prior to 1 Kings 21 in order to establish an event-line of the backstory of Elijah, Ahab, and Jezebel. This is used for sermon/character introductions.

Creation of the sermon manuscript. The third part of sermon preparation is the synthesis of the exegetical work to the applied hermeneutic template in order to craft a sermon. This section of chapter 4 contains a sermon manuscript of 1 Kings 21, as

viewed through the preaching theology of Clowney, which can be used to preach a Christocentric sermon from this narrative passage.

Chapter 5: Evaluations and Other Considerations

In this chapter, there is an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Clowney hermeneutic template; this is shown by the assessment of its implications for preachers, teachers, and church discipleship programs. There are considerations for other biblical literary genres in both Testaments. Even as this thesis deals with preaching of OT narrative sermons, the hermeneutic model can be used with other biblical literary genres. Other ministry applications can benefit from use of the Clowney hermeneutic model.

Implications for preaching ministry. The four hallmarks of Clowney's preaching theology have the most direct influence on preaching. In this final chapter, the preacher's reliance on the Word of God is addressed, as well as the need for the preacher to have a "widescreen" approach to reading the story of the Bible.

Implications for teaching ministry. This final chapter presents how an understanding of Clowney's homiletic theory can influence a teacher's comprehension of biblical theology and exposition. There are also considerations shown for synthesizing biblical narrative and history, along with some cautionary eisegetical concerns.

Implications for discipleship ministry. There are manifold benefits for the discipleship ministry that integrates the use of the "Clowney Template." Focus is given to topics such as biblical literacy, Scripture familiarity, and teaching a congregation a consistent understanding of biblical allegory. Missional considerations are also addressed.

Considerations for other biblical literary genres. While the focus of this thesis is OT narrative, other biblical genres, such as poetry and prophecy, are given attention in this last chapter.

CHAPTER 2

ANALYSIS OF CLOWNEY'S HOMILETIC TEXTS

In this chapter, I analyze Edmund Clowney's homiletical writings to develop a synthetic template for preaching Old Testament narrative. Three of Clowney's writings make up the major source work for this chapter. Clowney's book, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, is a collected series of lectures which gives insight to how he viewed his sermonic source material—the Bible and its overarching narrative of revelation and redemption. One of Clowney's final writings, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, gives the reader an in-depth look at Clowney's understanding of symbolism and its function in Scripture. Lastly, Samuel T. Logan's preaching anthology, *Preaching and Preachers*, contains a chapter contribution of Clowney's which provides—in addition to his assertion that all Old Testament passages pointed to Christ (not only those Messianic in content)¹—an extensive focus on typology and fulfillment. These three main texts consistently present Clowney's views about telling the story of the Bible by capturing God's unfolding revelation of Christ as the sole means of the redemption of mankind and creation. By exploring Clowney's thoughts, I show the main ingredients that make up a sermonic “meal” that presents Christ clearly in Old Testament narratives.

To create a template for preaching Old Testament narrative using Clowney's influence, one should ask, “What does the preacher need to know in order to communicate spiritual truths in Old Testament narrative passages?” Four hallmarks to Clowney's preaching theology are found in his writings: the claim of the Word of God as

¹Edmund P. Clowney, “Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures,” in *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art*, ed. Samuel T. Logan, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1986), 166.

sovereign authority of truth; God speaking words that are the source of the inspired text of Scripture; covenant understanding as the background for reading both the Old and New Testaments; and symbolism and typology and their Christocentric connections to promise/fulfillment. When connecting these observations to the story of the Bible, all four areas are essential components in Clowney's preaching theology. Biblical narrative is story, and the narrative of the Bible is redemptive history. I find it helpful to keep an 'author/story motif' in mind in visualizing Clowney's four hallmarks of preaching theology: *God speaks as author of the story; Scripture is the text that will tell the story; God's relationship with Israel is the story itself; symbolism provides the plot devices that point and direct the story to the hope of redemption found in Christ, who is the source and the goal of the story.*

The Word of God

Supporting his high view of Scripture and his biblical doctrine of the Word of God, Clowney wrote that "there can be no doubt that the whole structure of New Testament preaching rested upon the conviction that the gospel fulfilled the authoritative Scriptures of the Old Testament."² The narrative account of Luke 24 provides the foundation for Clowney's Christocentric understanding and scriptural basis for his biblical theology. Jesus' explanation of His being the fulfillment of the Law of Moses, as well as the writings of the prophets and the psalms enables the disciples on the Emmaus road to begin to comprehend the Word of God made flesh: "What Jesus explained to the disciples about the Old Testament became the key for their preaching. Luke reports to us how the apostles used their new understanding in preaching Christ from all the Scriptures."³ Clowney referenced the writings of Luke further, presenting Peter's

²Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 30.

³Clowney, "Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures," 165.

Pentecost sermon (Acts 2) and Paul’s conversations with both the Jews in Thessalonica (Acts 17) and King Agrippa (Acts 26). He presented these texts as further scriptural basis for connection between Old Testament writings as the source for a New Testament gospel preaching theology firmly rooted in biblical doctrine.⁴

Clowney took the setting of the creation account—with the very act of God speaking life into existence—as evidence of the impact of the sovereignty of the Word of God on the history of redemption.⁵ This understanding of Clowney’s reading of the story of the Bible is paramount to a comprehension of his personal theology of reading and expounding Scripture. With the sin of Adam and Eve in Genesis as the starting point, Clowney formulated this observation: “At every step in the history of redemption the sovereign power of God’s word is manifested.”⁶ Clowney developed this line of theology by joining the concept of God’s Word and its unfolding revelation to the history of redemption. He would use each of the Testaments to support the other to show that “as the writer of Hebrews traces the history of faith (Heb 11) he is also outlining the history of redemption by the word of God to which faith responds. Revelation attends redemption; indeed, redemption is by the revealed word of God.”⁷ This fusion of revelation and redemption is one of Clowney’s core values of biblical theology. There is a fascinating three-step pattern incorporating revelation, redemption, and the Word of God—which Clowney found consistently in the Pentateuch (and throughout the rest of the Old Testament)—undergirding his understanding of the Old Testament narrative:

In the book of Genesis a pattern of three steps emerges: first, a prior revelation of promise and call; then redemption in fulfillment of the promise; and finally, confirmatory revelation and teaching sealing the redemption. This is the case with

⁴Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 31.

⁵Ibid., 33-34.

⁶Ibid., 34.

⁷Ibid.

Noah, Abraham, and Jacob, so that the pattern is well established before it appears as the structure of the great redemption from Egypt.⁸

Clowney's three-tiered thesis encompassing promise, redemption, and revelation with regard to God's Word is shown in the promise of the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah. Clowney drew a Christocentric connection to the New Testament with this narrative of promise/fulfillment to and from the aged couple: "The whole of redemption is foreshadowed in this declaration of the redemptive potency of God's word; the word of God to Abraham is repeated by the angel Gabriel to Mary when her faith staggers at a great promise: 'For no word from God shall be void of power' (Luke 1:37)."⁹

Clowney's claim that the very purposes and thoughts of God are revealed and put into action by His word¹⁰ is one that gets to the heart of authorial intent. Appropriate distinction between the authority of the written word and the creative power of the Writer Himself is made clear by the following quote: "The dynamism and spirituality of the word is not, in the Old Testament, in tension with the objectivity of the word. The creative word may be remembered or recorded. The power of the word of God has the mystery of God's own glory, but the wonder lies not in a power that the word has of itself, but in that God pronounced it and will watch over it to perform it."¹¹ The supernatural authority found in the Word of God is intrinsic; the Word carries inherent authority because God Himself has pronounced it into existence.

The Role and Function of Scripture

God's Word is the source of authority for the ministry of preaching first seen in the Old Testament. According to Clowney, there are two primary functions of ministry of

⁸Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 34.

⁹Ibid., 35.

¹⁰Ibid., 38.

¹¹Ibid.

the Word: proclamation and teaching. The inscripturation of God's Word is the source of the ministry of proclamation and teaching, and inscripturation finds its point of origin at the theophany at Mount Sinai. Clowney painted an urgent picture of the Israelites and their dire need for Moses' intercession on their behalf, as they came into the presence of the Lord. This singular event—in which God's revelation of proclamation was manifested—is the beginning of Scripture as we know it. Clowney wrote that “because the people could not bear to hear the voice of God in thunder from above Sinai, Moses was called to receive the revelation and bring it to them . . . included in this task is the work of inscripturation. In writing the book of the covenant Moses continues the work begun by the finger of God upon the tablets of stone.”¹² Clowney added that this mediatorial action of Moses sets the pattern for the prophetic office.¹³ God has given both His Word and the authority of proclamation to the preacher. The one raised up for proclamation conveys the Word to the people in a prophetic and mediatorial action. Clowney succinctly stated that “the prophet is the mouthpiece of God: God puts his words in the prophet's mouth and teaches (the verb from which *torah*, law, is derived) him what to say.”¹⁴ God has provided inscripturation (the recording of His word-revelation) since mankind cannot abide His holy and fiery presence. Scripture is imbued with the authority of God's presence.

With the process of inscripturation comes the teaching of the Word. Clowney indicated that the Torah, given by God's revelation and then written down, was to be taught to the people and their children by Moses, the priests, prophets, judges, and the king.¹⁵ Consistent teaching is connected to the concept of continued revelation. Clowney

¹²Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 48-49.

¹³*Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 49.

explained that “the priests who are to teach the law are also to inquire of The Lord through the use of the Urim and Thummim (Num 27:21), and the prophet both receives the word and ministers the word already given.”¹⁶ Scripture and teaching of the Law and its revitalization are emphasized when the Book of the Law is discovered in 2 Kings. The teaching of the Torah was a foundational pillar of the Israelite culture and society. The Word of God was for every facet of life and family. According to Clowney, “Not only the prophets, priests, and princes of the people were responsible for teaching the word of God. Every father in Israel has this responsibility.”¹⁷

This corporate societal teaching addressed the covenant relationship between God and the Israelites, first taught by Moses. The Torah emphasized the duality of the blessing/curse covenantal model that continued to develop throughout Israelite history. Alongside this development, there is also a duality of unfolding revelation and coming redemption (which was ultimately Messianic) coinciding with the prophets’ teaching of covenant understanding. Clowney gave historical insight that “the curses and blessings of the law find their fulfillment, and the prophets with growing intensity anticipate the latter days, after the blessing and the curse (Deut 30:1), when the promises shall find their final realization.”¹⁸

The preaching and teaching of God’s inscripturated word demanded the retelling of God speaking forth in power. Continued and consistent proclamation did not give historicity to the Law; the sovereign source of the Law was the Word of God. In the proclamation of the prophets, salvation history—God’s creation and His abiding with the Israelites—was the source of the story: “In proclaiming the sure triumph of God’s

¹⁶Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 49.

¹⁷Ibid., 50.

¹⁸Ibid., 36.

redeeming and restoring word the prophets refer to the power of God in creation and in the great deliverance from Egypt.”¹⁹

One of Clowney’s insights is the development of a sermonic and teaching model that is formed by the impact and influence of the Word of God, both in sovereignty and Scripture. Clowney wrote that Ezra’s teaching model (from Neh 8) would become the model for synagogue preaching, and he highlights Jesus’ use of the same pattern in Nazareth when he gives the self-proclamation as the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy in Luke 4.²⁰ Regarding the importance of the teaching and preaching of God’s Word, Clowney provided both historical context and encouragement to those who preach the Word with the following statement about God’s Word, Scripture, and revelation: “With the completion of revelation in the gospel of Christ, this function became the sole and indispensable ministry of the word among God’s people. The calling of the prophet is completed in the apostolic age, but that of the pastor and teacher remains.”²¹ Clowney saw that both proclamation and teaching were biblical models to tell the story of the revelation and redemption spoken by God and recorded in Scripture. This is further supported and modelled in the New Testament apostolic age, with the giving of proclamation (κήρυγμα) and teaching of doctrine (διδασκαλία) by the first-century apostles and their disciples.

In summary, this cornerstone of Clowney’s preaching theology is comprised of two facets: (1) his high view of Scripture, (2) borne from the spoken Word of God. God’s speaking in power becomes an inscripturated revelation, thereby becoming the word source of the biblical narrative.

¹⁹Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 37.

²⁰Ibid., 50.

²¹Ibid.

Covenant Understanding and Narrative

For a synthesis of Edmund Clowney's preaching theology, a third essential (after the acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God's Word and the authority of the biblical text) is an understanding of God's covenant relationship with Israel. Clowney saw the covenant at Sinai as the source for the entire narrative of the Bible. To obtain an awareness of Clowney's theology, the concept of covenant history—as well as its interweaving narrative throughout Scripture and final covenant fulfillment in Christ—must be studied.

Covenant as History

As a result of God's speaking His Word into holy writ, this divine inscription that occurred at Sinai establishes God's covenant with Israel.²² However, God speaking His word to Moses did not begin the relationship with Israel; the story plot of redemption at this point recognizes a communal aspect of previously unrealized fellowship fulfillment. God's earlier promise to Abraham is now coming more closely into view. Clowney asserted that, through the covenant, God the sovereign binds Himself to Israel—His claim on Israel is His redeeming act—and He forbids idolatry.²³ With His word, God is bound to Israel. This is the backdrop against which the story of biblical redemption is told. This covenant establishment is the heart of the biblical narrative, and the heart of understanding Clowney's approach to biblical story-telling.

The understanding of covenant construction is the key to understanding how to preach the narrative of covenant story. In Clowney's writing on biblical theology, he referenced Ancient Near Eastern covenantal forms—which were Mosaic contemporaries—and presented separate parts of the covenant agreement: the prologue, a

²²Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 39.

²³*Ibid.*, 40.

list of regulations, a reading of the covenant with the people; and the procedure for blessings and curses.²⁴ Recognition and comprehension of these elements, as well as their essential functions and how they are represented in the life of Israel is the basis of not only understanding biblical narrative, but seeing Christological fulfillment. Clowney reasoned that the importance of the historical prologue in covenantal structure sets the tone for forthcoming biblical structure. He argued for a distinct and necessary lens of comprehension for the reader of Moses' writings: "The brief historical prologue of the covenant at Sinai is the key to understanding the whole preceding history of Exodus, and the books of generations in Genesis as well. The history of the Pentateuch is not political or cultural in aim. . . . It is covenantal history."²⁵

Covenant structure demands a legal structure, with regulations, stipulations, blessings, and curses. God commanded Moses to teach these legal requirements to the Israelites. This demand calls for the inscripturation of God's spoken Word to be proclaimed continually (such as the commands found in the writings of Deut 6). This teaching of the Torah—and its blessings and curses—is essential to uphold the vassal end of the covenant at Sinai. These essential contents of the history and the law become the source of the narrative story of Scripture.

The covenant writings inscriptured by God on Sinai and then given to Moses to place into the Ark of Testimony constitutes the legality of the covenant. What is first articulated as a formal and legal binding agreement can only be fully understood in light of unfolding Israelite history and the coming fulfillment of Messiah:

The covenant structure, then, requires precise and objective written statements: the text of the covenant proper, with its stipulations; the identification of the covenant Sovereign and the genealogies of those with whom the covenant is made; the history of God's gracious dealings in the past which are motivations to gratitude for those who receive his covenant; the record or annals of covenant service which

²⁴Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 39-40.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 41.

memorialize faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the covenant; the threat of curse and the promise of blessing.²⁶

This promise of blessing is not only intended for the Israelites' near-term. The blessing is also anticipated with the incarnation and atonement found in Jesus, and fully realized in his final return. This blessing is eschatological in its intention. First Peter 1:20 states the certainty of the foreordained purpose of Jesus and his coming before the foundations of creation. According to Clowney, God's declaration of His salvific purpose is stated prior to its realization, and is a sign of His covenant faithfulness.²⁷

There is precision and objectivity in the creation of the Sinai covenant. A foundational understanding of the holiness of God and the sinfulness of mankind is presented in these writings. That these mandates would become the basis for comprehension of the need for a Savior is an understatement. This is the storyboard that Clowney presented in his preaching, teaching, and writing. Covenant history was the source for Clowney's story. If one can grasp the importance of the Sinai covenant and its far-reaching implications, one can visualize theological connection from Genesis to Revelation with a fuller appreciation of God's sovereignty.

Covenant as Story

The story of the Bible is the story of salvation. Its margins are framed by the promise of the woman's seed foretold in Genesis 3, and affixed by the slain, risen, and worthy Lamb in Revelation 5. Clowney saw and argued that "the unifying structure of Scripture is the structure of redemptive history."²⁸ The Bible is not comprised of a first half featuring both a failed plan and failed relationship, with a second half saved by a quick thinking deity pointing his finger at a junior deity/scapegoat and saying to him,

²⁶Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 41-42.

²⁷Ibid., 44.

²⁸Ibid., 74-75.

“here, you’ve got to go bail us out . . . ,” nor is it a two-part tale of a god of thunder twistedly conjoined with a god of love. Scripture is not the saga of a schizophrenic warrior king who, at once, rails against his terrified subjects, and then codependently clamors after their approval and acceptance. Salvation history—spoken by God in the beginning—is fully realized by the incarnated God-man who is ushering in the final covenant blessing of a new heaven and new earth. God’s covenant relationship with the nation Israel, the Son (of) Israel, and the new Israel is a continuously developing storyline.

Because Scripture is a redemptive narrative, the Bible does not have the form of a textbook.²⁹ Holy inscripturation is not an arcane manual of victory-speaking formulae, and it is not a three-ring binder containing a human/heaven hybrid resource handbook. God the Son is the connecting line from the Pentateuch to John’s revelation given to him on Patmos, and His story becomes clearer as sacrificial system and substitutionary atonement are at once embodied in Him. The witness of Christ unfolds with each progressive epoch of revelation grounded in repentance.³⁰ The salvation story continues to develop as the Israelites journey out of a physical wilderness of sin and idolatry only to end up in a spiritual wilderness far past exile and far from God. Clowney reasoned that each of these historic periods in its own context has coherent structure and progressive revelation.³¹ Each and every part and piece of an independent, necessary episode is tied together to present the complete narrative in a unified manner.

Stories are comprised of sentences displaying themes of idea and thought. These sentences are comprised of words—the text. To study the story of the Bible, one must grasp not only the overall dramatic themes, as this can run the risk of unintentional

²⁹Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 75.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

subjectivity and result in ignoring important revelation. To understand the story, one must study the text objectively. As Clowney had a high view of Scripture, which had as its very source the Word of God, he deemed the biblical text—not his own words—as the essential foundation of the covenant story.

Clowney’s interpretation of biblical text involves a two-step process for the student of his biblical theology. The first step incorporates a comprehension of the text in its original historical setting (or “theological horizon”), and the second step relates the event in the text (and its contextual entirety) to a second theological horizon—one of the overarching structure of redemptive history.³²

The text in its original historical period. This first theological horizon isolates the event of the text in its immediate setting. Care is given to authorial intent and the context of the original audience. Clowney used an epoch-based structure of revelation observing biblical eras marked by the main events of Eden, the Flood, the call of Abraham, the call of Moses, and the coming of Christ.³³ Awareness of the Old Testament timeline is of tremendous importance when aligning event with epoch. Sub-periods of these main events must also be recognized. Clowney advocated a working knowledge of biblical history to establish sub-periods, citing the example of the importance of kingship establishment (and subsequent division)—as well as the exile and the restoration—and the unfolding theological significance attached to each event.³⁴ An understanding of covenant history is crucial as this is the backdrop of Old Testament revelation. Covenant history provides much of the margin around each Old Testament narrative, and interpretation related to this theological horizon will expand the vista of each story

³²Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 88.

³³*Ibid.*, 89.

³⁴*Ibid.*

without sacrificing any degree of original authorial intent. Clowney taught that “our hermeneutical method...must always begin by finding the immediate theological horizon and then relating that to the broader biblical-theological perspectives. When this is done, the specific force of the text in its horizon will become evident.”³⁵

The text in God’s total revelation. As the first step of Clowney’s concept of the theological horizon dealt with the immediate context of the historical/cultural setting of the biblical text, the second step is the connection of the event found in the text to the “bigger picture” of Scripture—the wider plateau of redemptive history. There is cohesion between the Old and New Testaments, as the theology between the two is not only similar—it is the same. There is not inconsistency as this theology is fully viewed in the person and purpose of Jesus. Clowney defended this conviction by observing the divisions of the life and work of Christ: the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.³⁶

There is an eschatological *τελος* that results from the kinetic line moving from the Old Testament into the New. The covenant relationship between God and Sinai crescendos to a deafening climax with the establishment of the new heaven and earth. The Second Coming will bring in the full manifestation of Christ’s kingdom. Clowney proclaimed that “in [Christ’s] presence the covenant is realized and sealed.”³⁷ In the Sinai covenant, the Lord would be among His people in the wilderness. As the covenant is being fulfilled in the extended theological horizon, the Word becomes flesh and dwells among His people (John 1). Ultimate fulfillment of the covenant will be the final horizon of Revelation 21:3, where the tabernacle of God will be among men and where the Lord

³⁵Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 92.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 98-99.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 99.

will dwell with them—where they shall be His people and God Himself will be among them. The seed of promise, the Son Israel, is with His people: “Because of the continuity of God’s work of redemption, the connection between salvation in the Old Testament and the New is organic. There is one saving Lord, and one true Israel, the people of God.”³⁸

The redemptive narrative that springs forth from the Sinai covenant is the story of a father and son—God and His people. This covenant saga is the story of the blessing of a nation across every era that will receive the full and final Blessing. Clowney envisioned a “realized eschatology,” in which every believer will share in a completed covenantal fellowship with God—one that is no longer framed by foreshadowing.³⁹ What was once promised following the sin that gave way to the curse of the fall—and then hoped for and sought after in an epic journey of a chosen people—culminates in the coming and the coming again of a Savior. Every eye which is fixed in hope will finally see the Savior as He truly is (1 John 3:2-3).

Covenant and Fulfillment

The person of Christ. A final consideration of Clowney’s view of covenant understanding involves promise and fulfillment. Utilizing his concept of the theological horizon construct, Clowney could take an event found in the text and connect it from its immediate horizon into God’s overall revelation and present Christ as the culmination of the event revelation: “Through the method of biblical theology the redemptive significance of a particular revelation in a particular period is studied and seen in the perspective which converges on Christ.”⁴⁰ The intertwining relation between redemption and revelation does find its rest in the person of Christ; however, redemption and

³⁸Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 100.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid., 77.

revelation begin with the person of Christ the Word. Clowney made a significant claim that “because Christ is the eternal Logos [λογος], God the Son, in every revelation of God he (ital.) also is revealed.”⁴¹

Clowney was correct in his observation. On page 76 of *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, he made a passing reference connecting Genesis 1 and John 1. What is fascinating about this claim are the results of the hermeneutical investigation of these two passages (and adding a third from Col 1). Reading the Hebrew text, the first word of the Torah (רֵשִׁית – reshith) means not only “in the beginning” but also “first fruits” or “first and foremost.” Hence, the revelation of Jesus is in the beginning of creation with God (Gen 1:1). In his gospel, John professes that the Word was in the beginning with God and was God, and that all things created came through Him (John 1:1-3).

Researching further, there is additional confirmation in Colossians 1:15-17 that Jesus, being the firstborn (or “fruits”–Gen 1:1) of all creation, indeed created all things. God the Father and God the Son are before all things and hold all things together. This line of realization comes from the manifestations of God from the very beginning of Scripture, running through the entire covenant saga, and culminating in the incarnation. God’s self-revelation in the Old Testament points to the fullness of revelation in Christ.⁴² As God is revealed to His people by His mighty acts, Christ, the Lord of the covenant, is made known to them. Clowney provided an extremely pastoral assertion: “In terms of the covenant, this means that Christ is the Lord, and in whatever way we learn of the Lord we learn of him. But the Covenant Lord comes to his people, dwells in their midst, and promises a final deliverance, an ultimate covenant of peace to be established by his coming.”⁴³

⁴¹Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 76.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid., 76-77.

Wherever the Lord shows up in the Old Testament epoch, Jesus is there. In whatever saving, redeeming, or revealing action in which the pre-incarnate Lord either initiates or is present, it is a not yet fulfilled manifestation of Him. Clowney reasoned that “since it is the Son of God who fulfills these promises, the redemptive epiphanies of God are particular revelations of Christ.”⁴⁴

The personage of Christ is not only a physical presence of the embodiment God seen at last in the Gospels. He is also the historical revelation that continually and consistently runs parallel to the covenant narrative from before its very beginning. He is a beacon, pointing to the covenant goodness of God, in whom believers have placed their hope and waiting faith: “Abraham’s faith was realized in the birth of Isaac, and that event became a ‘sign’ of God’s faithfulness which strengthened Abraham’s faith to rejoice in the coming of the day of Christ, the final Seed of the promise.”⁴⁵ To witness the person of Christ in the “latter days” waiting on the Second Coming, modern-day readers of Scripture have the benefit of beholding the “big picture” of the covenant story. One can visualize the start of the saga in Genesis and proceed until the near-finish in the present day with a modicum of belief. How much greater the amount of faith and trust it must have taken to watch and wait on God’s covenant promise in that immediate context, in order to see a Savior who was present, working, and dwelling with His people during that time. He was there, but in that day, His people could not see Him as the one foretold in Genesis 3:15 who would be echoed by Isaac, the son of promise: “Christ is the promised Seed, the Son of the woman, and where that Seed is manifested, Christ is in view.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 77.

⁴⁵Ibid., 45.

⁴⁶Ibid., 77.

Symbolism

Thus far, established hallmarks of Clowney’s preaching theology are the inherent sovereign authority found in the Word of God, along with its inscripturated form in the biblical text. Also, an understanding of the covenant agreement between God and His people as the setting of the biblical storyline is a third nonnegotiable of Clowney’s approach to preaching. In this final section of chapter 2, there will be discussion of a fourth sacrosanct principle for Clowney—that of biblical symbolism.

A Biblical Case for Symbolism

Clowney defended his study of scriptural imagery by making a biblical case for the intent of symbolism and its role in biblical interpretation, when he stated that “the history of the covenant that leads to Christ also anticipates Christ in its symbolism.”⁴⁷

Covenant salvation has always had the person and purpose of Christ at its core. With Christ promised at the beginning of Scripture, and with Him being the ultimate goal, there are “signposts” along the way that bring announcements of the hope that is to come. These symbols are not simply “plot devices” to the story of narrative (even if they function that way); there is purpose and intent to symbolism in Scripture. Clowney explained the ‘ripple’ effect of a symbol that points to fulfillment—but only in part: “Until the heavenly reality is manifested, the covenant fellowship is mediated through earthly symbols, ‘like in pattern’ to the heavenly archetype (Heb 9:24, 25). With the coming grace and truth in Christ the reality to which the symbol pointed is revealed.”⁴⁸

As the narrative of the Bible is told, these signposts can connect to Christ from any direction on the linear plane of biblical story. Symbolism provided essential theological ‘tethers’ to help the people of God remember promises that God had made—

⁴⁷Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 20.

⁴⁸Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 100.

promises that God would fulfill in the incarnation and passion of Christ. Clowney asserted that “it is evident, then, that symbolism is of particular importance in relating the revelation of the ‘past ages’ to the fulfillment in Christ. Symbols abound in Scripture, not incidentally, but because of the structure of the history of redemption which is at once organic and progressive.”⁴⁹

In regard to symbolism and hermeneutics, comprehension of the biblical text in both its immediate theological horizon and its overarching scope of redemptive history and promise fulfillment is necessary. There must be appropriate interpretation of symbols, their meaning, and their actual contextual intent. Clowney argued for this critical approach, as he strongly emphasized that biblical hermeneutics must take account of the words in Scripture and their symbols.⁵⁰ Divine design and intent connects God’s people to His purpose. Comparison and contrast of a biblical event with the mission of Christ is a necessary function of this Divine design: “The Lord made us in his image, and the principle of analogy is fundamental in God’s creation and revelation. Analogy always combines identity and difference. Interpretation may so press the identity as to reduce or remove the difference.”⁵¹

Recognition of a biblical symbol, as well as understanding its “big picture” purpose, is the result of not only awareness of biblical history and context, but also a dependence on the sovereign intent of the sign in the text. In the attempt to decipher these clues, biblical scholars have to ultimately acknowledge the mystery of the mind of God and His authority over His Scriptures that He has breathed into existence. Clowney encouraged theologians in their study and their discipleship as he stated that “in interpreting the symbolism of the Bible, we claim the doctrine of the perspicuity of

⁴⁹ Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 101.

⁵⁰ Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 21.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Scripture. There are difficult passages; we may be uncertain or mistaken about the meaning of a passage, but Scripture is God’s revelation, and workmen in the Word must seek his illuminating blessing.”⁵²

In Defense of Symbolism

Clowney admonished those theologians who saw the imaginative process of symbolic understanding as unmoored anathema: “The interpreter, and certainly the preacher, should carry no such prejudice against symbolism. The concreteness and imaginative appeal of symbolism is the glory of language. The richness of scriptural symbols which pervades our hymns should give power to the pulpit as well.”⁵³ Ergo, Clowney recognized the ecclesial history of symbolism in worship. He simply acknowledged the profundity of symbolism in Scripture, and saw benefit in taking advantage of both its appeal and its God-empowered creative impact on sermon craft.

Certainly, there are obvious inherent risks with the interpretation of symbolism. The history of preaching is rife with sermonic material that has been (and continues to be) a channel for florid imagery. Unchecked imagination—perhaps sincere in its intent—has derailed many a well-meaning preacher’s sermon. Clowney certainly recognized this reality, but refused to dismiss the importance of symbolism. As previously stated earlier in this chapter, Clowney’s high view of the role and authority of Scripture demanded that it alone would be the anchor of the preacher’s sermon. However, he did see that symbolism could function as a signpost, to provide direction and intent of the event’s results to Christocentric fulfillment: “The desire for literal interpretation of Scripture reflects a proper conviction as to the revealed truth of the Word of God. Its

⁵²Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 23.

⁵³Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 102.

suspicion of symbolism, however, overlooks the precision of meaning which symbolism may convey.”⁵⁴

An understanding of biblical symbolism will only enhance the preacher’s handling of Scripture. Appropriate exegesis of a text where symbolism is present demands the preacher research the horizons of the symbol: what it meant in its immediate setting, and the role that the symbol plays in the redemptive narrative. If the symbol is connected to the person and function of Christ with regard to fulfillment, there will be typological observations to consider.

Typology

A study of typology would recognize and explore those symbols found in the Old Testament that carry New Testament realization and Christocentric fulfillment. Clowney affirmed that typological comparisons were a natural and foundation facet of God’s salvific revelation:

Typology is grounded in God’s design. It flows from the continuity and difference in God’s saving work. There is continuity, for it is God who begins His work of salvation long before He gave His Son. Yet there is discontinuity, too. Salvation in Christ is not simply an improvement on Old Testament salvation. It is not just the final phase of Gods’ dealing with His people. It is rather the ground (ital.) of Old Testament salvation.⁵⁵

Covenant history and its unquestioned and necessary prevalence of animal sacrifice points to a future where ultimately only one substitutionary atonement will matter for mankind. What was originally a type partially hidden in tabernacle sacrifice in the Old Testament comes into full view with the Son of God’s saving act. Clowney explained this ‘partial perspicuity’ as not incomplete, but as looking ahead, when he affirmed that “the use of models, images, or symbols is part of God’s design to anticipate the fullness of meaning that cannot yet be revealed (Heb 10:4). But the blood of

⁵⁴Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 103.

⁵⁵Clowney, “Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures,” 174.

sacrificial animals may convey significance (ital.). It may serve as a sign, a symbol that points beyond itself to the reality of Christ's atoning sacrifice."⁵⁶

The presence of God with His people in the Old Testament is part of covenantal language and history. The God who dwelt with the Israelites in the camp is the same Lord who will tabernacle with His people in the New Jerusalem; therefore, God's presence in the wilderness is not simply a type for the coming incarnation. Nor is Jesus a symbol for God. The Father and the Son are one: "Because the incarnate Lord is not a symbol of God's presence, but God Himself present with us, all the symbolism of the tabernacle points to Him and is fulfilled in Him."⁵⁷

With the covenant story as the backdrop of Scripture, it is crucial for the preacher interested in using Clowney's homiletic theory as a model to preach Old Testament narrative to accept the prevalence of symbolism and type, and their connection to Christ. Clowney believed that there was no other way to accurately read and preach the Bible with showing Christ in all of Scripture: "In Jesus, therefore, both the reality and the symbols of God's dwelling in the midst of His people find fulfillment. The key to the New Testament understanding of typology is found in the sense in which fulfillment comes in Jesus Christ."⁵⁸

Clowney espoused this doctrinal precept as one that would encompass the whole of scriptural understanding. Every foreshadowed type that deals with a degree of atonement or manifested theophanic presence among the people finds its culmination in a fully realized incarnate Savior:

The heart of the understanding of 'type' in the New Testament lies in the New Testament doctrine of Christ. Only in Christ as the divine Savior do we find the transcending and transforming fulfillment that creates a whole new dimension . . .

⁵⁶Clowney, "Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures," 175.

⁵⁷Ibid., 176.

⁵⁸Ibid., 177.

Jesus is the *true* Vine (John 15:1), the *true* Son of God, the *true* Israel (Isa 49:3; Rom 15:8), the *true* Bread from heaven (John 6:32, 33). In Him the reality appears, and in Him that reality is given to His people.⁵⁹

There are certainly varying degrees of typological connection and realization, depending on the interpretive methods employed in exegesis. However, there must be a settled willingness to look beyond the immediate event setting of the biblical text.

Conclusion

The purpose of this second chapter was to provide an analysis of Edmund Clowney's homiletical writings in order to develop a hermeneutic template for preaching Old Testament narrative. As a result, four tenets of Clowney's biblical theology have been presented as unassailable factors in the development of this template: (1) the claim of the Word of God as sovereign authority of eternal truth; (2) God's spoken Word as the source of the inspired text of Scripture; (3) an understanding of God's covenant relationship with Israel as the background for historical and theological comprehension of the entire biblical narrative; and (4) an endorsement of the creative power of biblical symbolism and the acknowledgement of its Christocentric intent. If a preacher desires to utilize the model of Clowney's homiletic theory to present Christ in Old Testament narratives, he must understand how Clowney read the saga of Scripture. Again, keeping the 'author/story' motif at the forefront of sermon preparation will enable the preacher to tell the story of the Bible using Clowney's hallmarks in a 'widescreen' format: *God speaks as author of the story; Scripture is the text that will tell the story; God's relationship with Israel is the story itself; symbolism provides the plot devices that point and direct the story to the hope of redemption found in Christ, who is the source and the goal of the story.*

In the next chapter I apply the hermeneutic template to five of Clowney's sermons from Old Testament narrative passages. This process of comparison/contrast

⁵⁹Clowney, "Preaching Christ From All the Scriptures," 178.

tests the consistency of Clowney's hallmarks of preaching theology to his own OT narrative sermons.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSES OF CLOWNEY'S SERMONS

Edmund Clowney's imaginative approach to creating sermons with narrative texts is a model beneficial to the modern church setting. Clowney told the story as he preached. These sermons are examples of how the narrative method can be both disarming in approach and extremely gripping in application. If appropriate exegesis is applied as foundation, telling the story of Scripture is extremely effective. This chapter contains analyses of OT narrative sermons preached by Clowney, with regard to the four essentials found in Clowney's homiletic writings: the claim of the Word of God as sovereign authority of each narrative; God's speaking words that are the source of the inspired text of Scripture; covenant understanding as the background for reading both the OT and NT; and symbolism and typology and their Christocentric connections to promise/fulfillment.

This chapter contains five sermon content summaries, along with a detailed analysis of each sermon. I researched thirteen of Clowney's sermons in total, and the remainder have brief content summaries following the five sermon analyses. Audio sermons provide the basis of the corpus of this thesis. As Clowney's homiletic texts already contain several examples of OT narrative sermons, I thought it appropriate to provide the analysis for audio OT narrative sermons with no prior published commentary for the purpose of the application of the four-part sermon template. Some of the sermons in the corpus have published variations in Clowney's writings; as a result, those were not given written detailed analysis. The Edmund P. Clowney Legacy Corporation, through

the online services of SermonAudio.com provided the source material for the sermons listened to and analyzed.¹

“Following the Uncrowned King” (1 Sam 26)

Sermon Content Summary

Following a reading of the Scripture, this sermon begins with a fascinating contrast between a then-recent periodical containing a historical study of knights in the time of AD 1000 and that of David the shepherd king. Where most knights were considered illiterate, conceited, and ignorant (according to the study), David is a warrior, poet, leader, and musician. Clowney pointed out that David cried out in song to the Lord all of his grief, anguish, and praise.² These Psalms are confessions of the trust that David has in God, and they speak of both the situations and frame of mind in which David is found. The Psalms of grief and trust are ‘snapshots’ into the heart of David during his life events in the OT books of 1 and 2 Samuel.

What does it mean for David’s men to follow their uncrowned king? David knows that he has been anointed king of Israel, but he is dealing with the humiliation of running from Saul in the wilderness. Because of his jealousy and hatred toward David, Saul forsakes his kingly responsibilities and focuses on the pursuit of David in the wilderness. Clowney gave a synopsis of recent events in the lives of David and Saul from 1 Samuel 22, 23, and 24, in order to heighten dramatic tension. Saul’s killing of the priests of Nob (1 Sam 22) and the subsequent destruction of that city leads to Abiathar, a lone priest, escaping to David, taking the ephod, Urim, and Thummim. In 1 Samuel 23, David is told by the Lord to deliver the city of Keilah from the Philistines, and his men

¹Edmund P. Clowney Legacy Corporation, accessed January 25, 2019, https://www.sermonaudio.com/source_detail.asp?sourceid=epclgacy.

²Edmund P. Clowney, “1 Samuel 26 – Following the Uncrowned King,” recorded August 22, 1999, accessed October 23, 2018, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/saplayer/playpopup.asp?SID=12190713557>.

follow in obedience. Inquiring of the Urim and Thummim, David is told by the Lord that he and his men will not be safe from Saul in Keilah, so they escape to the wilderness. This uncrowned king and his obedient followers have no place to lay their heads.

Clowney then moved to the trust of the uncrowned king. In the wilderness, David trusts the gift of the kingship relationship that God has with His people—they belong to Him, and He to them. Also, David understands the king being the Lord’s anointed—David will not turn against the king despite Saul’s treacherous murder of the priests and the slaughter of the inhabitants of Nob. Clowney contrasted this principle of trust with the story of David, Nabal, and Abigail in 1 Samuel 25.

Using legal terminology, Clowney made a Christocentric connection from David being on trial to Jesus being on trial. Despite David’s trust in God, he is shown to be constantly in anguish with these seemingly unending trials with Saul. At the end of 1 Samuel 26, Saul gives the verdict and David is in the right (as is the case with 1 Sam 24). In spite of the verdict, David is still in humiliation as he cannot go back to Saul. Jesus, in his humiliation, stands before Pilate. Even as Pilate cannot find fault in Jesus, he is still handed over to be crucified.

The importance of kingship in the OT points to the Kingship of Jesus. The humiliation of the true uncrowned King before Pilate points to his ultimate purpose and eternal Kingship. As the King, Jesus comes into the world to pay the price for sin. Was it easy for David’s men to follow him? Was it easy for the disciples to follow Jesus? Clowney pointed to Mark 8 and taking up one’s own cross in order to follow the One who is the true King.

Analysis and Observations (“Uncrowned King”)

God’s Word as Sovereign Authority in the Narrative

Clowney was consistently able to show to his congregation the role and import

of the Word of God on the central actions of the characters in each narrative. In this sermon on the uncrowned King, the Word of God is David's sovereign authority in his understanding of anointed kingship and covenant promise. David acts like a king, and his loyal followers respect him and show him obedience because they recognize God's anointing upon him. Also, God's Word as authority is the basis for David not seeking vengeance against Nabal (1 Sam 25) and, ultimately, Saul in both chapters 24 and 26. Clowney referenced the confrontation between Abigail and David as she speaks the Word of the Lord to David. His response to Abigail is Scripture that echoes his final encounters with Saul: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me, and blessed be your discernment, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodshed and from avenging myself by my own hand" (1 Sam 25:32-33).

Clowney spoke of Saul's life being at David's mercy, and said that these two encounters in the OT narrative were intentional. God's purpose for His inscripturated Word is, in fact, to show the importance of not just the first test, but also the second:

Then Abishai said to David, "Today God has delivered your enemy into your hand; now therefore, please let me strike him with the spear to the ground with one stroke, and I will not strike him the second time." But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him, for who can stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed and be without guilt?" David also said, "As the Lord lives, surely the Lord will strike him, or his day will come that he dies, or he will go down into battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed; but now please take the spear that is at his head and the jug of water, and let us go." (1 Sam 26:8-11)

According to Clowney, *the second test is more difficult than the first one*. There is the temptation for Abishai to admonish David with a statement such as "surely God is in this if it's come around twice." The sovereign authority of God's Word is given a NT reference, as Clowney pointed to Peter's claim that he would not leave Jesus in John 6. Following Jesus' difficult statement made regarding discipleship (the eating of his flesh and the drinking of his blood), many who have been following Jesus withdraw from him; Jesus asks Peter and the disciples a question: "Jesus said to the twelve, 'You do not want to go away also, do you?'" Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You

have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God” (John 6:67-69).

Scripture as Story

In this sermon based on 1 Samuel 26, Clowney’s summary of 1 Samuel 22-24 provides much of the sermonic material. These prior events and key personalities in the earlier Scripture narrative (Keilah, Nabal and Abigail) embellish this passage detailing what would be the final meeting between David and Saul. In addition, Clowney revealed that this narrative is the basis for ‘wilderness’ psalms such as Psalms 142 and 63. These songs of lament and trust provide a view of the heartbreak and grief of David, as well as his cleaving to God. In Psalm 142, he claims that no one knows him, and that his refuge (Keilah) has failed him (142:4). In Psalm 63:8, David’s soul clings to God, and God’s right hand upholds him.

Covenant Understanding within the Narrative

David has been anointed king, but he is a fugitive on the run from Saul. Clowney added that David has been driven from the Land of Promise into the wilderness. David’s understanding of God-anointed kingship is one where God’s people are ruled by God’s anointed one, regardless of who is seated upon the throne. As a result, David will not turn against the kingship of Saul, even as Saul has slaughtered the priests at Nob. David engages in covenant warfare in Keilah to fight the Philistines (1 Sam 23). However, this is not merely a convenient circumvention of Saul’s kingship by David. God has commanded David, the one after His own heart, to rescue the city of Keilah.

In addition, the concepts of kingship, calling and covenant warfare are highlighted with David’s men making a second attempt to convince him to strike Saul as his camp is sleeping in Hachilah (the first being the cave narrative in 1 Sam 24). However, David’s faith in God acting as avenger shows David’s respect for the kingship

and knowledge of the covenant promise. Clowney asserted that anointed kingship represents God's rule, and not merely political office.

Symbolism, Typology, and Christocentric Connections

David and his loyal followers have nowhere to lay their heads in the wilderness. Clowney placed this scenario alongside the words of Jesus in Luke 9:58 which can serve as a *type*: "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." Also, the loyalty of David's 400 men to their king is seen again in the loyalty (to a certain point) of Peter and the disciples to their King.

Clowney posited that the patterns of the sufferings of David and the kingship in the OT point to the sufferings of Jesus in the NT. The humiliation of an uncrowned king on the run in the wilderness who is, in all actuality, on trial with Saul is seen again, as another uncrowned king deals with humiliation in front of Pilate. There is a verdict delivered on David: "Then Saul said, 'I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will not harm you again because my life was precious in your sight this day. Behold, I have played the fool and have committed a serious error'" (1 Sam 26:21). However, when Jesus stands on trial before Pilate, the Roman prefect finds no fault in Jesus, but still hands him over to be crucified. Whereas Saul feels threatened by David's popularity, the threat of Jesus to Pilate is an interesting query. Clowney restated the concern of Pilate—whether Jesus is a threat to the Romans or a threat to the Jews—and then asked the question, "What kind of threat is a man who has been disavowed by his own people?" The real charge, of course, is Jesus' claim to be the Son of God—the true uncrowned and humiliated king—who will be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords.

“God’s Blessing of a Faithful Mother” (2 Kgs 4:8-37)

Sermon Content Summary

The overall theme of this sermon is “Can God be trusted to not disappoint?”³ As the beginning of the sermon, the entire narrative is read, which takes approximately six minutes. Clowney then retold the story throughout the sermon in an inductive fashion, leading to a Christocentric climax.

In this time of Israel’s history, God’s raising up of prophets who follow Him (Elijah and Elisha) in spite of ungodly political leadership (Ahab, Jezebel, and then-current king Joram) establishes the relationship of respect a Shunammite woman has for Elisha and his ministry. Her faith in God, as well as the awe she has for the prophet, prompts her to provide food and eventual board for him and his servant, Gehazi.

As Elisha wants to reciprocally bless the woman for her hospitality, he makes inquiry of her possible needs, either societally or financially. The text is expounded upon and reveals that she is a woman of means; however, she has a certain reservation to her faith. She has no need for provision or political favor, so Elisha gives a pronouncement of a son to her. Her lack of belief in the miraculous workings of God becomes evident when she tells Elisha, “No, my lord, O man of God, do not lie to your maidservant” (4:16). At this point, Clowney compared the woman’s struggle of faith and belief to those of the congregation—most notably the mothers—as this sermon was preached during a Mother’s Day service.

After the birth of the child, the scene shifts to when he is of an age that he is able to work in the fields with his father. The mother’s faith is tested when the child dies as a result of an unnamed head trauma. The process of her placement of the son’s body in

³Edmund P. Clowney, “2 Kings 4:8-37– God’s Blessing of a Faithful Mother,” recorded May 8, 1988, accessed October 22, 2018, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/saplayer/playpopup.asp?SID=1121071745181>.

the quarters she provided for Elisha, and her pursuit of the prophet is given extensive detail in the narrative. According to Clowney, this assault *on* her faith becomes the assault *of* her faith. She is determined to bring Elisha back to her son. Elisha dispatches Gehazi back to their quarters, along with his staff imbued with healing power, but the woman will not return without the prophet himself. The resurrection of the son is given a painstaking account. Clowney's description of the event was not simply one of a prophet performing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, but rather of a total and personal identification with the boy (this theme is revisited at the climax).

The narrative of Luke 7:11-17 and Jesus' raising of the widow's son is the NT theological horizon for this passage in 2 Kings 4. There is a pointing from Elisha's healing to the miracle of Jesus; the people there in Nain who witness Jesus' miracle realize this as a visitation from God. The personal identification of Elisha to the boy is the personal identification of Jesus to us. God has come to His people in the ministry of Jesus and does not disappoint.

Analysis and Observations (“Faithful Mother”)

God's Word as Sovereign Authority in the Narrative

Elisha has the Word of God. The woman realizes and respects the authority of the prophet. Clowney cast the woman's sense of awe toward the prophet as fear. The woman goes to hear the Word of God through Elisha. The text points to evidence of discussions that she and her husband have had regarding the man of God and his ministry (4:9; 4:22-23). However—according to Clowney—there is a question of faith and trust on the part of the woman. When Elisha's blessing of the woman occurs, her response of asking Elisha not to lie is restated: “Don't promise too much.” Clowney added that this is an example of faith mixed in with fear.

The woman is given a son by the Word of God, and her faith is then tested by

his death. She is not bitter by her son's death; she is determined to go to the man of God at Mount Carmel, bypassing inquiry and assistance of both her husband and Gehazi. Prior to her confrontation with Elisha, God does not reveal to Elisha about the fate of the son (4:27); God is not just testing the faith of the woman, but also the faith of His prophet. Clowney stated that the Word of God is sure and His promises are good, as both the woman's faith is rewarded and the prophet's prayers are answered with the raising of the son.

Scripture as Story

Clowney preached this Mother's Day sermon in an inductive fashion. Even as he read the entire passage of Scripture at the beginning, he retold the story throughout. He set up the background for Elisha and then unfolded the narrative scene by scene. He interjected application reference points for the listener—such as distrust, disappointment, hope, and faith. The story of the OT scripture text seamlessly moved into the NT pericope of Luke 7:11-17. The scene at Nain in this last portion unfolded in the same fashion with compelling suspense. Clowney made the transition in this casual (but dramatic) way: “You know, just over the hill from Shunem is the village of Nain—remember that story?”

Covenant Understanding within the Narrative

The sermon stage is set with the establishing of the immediate historical horizon. There is description given of ‘dark days’ of Israel, as this was the time of King Joram, the son of the apostates Ahab and Jezebel. Due to both the pagan worship of Baal and the priests serving in Judah, God provides Elijah and Elisha as prophets to Israel in order to show His presence and power. Covenant understanding is also brought out in the resurrection of the Shunammite woman's son. Clowney stated that God has done this act in order to seal the promise of grace to His people and to honor their faith with both a

sign of spiritual renewal and a reminder of the faithfulness of the living God.

Symbolism, Typology, and Christocentric Connections

The pregnancy of the Shunammite woman is not unlike the divinely ordained pregnancies of Sarah in the OT, as well as Elizabeth and Mary in the NT; as such, her divinely-tinged pregnancy that results in a son that dies and is resurrected points as a type of promise fulfillment to the Son who will die for the sins of all mankind and will be resurrected to new life.

Clowney made a comparison of Elisha to Jesus as God giving blessing to His people through “the man of God” and a “prophet whom He raised up and a bearer of the Word of God.” This sets up the aforementioned transition from Shunem in the OT to Nain in the NT.

In Luke 7:11-17, Jesus and his disciples, with an accompanying crowd, meet a funeral procession for a young man followed by his mother and a crowd of mourners. Having compassion not unlike Elisha had for the Shunammite woman, Jesus tells the mother to not cry and raises the boy from the dead. Clowney gave an exposition of Luke 7:16 and made a reverse connection from Jesus to Elisha: “Fear gripped them all, and they began glorifying God, saying, ‘A great prophet has arisen among us!’ and, ‘God has visited His people!’” Clowney asserted that the people in Nain recalled Elisha’s similarly miraculous act and made the connection. The ‘personal identification’ of Elisha to the woman’s son is symbolic of the ‘personal identification’ of Jesus’ visitation in Nain.

“Salvation is of the Lord” (Jonah 2:9)

Sermon Content Summary

Following a reading of the Scripture text, Clowney introduced this sermon

with a humorous anecdote of a former student at Westminster Seminary.⁴ The student preacher asked Clowney—during a Saturday night phone conversation—what the Bible was all about, and Clowney stated, “Salvation is of the Lord” (Jonah 2:9). This is Jonah’s cry of confession from inside the stomach of the great fish, and according to Clowney, the Bible’s great message of salvation through God Himself.

A definition of salvation as “being put in a broad place” or “not hemmed in” is contrasted with Jonah’s location inside the fish. Clowney gave the claustrophobic illustration of being shut up in an upward berth on a Pullman train. Jonah cries from the very place of death, or Sheol (2:2). Cross-references to Psalms 69 and 18 embellish the threat of death and the fear of God’s judgment. The brevity of life, the futility of living, and the guilt toward death and judgment is brought out early in the sermon by Clowney’s incorporation of Psalm 90.

There is affirmation given that no situation is hopeless and that God’s hand can reach Jonah; however, the question is asked, “Is being swallowed by the fish actually Jonah being spared?” Jonah has been spared from drowning, but is there more salvation to come? Psalms of lament are addressed, with the Psalmist giving God praise prior to deliverance. Jonah claims his deliverance, even before it arrives.

Jonah’s historical background is given in the narration. His success as a prophet under the reign of Jeroboam II, resultant with Israel’s expansion (as seen in 2 Kgs 14), provides explanation to his intentional disobedience to God because of nationalistic loyalty. Jonah’s rapid departure to Tarshish is explained as a means of destruction for Nineveh. If Jonah will not bring a call of repentance to the capital of Assyria, then God will certainly wipe out this enemy of Israel.

Jonah’s anger at God reveals foolish pride, as well as his reluctantly coming to

⁴Edmund P. Clowney, “Jonah 2:9 – Salvation is of the Lord,” recorded July 7, 1985, accessed October 23, 2018, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/saplayer/playpopup.asp?SID=11210712392510>.

terms with God's mercy to both Nineveh and to himself. The reaffirmation of salvation belonging to the Lord alone—not soldiers, armies, or vain idols—gives assurance that Jonah's cry was heard by God. Clowney pointed to the Exile of Israel and subsequent returning Remnant as part of the salvation plan of God, and culminated with Jesus' proclamation of the sign of Jonah in Luke 11. This salvation would be both personal and worldwide.

The sermon's climax connects to Christ's atonement. Jonah could not save Israel, and cannot save the listener; however, Jesus can save. The sermon finishes with the image of Jesus being lowered to the depths abutted to the image of the raising up of his children to the heights with him.

Analysis and Observations (“Salvation is of the Lord”)

God's Word as Sovereign Authority in the Narrative

Jonah's anger at God's deliverance of Nineveh reaches fever pitch following his proclamation to Nineveh and their repentance. Despite this turn of events, he knows the character of God because of His Word: “for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity” (Jonah 4:2b). This statement of Jonah's knowledge of God's mercy as a character attribute is a contrast to Jesus' obedience to the Word of his Father. Jonah is prideful, foolish, and grudgingly obedient to God; Jesus humbly obeys the Word of his Father and comes to save mankind.

Scripture as Story

Clowney's sermon is rife with the usage of OT scriptures. The fear of death and God's judgment are emphasized from the Book of Psalms, as revealed in these cross-references. Water is seen as a symbol of death to David as well as Jonah: “Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her

mouth upon me” (Ps 69:15). Also, David’s Psalm 18 is referenced with an application to a possible illness of the listener: “The cords of death encompassed me, and the torrents of ungodliness terrified me. The cords of Sheol surrounded me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God for help” (18:4-6a). Clowney brought out the feeling of guilt toward the reality of mankind facing the inevitability of God’s judgment, with Moses’ words from Psalm 90: “For we have been consumed by Your anger and by Your wrath we have been dismayed. You have placed our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your presence” (90:7-8).

The picture of the fear of death, and resultant guilt and judgment is viewed alongside God’s mercy and grace. Clowney developed this salvation process sequence: death leads to a meeting with God, and death can lead to deliverance; the word of Jonah is deliverance, and salvation is of the Lord. This psalmic image of a lament which celebrates God’s deliverance before it arrives is observed in Jonah 2. Jonah claims his deliverance by the grace of God. Clowney gave further illustration of a forthcoming grace of God from a confession of King Hezekiah: “Lo, for my own welfare I had great bitterness; it is You who has kept my soul from the pit of nothingness, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back. For Sheol cannot thank You, Death cannot praise You; Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your faithfulness (Isa 38:17-18).

Covenant Understanding within the Narrative

An understanding of biblical history, in regard to God’s faithfulness despite Israel’s waywardness, helps to facilitate understanding of the background of the narrative. As revealed in 2 Kings, God restored the border of Israel during Jonah’s service as prophet: “He [Jeroboam II] restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which He spoke through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who

was of Gath-hepher” (2 Kgs 14:25). When Jonah is called to Nineveh, he runs to Tarshish. Nineveh is capital of Assyria, who is a threat to Israel. Clowney gave the example of the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III in the British Museum. There is a scene on the obelisk of the Israelite King Jehu, and his obeisance and tribute to Shalmaneser of Assyria. Jonah wants Nineveh destroyed, but he is charged with a message of repentance and salvation. When God spares them, Jonah is angry, even as he knows that God is merciful and slow to anger. Even as he knows God’s character because of Scripture, Jonah is aware that armies of Nineveh will destroy Israel even as God is gracious. However, Clowney pointed to both a future redemption and resurrection. In Jonah 2:2-5, the hesitant prophet gives a cry of assurance—this is an inclusive foreshadowing of the Exile of Israel—going into the sea and being destroyed—and the ultimate return of the Remnant that God has promised to save. There is a further echo of God’s mercy in Israel’s exile with the symbolic vision given from Ezekiel 37 of the Valley of Dry Bones.

Symbolism, Typology, and Christocentric Connections

In Luke 11:29-32, Jesus preaches a sermon and presents what he refers to as the Sign of Jonah:

As the crowds were increasing, He [Jesus] began to say, “This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.... The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. (Luke 11:29-30; 32)

Jonah is a *type* of savior whose message for an entire nation is symbolic of the One who will bring ultimate atonement for all. Jesus is the ‘greater’ realization of Jonah’s message of repentance. Jesus is the embodiment of salvation for a nation of unbelievers. This will be ultimately a salvation by resurrection. Clowney contrasted and connected Jonah to Jesus as men who both came ‘back from the grave’ to deliver a message of salvation. There is a fascinating juxtaposition of Jonah wanting to become a curse for Israel, so that

the nation might be spared from Assyria—in the same way of the sinless Jesus becomes sin, and ultimately a curse, for sinful man. As Jesus has come to us where Jonah came to Nineveh, Jesus enters into the grave for mankind, where Jonah could not.

“God on Trial” (Exod 17:1-7)

Sermon Content Summary

This sermon begins with a reading of Exodus 17:1-7, which is then followed by a lengthy introduction detailing the post-World War II play *The Sign of Jonah* by Günter Rutenborn.⁵ This serves to present the listener with the question of ultimate fault regarding the existence and allowance of the Holocaust. The response provided from the playwright and cast is “Don’t blame any of us; God is to blame,” which sets into motion the climax of the play, which is placing God on trial and pronouncing judgment. This illustration becomes the springboard for the sermon—with the accused sinful nation, Israel, becoming the accuser and placing God on trial.

Israel’s response to God in the wilderness of Rephidim is one of rebellion, not faith. There is an accusation made against Moses and, ultimately, God, which declares that Israel has been brought up from Egypt in order to kill them and their children and their livestock with thirst (17:3). Israel wants to levy treason charges against both Moses and God and ask the question, “Is God among us or not?” Israel commits the blasphemy of unbelief and tests the Lord, and at this point in the sermon, the terms of Massah (מַסָּה – place of trial) and Meribah (מֵרִיבָה – place of strife) are defined and explained.

Court is convened and the elders are gathered, with Moses and his rod, and there is an inquiry as to who is the accused. Upon whom will the rod of Moses come down? The accused is the Lord Jesus Himself who will be struck on the rock. At this point in the sermon, references to the life and work of Jesus are drawn from several OT

⁵Edmund P. Clowney, “Exodus 17:1-7 – God On Trial,” recorded August 3, 2003, accessed October 22, 2018, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/saplayer/playpopup.asp?SID=112107040360>.

passages. The culmination of the sermon comes in these passages which show the realization of Jesus' identity and atonement, which fulfill corresponding OT symbols. The question, "Is the Lord among us?" is asked at the conclusion of the sermon, with the invitation for the spirit of the Lord to come and dwell with the listener.

Analysis and Observations ("God on Trial")

God's Word as Sovereign Authority in the Narrative

Clowney asserted toward the close of the sermon that the message of Jesus as the rock that was struck in Exodus 17 was truth, not just symbolism. Jesus is the Rock from whence comes spiritual water that brings eternal life. Clowney proclaimed that hearers of the Word have a spiritual thirst—a need to hear the preaching of the Word of God, and to come and to drink and to live. He then cited Jesus' words: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28).

Scripture as Story

The narrative of the sermon gets its footing in the biblical text. Clowney took the seven verses, and embellished a trial scene (capitalizing on an earlier prompt with the Rutenborn illustration that was used in the introduction). There are also cross-references to the book of Deuteronomy, which then point to Jesus' temptation in the NT. Deuteronomy 6:16 is referenced with the warning of not testing the Lord. The admonition in Deuteronomy 8:2-3 for Israel to remember how the Lord has led them and fed them in the wilderness—as well as tested their hearts in obedience and reminded them that they cannot live by bread alone but everything that would proceed from the mouth of the Lord—is contrasted with Jesus using this passage when he is being tempted in the wilderness by Satan.

Covenant Understanding within the Narrative

Clowney's biblical theology with respect to his two-step concept of layering theological horizons is on display in this narrative sermon. Moses' striking of the rock, in its immediate theological horizon, provides—for the original audience of the text—an acknowledgment of God's provision of quenching sustenance for the children of Israel as they traveled from the wilderness of Sin into Rephidim. The second theological horizon relates the salvific event in this locale—that would be renamed for trial and strife—to the bigger backdrop of redemptive history. Jesus, chosen before the beginning of time to be the Lamb of God, becomes—following a mock trial by sinful man—the atoning sacrifice stricken for the sins of not only the children of Israel, but for all.

Historical Jewish law and covenantal language are given highlight by Clowney, with regard to the assigning of guilt, blame, and amends of sacrifice. He referenced Moses' fearful complaint to God (17:4), and reminded the congregation that stoning is indeed found in Jewish law; this would be execution by the community. Clowney's exposition of Massah (מַסָּה – place of trial) and Meribah (מֵרִיבָה – place of strife) is affixed to the terms of “judgment” and “found guilty.”

Symbolism, Typology, and Christocentric Connections

Clowney preached that the One who stands on the rock is God the Son, and that the pattern of Jesus' calling and ministry is found throughout the OT. Referencing the encounter of Moses and the burning bush at Mount Horeb, Clowney revealed that the Angel of the Lord who was present is Jesus Christ. The theme of the name of the Angel of the Lord is picked up later in Exodus 23. God, as He sends this Angel to lead Moses and the Israelites, says, "Be on your guard before him and obey his voice; do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your transgression, since My name is in him" (Exod 23:21). Clowney then linked this event even more forward to John 8, with Jesus' confession before the Jews: “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I

am” (John 8:58).

Clowney took the image of Jesus as the Judge, and upturned that with Jesus becoming the accused who will stand on the rock which Moses will strike; by doing so, God will redeem by bearing the judgment.

Clowney continued this thread of Christocentric connection to God as provider. The symbolism of God providing the Lamb to stand in the place of Isaac (Gen 22:8) echoes to God providing the Lamb of God. Regarding this provision of Jesus, the Apostle Paul is cited: “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all” (Rom 8:32). Clowney testified that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all the OT prophecies and the only One who can pay the price of atonement.

As the rock is struck by Moses, water comes forth. There is symbolic imagery involving water, which is developed further. Peter, in his sermon from Acts 3, provides an image of water as a picture of restoration following the Resurrection:

Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. (Acts 3:19-21)

Paul is quoted again, from 1 Corinthians 10, when he presents both water and the rock, as he speaks of the Israelites all together being first led, then baptized into Moses, by the cloud and through the sea. He adds, “And all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ” (1 Cor 10:3-4).

Further symbolism is seen in Clowney’s mention of the spear in Jesus’ side at the Crucifixion. There is a duality of the picture of blood and water that flowed as a result of the spear. The blood is a symbol for the atonement satisfied at Calvary, and the water points to both cleansing and new life; the same new life that Jesus offers to the Samaritan woman at the artisan well.

“Naaman Healed of Leprosy” (2 Kgs 5:1-27)

Sermon Content Summary

The sermon begins from the viewpoint of the servant girl of Naaman’s wife (or according to Clowney, “Mrs. Naaman”).⁶ The narrative starts with a name being given to the unidentified Israelite servant girl in Naaman’s household. She is referred to as “Amah” (or ‘female slave’ in Hebrew – אַמָּה) and conjecture is offered to what her background could have possibly been—complete with family and friends—prior to being captured by the Syrians. Her character is revealed in her dedicated and compassionate relationship with “Mrs. Naaman,” resulting in her suggestion that her master Naaman would visit the prophet Elisha in Samaria (5:2-4).

The sermon moves to the process of Naaman making the travel request to King Ben-Hadad III of Syria and the subsequent acquisition of treasure to bring to King Joram of Israel and ultimately Elisha the prophet (5:5-7). Great attention is given to the tense political climate between Syria and Israel at the time of the story. This provides the rationale for the response of nervous anger on the part of Joram upon Naaman’s arrival.

Elisha’s encounter with Naaman (5:8-14) serves to show Naaman that there is a God in Israel. The arrogance and rage of Naaman is contrasted with the perceived ambivalence of Elisha, when Naaman’s gifts and grandeur are unacknowledged by the prophet. The admonition to Naaman by his own servants (5:13) becomes an elaborate discourse with intent to make connection to the audience.

Naaman’s return to Elisha (5:15-19) results in two key points. First, there is a proclamation by Naaman that there is no God but in Israel, as Naaman has become a believer in Yahweh. This is evidenced by his request to have “two mules’ load of earth” for an altar base for sacrifices “to Yahweh” (יְהוָה), which is the title that Naaman—a

⁶Edmund P. Clowney, “2 Kings 5 – Naaman Healed of Leprosy,” recorded October 3, 1999, accessed July 15, 2016, <http://www.sermonaudio.com/playpopup.asp?SID=121907137550>.

Gentile—uses. Secondly, the refusal of Elisha to receive any payment indicates that neither God nor His prophet can be bought. Elisha’s farewell to Naaman, which is a cryptic response of “go in peace” (לֵךְ לְשָׁלוֹם) to Naaman’s request of forgiveness for future feigned obedience to his master’s pagan god, is given attention and possible explanation that points to the previously mentioned sour Israeli-Syrian relationship.

Gehazi’s greedy deception and resultant curse of leprosy (5:20-27) is the final movement in the sermon. His action of deceit and dismissal of God’s grace to Naaman is amplified by a connection to Jesus’ statement in Luke 4:27 regarding the lone healing of Naaman the Gentile amongst the many lepers in Israel. The grace and mercy offered and given by Jesus alone is the climax of the sermon, in that there is not a thing of value or worth that anyone can offer up for healing and salvation from the Lord.

Analysis and Observations (“Naaman”)

God’s Word as Sovereign Authority in the Narrative

Clowney said, “Send him to me and he will know there is a God in Israel.” Clowney added that Elisha would have never said this without the Lord’s permission. The actual text that is referred to reads as follows: “It happened when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent word to the king, saying, ‘Why have you torn your clothes? Now let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet (נָבִיא) in Israel’” (2 Kgs 5:8). However, the intent of the text is clear, as Naaman’s return trip to Elisha (5:15) results with Naaman declaring that he now knows that the only God is in Israel. Naaman also knows that this is a God that cannot be bought. Clowney also commented that this God in Israel is not impressed by anything that one can bring—Naaman had to be willing to be humbled in order to listen to the words of the prophet. In short, Naaman had to be obedient to the Word of God, and had to be obedient in order to show faith.

Scripture as Story

The first seven verses of this text are filled with such florid detail it draws the listener into the story. Clowney developed a backstory for the servant girl in his sermon introduction. It is supposition based on the historical setting and geo-political ramifications of Israel and Syria, and it draws the listener into the story. In Clowney's narrative, "Little Amah" was brought over as a slave, perhaps from Galilee when Syrian enemies raided Israel, and she is not able to see her parents and family, or play with her friends. She is dutiful and faithful to "Mrs. Naaman," especially when Mrs. Naaman laments over her husband's disease.

Covenant Understanding within the Narrative

The first-level (immediate) theological horizon is one that is contextual to the original audience—the declaration that there is no God except the one true God of Israel. The grandeur of Naaman, along with his entourage, and his goods that represent Syria is contrasted with the willingness to forsake his accompanying pride and dip in the Jordan seven times; the purity of the waters of the rivers in Naaman's home of Syria is contrasted to the mud of the Jordan River. Naaman was willing to be obedient to the word of the prophet. Naaman proclaims that there is no God except the One of Israel.

The second-level (redemptive/historical) theological horizon brings the events of Jesus' teaching in the synagogue at Nazareth in Luke 4 to centerstage. After Jesus proclaims that the Scriptures are fulfilled that day in him, he begins a discourse on how Israel has consistently dismissed the ministry of OT prophets—with their resultant salvation message being sent to the Gentiles; in effect, Israel has been bypassed by God's interventions due to their own stubborn choice. Jesus first references Elijah and the famine, and then moves to Elisha: "And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian" (Luke 4:27). God has come near so many times, and Israel has consistently and intentionally

dismissed His presence. In Luke 5:12-16 (also Matt 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45), Jesus does, in fact, heal a leper who is an Israelite. This is evidence of an Israelite who believes in him. Jesus then tells the former leper to go and visit the priests and make the appropriate Mosaic offering for cleansing.

Symbolism, Typology, and Christocentric Connections

Clowney declared that the message of Jesus was made clear in the story of Naaman. For Naaman to be healed of his leprosy, he had to be obedient to the word given by Elisha. The prophet would not take any reward for his act; Clowney decreed that this was to show that healing had to come by grace alone. In the same way, our salvation comes by grace alone through Jesus alone. We cannot do anything to earn it. Clowney affirmed that Jesus could not be bought, but paid the price to buy us. Another comparison to Jesus would be his obedience. Paul provides confirmation of Jesus' willingness to come to Calvary: "Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8).

Gehazi is the antithesis of Jesus. Gehazi lies to Naaman in order to take advantage of his desire to pay Elisha a reward. Gehazi then takes the two talents of silver and clothes from Naaman, which were received through deception, and hides them before returning to Elisha. Clowney added that Gehazi's punishment of leprosy due to his lying and deceitfulness also underscores the fact that Gehazi neither cared about the Word of God that was spoken nor care about the grace of God being shown; in essence, Gehazi denies the Gospel.

Prior to a final prayer, Clowney provided this sermon closing: "That's the wonderful thing about what Jesus came to do. . . . He came to bring us a blessing far greater than all the gold and all the silver and all the blessing that could be brought in terms of money. . . . He brought us life . . . life with Him, and life forever. What a wonderful Savior Jesus Christ is." God is the one that brings salvation through Jesus—

man cannot do it. Jesus has paid the price to buy us.

Additional Sermon Corpus Content Summaries

Thirteen of Clowney's OT narrative sermons were researched for chapter 3. Content summaries of the remaining eight unanalyzed sermons are in this section.

“Heaven Opened” (Gen 28:10-22; John 1:45-51)⁷

Using Genesis 28 as a springboard, Clowney preached, in essence, a NT narrative sermon with OT moorings in the center section. Clowney said that the Bible is one long connected story that is always pointing forward to the time when Jesus comes. Philip introduces Jesus as the one that the Law and Prophets told about. Nathaniel's encounter with Jesus is an echo of the story of Jacob at Bethel. Clowney gave a summary of Jacob's deception and conflict with Esau which leads to Jacob being alone and in exile. Jacob has a dream of a stone stairway to heaven (or ziggurat, according to Clowney, as he made a fascinating connection to God's mercy shown at the tower of Babel).

Angels go up and down the stairway; God speaks and tells Jacob the promise of blessing and offspring (Clowney talked of the blessing of children and God's love for them, and referenced then-current statistics of abortion). With the theme of heaven opening, the Lord sees the true people of God. The point of heaven being opened is God speaking to His people through Scripture and the Holy Spirit. God sees Jacob (and all His children) because He has come down; man cannot ascend to God, but God has come down in Jesus to be among His people.

⁷Edmund P. Clowney, “Genesis 28:10-22; John 1:45-51 – Heaven Opened,” recorded January 23, 2000, accessed October 23, 2018, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=111907024560>.

“Meeting the Captain” (Josh 5:13-15)⁸

Clowney preached on a season of new beginnings for the congregation and used the illustration of Israel finally coming into the Promised Land, after the travail of unbelief which resulted in wandering in the wilderness. Near Jericho, Joshua meets a man armed with a flint knife before him and inquires his purpose—is he for Israel, or against them? The man reveals that he is the Captain of the Lord’s Host, and that this land is holy ground. Joshua has met the Captain, who is shown to be Jesus, and He will be in charge. Clowney connected to his audience with this reality: no matter what personal plan an individual may have, an encounter with the Lord will be certain. Military language, with regard to the war on terrorism and ‘jihad’ (“holy war”) is utilized to show a spiritual charge of holy war against Jericho. There are connections made to Jesus coming to drive out darkness of this world. Present-day applications address spiritual war being declared on proud idols of disobedience; spiritual weaponry (2 Cor 10:4) will be used in this joyful conquest (2 Cor 2:14).

Jesus wants to meet with us to reveal our sins with his purifying ‘flint knife.’ We all have plans for a new season, but in whom do we yield? What does the Captain want for His children? We can have the greatest new beginning ever in Jesus, if we serve Him and allow Him as Lord to be in charge. Clowney presented the example of Thomas’ proclamation of Jesus as Lord following the Resurrection. The finiteness of Jericho is contrasted with the anticipation of the eternal Kingdom that comes with the return of Jesus.

⁸Edmund P. Clowney, “Joshua 5:13-15 – Meeting the Captain,” recorded July 21, 2002, accessed October 23, 2018, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=1121071070>.

“See What It Costs” (Gen 22)⁹

In this sermon, Clowney asked, “If the Gospel is by grace and free and a wonderful blessing, is there any fine print?” So begins the inquiry into the question of fine print in the promises made to Abraham by God. The climax of blessing is Abraham’s son, Isaac, and Abraham is commanded to offer him as a sacrifice. If this is to be, how can God bless all of the families of the earth as promised? How could God ask this of Israel when pagan nations sacrificed their young? Where is the justice found here?

In terms of justice, Clowney reminded the congregation that the standard of measure of holiness versus sin is Jesus, whom we often disregard. Connecting to the story of the judgment of the firstborn of Egypt, it is shown that God has the right to ask for the promised son of Israel. What will be seen at Mount Moriah (הַר־מֹרְיָהּ – ‘Jehovah will see to it’)? Abraham obediently loads the diligently-chopped wood onto Isaac, and together they go up Mount Moriah. Calling this scene one of the most touching in the Bible, Clowney revisited the inquiry of Isaac regarding the whereabouts of the sacrifice. Abraham speaks as a prophet when he says that God will see to it, which connects to promise/fulfillment in Hebrews 11. It is pointed out that Isaac has the same measure of faith as his father, as he helps build the altar and allows himself to be bound.

Application is made when the question is asked, “What would be required of *me* in the fine print?” Abraham loves God more than Isaac, and God wants us to love Him more than anyone or anything else. To follow Jesus, the price is everything. The call of Deuteronomy 6:4 is contrasted with the reality that God provides everything for our faith. We need a spotless, sinless Lamb (unlike Isaac) for our salvation that only God can provide. On the mount named Moriah, Jesus is seen.

⁹Edmund P. Clowney, “Genesis 22 – See What It Costs,” recorded August 23, 1998, accessed October 23, 2018, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=5250914213710>.

**“Look and Live”
(Num 21:4-9; John 3:1-15)¹⁰**

This sermon has a reverse Christocentric connection, as Jesus quotes the book of Numbers in his late-night confrontation with Nicodemus. He knows Jesus has been sent from God, but does not see that Jesus has come from heaven. Nicodemus cannot see the Kingdom of God. There is an early reference to Jesus’ ascension to heaven in an obscure OT verse: “Who has ascended into heaven and descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has wrapped the waters in His garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name or His son’s name? Surely you know!” (Prov. 30:4). The reality of inaccessibility of heaven to us is posted also in the question: “How can we know the things of God?” Clowney’s answer to the question of ascension was the paradox of the cross. Who can ascend? Jesus can, because he came down from heaven. Clowney added that He came down not as a mere man, but as the Son of Man which references the book of Daniel.

Jesus will ascend to heaven, and he will be lifted up—both with the cross and the ascension. John’s Gospel emphasizes the exaltation of Jesus that begins with the cross—by salvation through his atonement. This is an echo of the bronze serpent that is lifted up in Numbers 21. However, the serpent as symbol of death becomes a symbol of triumph over death. Jesus’ words in John echo back to the OT statement that anyone hung on a tree is accursed: “So Jesus said, ‘When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me’” (John 8:28). However, Clowney stated that the God who lifted him to the cross will lift him up in glory.

¹⁰Edmund P. Clowney, “Numbers 21:4-9; John 3:1-15 – Look and Live,” recorded January 4, 1987, accessed October 23, 2018, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=112107117452>.

**“Water from Bethlehem”
(2 Sam 23:13-17)¹¹**

The central theme of this message is devotion. Clowney defined the OT term *חֶסֶד* (*chesed*) as loyalty and devotion, specifically seen in three mighty men who follow David. Also, this can be amplified for a picture of our devotion to God, and most importantly, God’s loyalty and devotion to us.

David is not yet king, and is in the parched wilderness in southern Judea. He makes the statement desiring water from the well in Bethlehem. However, even as David is the Lord’s anointed, he is unable to return to the garrison stronghold held by the Philistines. Three mighty men overhear David’s comment and act upon it. Clowney provided a picture of how they must have fought their way in, got their water, and fought their way out. As David did not make a specific request, these three did this act out of devoted loyalty to their uncrowned king. David, overcome by their act of devotion, pours out the water as a sacrifice of praise to the Lord. Clowney then gave a haunting warning to those in church leadership to honor and sanctify the service of those who follow in loyal devotion.

He then transitioned to the devotion of another mighty man, Uriah the Hittite, as shown in 2 Samuel 23:39. Clowney turned to the tragic tale of David, Bathsheba, and the doomed Uriah found in 2 Samuel 11. Betrayal and murder and every other sin show the reason that Jesus has come. As both Lord and servant of the covenant, Jesus, born in Bethlehem, comes to fight for us and bring for us the water of life. Jesus gave his life for us, showing us *חֶסֶד*. As God had mercy on David according to His lovingkindness in Psalm 51, God has shown mercy to us through Jesus.

¹¹Edmund P. Clowney, “2 Samuel 23:13-17 – Water from Bethlehem,” recorded March 15, 1982, accessed October 23, 2018, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=290805428>.

“Can God Be among Us?” (Exod 34)¹²

Clowney began the sermon with the question, “Can God dwell among His people?” God has brought the Israelites out of Egypt and has spoken to them from Sinai. Moses goes on the mountain, and is gone for forty days; the Israelites disobey God and make a golden calf. The Levites are on the side of God and act against the other tribes in judgement. God says to Moses that He will send an angel to lead, protect, and provide for the Israelites, but He will not go among them, as He is holy. Because they are stiff-necked, God will consume them in righteous anger. Interestingly, Clowney pointed out that this account occurs between the design of the tabernacle and its construction. This is a verdict of God’s grim but necessary judgment, but also of His mercy, as they cannot stand before a holy, sinless God.

Then Clowney asked an extremely awkward—but poignant—question: “Isn’t that the sort of divine offer that Israel should have taken? It’s good to have a God in the wings...God won’t be too close, but he’ll be at a reasonable distance.” The Angel will be there to take care of Israel, providing for and defending her, but Moses alone will deal with God. Clowney drew frightening connotations to the present-day church.

Israel laments and Moses intercedes for them. God, in covenantal language, has said that He would dwell among His people and them with Him. The golden rings of the Israelites, once worn in pagan celebration, are taken off in mourning. Moses prays for God’s presence in the midst of His people—the tabernacle among His people—and for the assurance of God’s name among His people.

God says that He will wipe out the Israelites and start a new line with Moses; however, Moses *identifies* with the Israelites—just as Jesus identifies with man. Also, Moses wants to know the Angel of the Lord and to know the Lord’s ways. God says that

¹²Edmund P. Clowney, “Exodus 34 – Can God Be Among Us?” recorded August 12, 1982, accessed October 23, 2018, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=2180812212>.

He will not go in the midst of them, but will go up in the presence of the Angel. In Ex 34:9, Moses pleads that God would go in the midst of them, despite their sin. Rather than going *before* them and leading them *to* their inheritance, the plea is that God would *be in* the midst of them, and that Israel would be taken *as* His inheritance. As Moses acts as mediator, he prefigures the mediation that would come in fulfillment with Jesus. In John 1, Jesus dwells among his people, and his glory will be seen among them. According to Clowney, the vast panorama of salvation comes to full realization in Jesus Christ.

“Family Devotion” (Ruth 4:1-17)¹³

This sermon is a story of testing, and ultimately, a blessing of devotion. This is the faithful devotion of God to His people, as well as the devotion that God’s people are called to have to one another. When the narrative begins, Naomi is married to Elimelech, and is the mother of Mahlon and Chilion in Judah. When a famine occurs, the family escapes out of the covenant land to Moab. The sons marry Ruth and Orpah, both from Moab. Tragedy strikes; Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah remain. Naomi, having left Judah years earlier, has returned bitter (מָרָר—*marar*). According to Clowney, bitterness arises when we have those things that our hearts desire and then lose them; this is an echo of Israel’s bitterness in the wilderness. Naomi still looks to the Lord to provide, and Ruth, her daughter-in-law, goes to glean in the field of Boaz. Naomi blesses Boaz because of his kindness, and points out to Ruth that Boaz is Naomi’s kinsman redeemer. Clowney said that Naomi returns to her inheritance, her kin, and her God.

Ruth, having pledged her devotion to Naomi, comes to Bethlehem with Naomi. Ruth is tested in her obedience to her mother-in-law to not only glean for the two of them, but to follow Naomi’s guidance and present herself to Boaz. As kinsman redeemer, Boaz will pay the price to be able to marry Ruth and have children that will continue the

¹³Edmund P. Clowney, “Ruth 4:1-17 – Family Devotion,” recorded May 11, 1986, accessed October 23, 2018, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=112107153208>.

line and inheritance of the dead husband in Israel. Naomi is shown devotion by the dedication and kindness of Ruth and Boaz, and ultimately the Lord. Ruth is shown devotion by Boaz throughout their relationship—at first with her gleaning in the field, and then with his purchase of the inheritance of her.

The blessing of devotion is seen in Boaz, as he will be the great-grandfather of David, the shepherd king, and will ultimately be in the genealogy of Jesus. Boaz, as kinsman redeemer, is a *type* in which God and Jesus are seen. The familial identification of a kinsman who will redeem is seen in God, who identified with the Israelites and brought them out of Egypt. Jesus identifies with us and becomes our kinsman redeemer by becoming a sacrificial offering for our sin.

**“This is Your Life”
(Ps 56:8; 1 Sam 21:10-15)¹⁴**

Having run from Saul into Philistine territory, David pretends to be a dribbling maniac in front of Achish, King of Gath. This is a moment in David’s life that is marked with fear and humiliation. Using the illustration of a “This is Your Life” celebration, Clowney posited the question: “Are there things or events in our lives that we’d like to forget?”

Many things are disordered in our lives, just as in David’s journey. How do we deal with them? How do we move forward? David, in the midst of his enemies, has this realization from God: “You have taken account of my wanderings; Put my tears in Your bottle. Are they not in Your book?” (Ps 56:8) God keeps a record written in mercy, wisdom, and triumph; therefore, God cares for, leads, and blesses His people.

As the OT is the record of God’s covenant dealing with His people, God knows the names and situations of His people. This record of our wanderings, deeds, and tears,

¹⁴Edmund P. Clowney, “Psalm 56:8; 1 Samuel 21:10-15 – This is Your Life,” recorded December 29, 1985, accessed October 23, 2018, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=1121071842594>.

at once terrible, is ultimately an act of mercy—the Lamb’s Book of Life. Our names are written down in the blood of Jesus; not because of our worthiness, but because of the worthiness of Jesus, the Lamb of God. Our names are not blotted out, but our sin instead.

God, in His wisdom, leads us through the years of our lives. Clowney referenced the Book of Numbers and the record of wanderings of Israel to show that God was teaching Israel. God did this by leading them through the desert wilderness for education and training; their wisdom would not come by the shortest route. Clowney added that there is purpose in our past—it is neither forgotten nor wasted and is given meaning by God.

God writes His book in mercy, wisdom, and triumph. Paul declares, “If God is for us, who is against us?” (Rom 8:31) This is the culmination of an OT scripture in Isaiah, seen as a connection to Christ’s victory, and subsequently our victory: “I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. For the Lord God helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have set My face like flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed. He who vindicates Me is near; Who will contend with Me?” (Isa 50:6-8).

We know that God is for us, because He has given His Son for us. Even our tears are blessings, which will go into God’s book.

Conclusion

The four hallmarks of Clowney’s preaching theology—the claim of the Word of God as sovereign authority of each narrative; God speaking words that are the source of the inspired text of Scripture; covenant understanding as the background for reading both the OT and NT; and symbolism and typology and their Christocentric connections to promise/fulfillment—are seen clearly in these sermons. Regardless of the OT narrative text that was being preached, Clowney kept the central focus in each message on the Word of God as the essential undergirding to both story action and to sermon

development. In chapter 4, I craft an original expository sermon of an OT narrative passage using the homiletic model created from chapter 2. The following chapter consists of three sections: (1) an exegesis of the OT narrative text; (2) the application of the Clowney hermeneutic template to the OT narrative text; and (3) a sermon manuscript consisting of a synthesis of both the exegetical work of the passage and the Clowney hermeneutic template.

CHAPTER 4
SERMON CRAFT VIA THE HERMENEUTIC
TEMPLATE

Steps in Sermon Preparation

After the selection of the OT narrative is made, the preacher needs to read the story again. Before applying the ‘Clowney template,’ the basic direction and flow of the narrative has to be understood, as is the case with any story. Robert Vogel writes that “there are four key literary features in narrative passages that should be examined to understand the text. They are: setting, characters, plot, and narrator’s viewpoint.”¹ The preacher and congregant alike both ask these foundational questions regarding a story: “Who, what, where, when, and why.”

In addition, there are numerous study aids available to assist the preacher with biblical language. As the subject of this thesis is OT narrative, Hebrew lexicons—such as the Strong’s Concordance feature on www.biblehub.com—will help with providing the preacher/teacher with definitions and synonyms for difficult words in the biblical text.

The text selected for this chapter is the story of Naboth’s vineyard in 1 Kings 21. This chapter will be presented with three sections. Exegetical work with the text will be shown first (Strong’s Concordance numbers will be shown). The second section will integrate the exegetical work of the biblical text with the four hallmarks of Clowney’s preaching theology; the final section will provide a sermon manuscript, constructed from the synthesis of the exegesis and ‘Clowney template,’ from which the preacher can present the sermon.

¹Robert A. Vogel, *Christian Preaching* (Louisville: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 56.

Part 1: Exegetical Work (1 Kgs 21 NASB)

After multiple readings of this Scripture text, there are three key scenes in 1 Kings 21. Scene 1 is 21:1-4 (Ahab Covets Naboth's Vineyard), Scene 2 is 21:5-16 (Jezebel's Plot of Deception), and Scene 3 is 21:17-29 (Elijah's Confrontation of Ahab). Exegetical work will be shown as these three scenes unfold in Part 1.

Scene 1: Ahab Covets Naboth's Vineyard (1 Kgs 21:1-4)

The story begins in verse 1: "Now it came about after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which was in Jezreel beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria." This verse introduces two of the main players in the drama (Naboth and Ahab) and gives a location that will be a major plot device: Naboth's vineyard in Jezreel. The two begin a conversation: "Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, 'Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden because it is close beside my house, and I will give you a better vineyard than it in its place; if you like, I will give you the price of it in money'" (21:2). Other details regarding this initial encounter are brought to light by the commentators Keil and Delitzsch:

Ahab wanted to obtain possession of the vineyard of Naboth, which was in Jezreel, near the palace of the king, either in exchange for another vineyard or for money, that he might make a vegetable garden of it. From the fact that Ahab is called the king of Samaria we may infer that Jezreel, the present Zerin (Josh 19:19), was only a summer residence of the king.²

Following Ahab's offer, Naboth responds in a manner that is rather terse: "But Naboth said to Ahab, 'The Lord forbid me that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers'" (21:3). Translation of the Hebrew for 'inheritance' is *nachalah* (נַחֲלָה), which means, "Possession, property, inheritance" (Strong's Hebrew 5159).

In this first scene, allusions to historical Pentateuchal laws are given. Thomas Smothers provides insight on legal history and property:

²C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 3, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 269.

Ahab made what appears, on the surface, to be a fair offer of purchase, but Naboth refused to sell because the property was “the inheritance of my fathers” (21:3). According to legal tradition, family property was not to be alienated permanently. The principle involved was that the land belonged to the Lord; the land owner was steward, not owner (Lev 25:23-24). Persons could not enrich themselves at the Lord’s expense by selling the patrimony for monetary gain.³

The text provides character traits of these two players in this verse and the following: “So Ahab came into his house sullen and vexed because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he said, ‘I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.’ And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and ate no food” (21:4). Robert Cate offers thoughts on the behaviors of both men: “Naboth [was] typical of the fearless rural land holders of ancient Israel . . . the land was perceived as being the divine gift to God’s forbears and posterity. Recognizing the validity of Naboth’s position, Ahab gave in to Naboth’s decision but went home to pout.”⁴

If one does not understand the cultural context of the passage, the passage would be laced with unintentional misunderstanding. At first reading, one would assume that there was nothing wrong with Ahab making an offer for the vineyard; the problem seems to begin with Ahab’s response. However, Naboth understands the value and honor of inheritance (birthright). This scenario is a contrast to the scene in Genesis 25:29-34, when Esau, tempted by Jacob, forsakes his own birthright:

When Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field and he was famished; and Esau said to Jacob, “Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished.” Therefore his name was called Edom. But Jacob said, “First sell me your birthright.” Esau said, “Behold, I am about to die; so of what use then is the birthright to me?” And Jacob said, “First swear to me”; so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright. (Gen 25:29-34)

³Thomas G. Smothers, “1 and 2 Kings,” in *Mercer Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Watson E. Mills (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995), 313.

⁴Robert L. Cate, “Naboth,” in *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Watson E. Mills (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1992), 599.

Sin, as a character trait of Ahab, can also be cross-referenced back to Genesis 4:7. Cain's disappointment and anger (toward both God and Abel) as a result of God's disregard for his offering is given a compassionate, but stern, warning from the Lord: "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it" (Gen 4:7).

Scene 2: Jezebel's Plot of Deception (1 Kgs 21:5-16)

The second scene of the narrative of Naboth's vineyard begins with the entrance of Ahab's wife, Jezebel. She approaches Ahab, as he is still possibly lying down in his chambers: "But Jezebel his wife came to him and said to him, 'How is it that your spirit is so sullen that you are not eating food?'" (21:5). Jezebel is the third player of the drama. She is the Phoenician pagan princess and Baal worshipper who has led her husband to build the false deity Baal an altar and to effectively sponsor a Canaanite cult in Israel. Ahab answers Jezebel's question: "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you a vineyard in its place.' But he said, 'I will not give you my vineyard'" (21:6). A taunt is then issued to the king: "Jezebel his wife said to him, 'Do you now reign over Israel? Arise, eat bread, and let your heart be joyful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite'" (21:7). Jezebel's tone implies that—in essence—she is saying, "Since you don't have the courage to do it, I will get you the vineyard myself."

Jezebel makes good on her taunt to Ahab. Using the seal of the Israelite king, she contacts persons in Jezreel that have degrees of nobility and authority: "So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and sent letters to the elders and to the nobles who were living with Naboth in his city" (21:8). Jezebel, under the seal and in the name of the regent, is very clear with her intent: "Proclaim a fast and seat Naboth at the head of the people; and seat two worthless men before him, and let them testify against him, saying, 'You cursed God and the king.' Then take him out and stone him to

death.” (21:9-10). Of interest is the description of the two staged witnesses. In Hebrew, the term is *belial* (בְּלִיַּעַל), meaning “worthlessness” (Strong’s Hebrew 1100). This term also appears once in the NT, in 2 Corinthians 6:15 as a name of Satan (The KJV translates this part of the phrase in 1 Kgs 21:10 as “sons of Belial”).

This heavily orchestrated travesty against Naboth is given further explanation by Keil and Delitzsch: “Jezebel ordered the fasting for a sign, as though some public crime or heavy load of guilt rested upon the city, for which it was necessary that it should humble itself before God (1 Sam 7:6).”⁵ To make the murderous sham look official, Naboth’s ‘crime’ had to have tremendous weight; thus, there is a formal charge of the *cursing* (*berakta*, בִּרְכָה, Strong’s Hebrew 1288) of both God and Ahab: “The intention was, that at the very outset the appearance of justice should be given to the legal process about to be instituted in the eyes of all the citizens, and the stamp of veracity impressed upon the crime of which Naboth was to be accused.”⁶

This second scene rises to a climax with the fruition of Jezebel’s plot to falsely accuse and murder Naboth, and to take his vineyard. First Kings 21:11-12 reveal the treachery of Naboth’s neighbors: “So the men of his city, the elders and the nobles who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent word to them, just as it was written in the letters which she had sent them. They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth at the head of the people.” The two worthless scoundrels (or ‘sons of scoundrels’) also carry out the directions they have been given: “Then the two worthless men came in and sat before him; and the worthless men testified against him, even against Naboth, before the people, saying, ‘Naboth cursed God and the king.’ So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death with stones” (21:13). In 2 Kings 9:26, it is revealed that Naboth’s sons were also stoned to death. Betrayal has come to Naboth by those that knew him; these feckless

⁵Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 3:270-71.

⁶Ibid., 271.

nobles had a terror-laced loyalty to Ahab and Jezebel: “The elders of Jezreel executed this command without delay; a striking proof both of deep moral corruption and of slavish fear of the tyranny of the ruthless queen.”⁷

The scene closes with a sense of pseudo-falling action. Jezebel is contacted by the Jezreelites with their news: “Then they sent word to Jezebel, saying, ‘Naboth has been stoned and is dead.’ When Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, ‘Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth, the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead’” (21:14-15). Jezebel tells Ahab to get up and go get what is now his vineyard. Keil and Delitzsch explain the legal reason that enables Ahab to carry out his desire: “As Naboth’s sons were put to death at the same time, according to 2 Kings 9:26, the king was able to confiscate his property; not, indeed, on any principle involved in the Mosaic law, but according to a principle involved in the very idea of high treason.”⁸ Scene 2 ends with 1 Kings 21:16: “When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.”

The second scene comes to a close. Having taken the lead on a murderous enterprise, Jezebel has given to Ahab a vineyard that will become their ultimate undoing in the final scene. Ahab’s behavior, following his spurned offer to Naboth, incites Jezebel on a path of vengeance that will destroy them both.

Scene 3: Elijah’s Confrontation of Ahab (1 Kgs 21:17-29)

The third and final scene of 1 Kings 21 introduces the prophet Elijah to the narrative: “Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ‘Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of

⁷Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 3:271.

⁸Ibid.

Naboth where he has gone down to take possession of it.” (21:17-18). Elijah is last seen in 1 Kings 19 in Damascus, along with the anointing of his successor Elisha. The biblical text does not specify the location of Elijah in chapter 21; however, Damascus is north of Jezreel, and Elijah would have to “go down” (*yarad*, יָרַד ‘to come or go down, descend’ – Strong’s Hebrew 3381) as is stated in the text.

The prophetic language infers that Elijah knows the whole saga of Ahab, Naboth, and Jezebel. God says to Elijah, “You shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord, “Have you murdered and also taken possession?”’ And you shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord, “In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth the dogs will lick up your blood, even yours.”’ (21:19).

The scene then shifts immediately to the confrontation of the two foes in the vineyard of the deceased Naboth: “Ahab said to Elijah, ‘Have you found me, O my enemy?’ And Elijah answered, ‘I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the Lord’” (21:20). The prophet begins to unfurl a proclamation of the Lord’s word against the nefarious king: “Behold, I will bring evil (*raah*, רָע, ‘evil’- Strong’s Hebrew 7451) upon you, and will utterly sweep you away, and will cut off (*carat*, כָּרַת, ‘cut off, destroy’ - Strong’s Hebrew 3772) from Ahab every male, both bond and free in Israel” (21:21). Elijah continues the prophecy from the Word of the Lord, affixing names of past Israelite kings to denote their accompanying fates: “And I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and because you have made Israel sin” (21:22). The two Israelite kings were steeped in sinful behavior that dishonored God. Jeroboam is the first king of Israel following the division from Judah. As a result of his fear that the kingdoms would reunite due to joint worship in Jerusalem, he becomes an idolater and leads the nation to do the same. According to Rev. A. Rowland, “To prevent his people from turning again to the house of David, [Jeroboam] set up two golden calves, one in Beth-el and the other in

Dan, saying ‘these are thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.’”⁹ Baasha, a violent successor of the throne of Jeroboam, unfortunately follows in the same manner: “Baasha, The third king of the separate kingdom of Israel, usurped the throne of son of Jeroboam and exterminated the house of Jeroboam. . . . He is told by the prophet Jehu that because of his sinful reign the fate of his house would be like that of Jeroboam.”¹⁰

Elijah then addresses Jezebel in his proclamation against Ahab. This prophecy also envelops their son Joram, who will reign in Israel, as well as his contemporary, Ahaziah, king of Judah: “Of Jezebel also has the Lord spoken, saying, ‘The dogs will eat Jezebel in the district of Jezreel.’ The one belonging to Ahab, who dies in the city, the dogs will eat, and the one who dies in the field the birds of heaven will eat” (21:23-24). Their fates are revealed in 2 Kings 9.

The next two scriptures in the chapter provide a character summary of Ahab which transitions to his response in verse 27: “Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife incited him. He acted very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the Lord cast out before the sons of Israel” (21:25-26). Ahab’s abomination is given a connection to Mosaic covenantal language, which is found in Genesis 15:12-16.

Ahab’s response to the prophecy of Elijah is one of humility: “It came about when Ahab heard these words, that he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and fasted, and he lay in sackcloth and went about despondently” (21:27). Interestingly, Ahab’s means of showing contrition points to his understanding of the Pentateuch; also, Ahab’s contrition entreats a stay of judgment for the remaining state of his kingship: “Then the

⁹A. Rowland, “The Sin of Jeroboam,” *The Pulpit Commentary*, accessed December 4, 2018. https://biblehub.com/sermons/auth/rowland/the_sin_of_jeroboam.htm

¹⁰A. L. Breslich, “Baasha,” in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, accessed December 4, 2018. <https://www.biblestudytools.com/encyclopedias/isbe/baasha.html>

word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ‘Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days, *but* I will bring the evil upon his house in his son’s days’” (21:28-29).

The entire chapter of 2 Kings 9 reveals what happens to Jezebel when Elisha the prophet raises up Jehu to take back the throne of Israel. That narrative fulfills this prophecy of Elijah against Ahab and Jezebel (as well as Joram and Ahaziah) found in verses 21-24 and verse 29 of 1 Kings 21.

Part 2: Application of the Hallmarks

Following the exegetical work of the text of 1 Kings 21, I will make application of the ‘Clowney template’—the four hallmarks of Clowney’s preaching theology—to the text. This will help to give direction to the sermon craft.

God’s Word as Sovereign Authority in the Narrative

Elijah is a conduit of the Word of God, and he continues to address perilous situations regardless of the severity of consequences; God’s Word as sovereign authority provides courage to those who are called to proclaim it. Elijah comes to Ahab with this prophecy, even after threats to his life by Jezebel. The text is clear in stating the origin of where Elijah is to go, and what he is to pronounce; Elijah will speak only *what the Lord says*: “Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ‘Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth where he has gone down to take possession of it’” (21:17-18). Elijah addresses Ahab with God-commanded language not unlike inquiries made to a witness in a courtroom setting in verse 19: “You shall speak to him, saying, ‘*Thus says the Lord*, “Have you murdered and also taken possession?’” And you shall speak to him, saying, ‘*Thus says the Lord*, “In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth the dogs will lick up your blood,

even yours.””” This confrontation with God’s Word given by a prophet to a guilty party is an echo of Nathan’s words of accusation against David in 2 Samuel 12.

Elijah continues speaking God’s words against evil by making a two-pronged proclamation to Ahab: first his murderous, pagan bride: “Of Jezebel also *has the Lord spoken*, saying, ‘The dogs will eat Jezebel in the district of Jezreel’ (21:23); and then to Ahab’s lineage and co-conspirator in verse 24: “The one belonging to Ahab, who dies in the city, the dogs will eat, and the one who dies in the field the birds of heaven will eat.” In 2 Kings 9, these authoritative prophecies in God’s Word, proclaimed by Elijah, come to pass. Elisha the prophet gives direction that Jehu, son of Nimri, is to be anointed king of Israel. The word to Jehu is as follows: “*Thus says the Lord*, the God of Israel, ‘I have anointed you king over the people of the Lord, even over Israel. You shall strike the house of Ahab your master, that I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel’” (2 Kgs 9:6b-7).

At the close of this narrative, God again speaks to Elijah: “Then *the word of the Lord came* to Elijah the Tishbite, *saying*, ‘Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days, but I will bring the evil upon his house in his son’s days’” (21:28-29). The translation of ‘days’ is *yome* (יֹמֵי), which can mean ‘lifetime’ (Strong’s Hebrew 3117). Ahab’s death from the flight of a ‘random’ arrow, during a battle between the nations of Israel and Judah with Ramoth-Gilead (1 Kgs 22), fulfills the prophecy given by the Word of Lord to Elijah (1 Kgs 21:19):

The king was propped up in his chariot in front of the Arameans, and died at evening, and the blood from the wound ran into the bottom of the chariot...So the king died and was brought to Samaria, and they buried the king in Samaria. They washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria, *and the dogs licked up his blood...according to the word of the Lord which He spoke.* (1 Kgs 22:35-38)

Evil does fall on Joram, the son of Ahab, in 2 Kings 9. King Joram meets Jehu and at the property of Naboth. Jehu shoots Joram in the heart with an arrow.

Then Jehu says to his officer, “Take [Joram] up and cast him into the property of the field of Naboth, for I remember the Lord’s oracle against him: ‘Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons,’ says the Lord, ‘and I will repay you in this property,’ says the Lord. Now then, take and cast him into the property, according to the word of the Lord.” (2 Kgs 9:25-26).

Jehu comes to Jezreel and is taunted defiantly by Jezebel. He yells to the window of her abode and says, “Who is on my side? Who?” Two or three officials looked down at him. Jehu says “Throw her down.” These two or three toss Jezebel over and Jehu tramples her under foot. They went to bury her, but they found nothing more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. (2 Kgs 9:30-33, 35) Jehu’s final words in 2 Kings 9 point to the sovereign authority of God’s Word regarding the prophecy given to Elijah: “This is *the word of the Lord*, which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ‘In the property of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel’” (2 Kgs 9:36).

Scripture as Story

The backstory of Elijah, Ahab, Jezebel. To simply drop a congregant into an OT narrative with little or no set-up nearly guarantees that the congregant will most likely disengage from the sermon. Clowney had incredible ability in setting the ‘scene’ of the story and drawing the listener quickly into the plot. With the story intersections of Elijah, Ahab, and Jezebel alone, one can get mired in backstory details, if significant salience is not deftly performed. Clowney would bring out a wealth of material from Scripture for the backdrop of the narrative

For this message, identities of the main players in the story should be explained prior to the setting of Naboth’s vineyard in 1 Kings 21. In preparation for this sermon, I devised a scriptural event-line for the main players, pointing to their relationships prior to the events in Naboth’s vineyard. In the sermon manuscript, pertinent

information from the event-line will be utilized as either introductory material or to facilitate character introduction. The scriptural event-line has been converted into the following summary paragraphs.

Scriptural event-line summary. In 1 Kings 16:28, Ahab, son of Omri (a wicked king), becomes king over Israel during King Asa of Judah's 38th year of reign (1 Kgs 16:29). Ahab will reign 22 years in total; he is described in Scripture as the worse king to that point of Israel's history (1 Kgs 16:30). Ahab marries Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal king of Sidonia; Ahab serves Baal-and builds altar for Baal and the Asherah, which is the pagan goddess mother of Baal¹¹ (1 Kgs 16:31-33).

Elijah the Tishbite first appears in I Kings 17. He gives a prophecy against the atrocities of Ahab; hence, there will be no dew or rain to fall on the nation. God tells Elijah to go east and hide by the Cherith brook, where he will be fed by ravens and will obtain water by the brook (17:6). When the brook dries up, Elijah is told by God to go to Zarapeth, where there will be a widow whom God has commanded to help Elijah. This comes to pass according to the Word of the Lord. At Elijah's request, the widow makes him a cake with her meager amount of flour and oil; as a result of her obedience, God provides a continual flow of flour and oil for the widow and her household. Later in the chapter, Elijah raises the widow's son from the dead; as a result, the widow claims Elijah as a man of God and that the words of the Lord in his mouth are true (1 Kgs 17:17-24).

Three years later, God tells Elijah to confront Ahab and that He will send rain. En route, Elijah encounters Obadiah, the God-fearing head servant of Ahab, who has been dispatched to find water and sustenance for the king's livestock. Elijah tells Obadiah to announce the prophet to the king (1 Kgs 18:1-16). Elijah issues a challenge to Ahab:

¹¹Richard B. Vinson, "Asherah," in *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, 68.

“Now then send and gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, together with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table” (1 Kgs 18:19). Both Elijah and the pagan prophets will each have a sacrifice to offer; the God who responds with a lighting of the respective sacrifice will be claimed by the Israelite nation as the one true God. At Mount Carmel, Israel will have to decide if they will follow God or Baal.

After the darkly comic description of the wasted effort of the prophets of Baal and Asherah, Elijah calls the Israelites to himself. Elijah has his sacrifice drenched with water and then gives this prayer in 1 Kings 18:36-39:

At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, “O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that You, O Lord, are God, and that You have turned their heart back again.” Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, “The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God.” (1 Kgs 18:36-39)

God sends fire on the immersed sacrifice of Elijah. Israel claims the Lord is God, and Elijah tells them to seize the pagan prophets. Elijah then slays the prophets of Baal (18:40).

In 1 Kings 19, Jezebel threatens to do to Elijah as he did to her priests. Elijah flees to Mount Horeb and has encounters with God where he is admonished, encouraged, and told to go to Damascus. There, Elijah will anoint the kings of Syria (Hazeal) and Israel (Jehu) and will place his mantle on Elisha, thereby anointing Elisha as his prophet successor.

These four chapters (1 Kgs 16-19) establish the tensions between Elijah, Ahab, and Jezebel, which serves to set up the turn of events in 1 Kings 21. Just before the narrative of Naboth’s Vineyard, there is a war between Israel and Aram in 1 Kings 20. God wants to deliver the enemy into the hand of Ahab, so Ahab will give the resultant credit and glory to God. Ahab wars with Ben-Hadad of Syria, and God grants victory to Israel; however, Ahab, in disobedience to God, offers Ben-Hadad clemency instead of

death, which angers God even further. This passage further underscores the challenge of character and cowardice with Ahab.

As this sermon's text is an OT narrative, an understanding of the storyline—and the ability to tell it concisely—is crucial for redemptive communication of Gospel truth. Narrative, simply put, is story. In preaching narrative, the preacher cannot lose sight of the story.

Covenant Understanding within the Narrative

The initial point of conflict in the narrative is the vineyard of Naboth. Ahab desires the vineyard, and Naboth will not relinquish it. In 1 Kings 21:3, Naboth defends the keeping of his property by referring to his rights within covenantal law: “But Naboth said to Ahab, “The Lord forbid me that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers.” Naboth is a godly man, and he does not want to offend God. He is in the legal right to refuse Ahab in verse 3: “Naboth refused to part with the vineyard, because it was the inheritance of his fathers, that is to say, on religious grounds, because the sale of a paternal inheritance was forbidden in the law. He was therefore not merely at liberty as a personal right to refuse the king's proposal, but bound by the commandment of God.”¹² As king, Ahab should have understood covenant details and probably should not have even made the request of Naboth. The problem begins to bloom with Ahab's immature response in verse 4:

Instead of respecting this tender feeling of shrinking from the transgression of the law and desisting from his coveting, Ahab went home to Samaria, sullen and morose, lay down upon his bed, turned his face to the wall . . . and did not eat. This childish mode of giving expression to his displeasure at Naboth's refusal to comply with his wish, shows very clearly that Ahab was a man sold under sin.¹³

¹²Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 3:269-70.

¹³*Ibid.*, 270.

In addition to property laws, covenant understanding comes into play later in the chapter when Elijah confronts Ahab in the vineyard: “Ahab said to Elijah, ‘Have you found me, O my enemy?’ And he answered, ‘I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the Lord’” (21:20). Because of Ahab’s sin, Elijah speaks the word of the Lord in judgment to Ahab: “Behold, I will bring evil upon you, and will utterly sweep you away, and will cut off from Ahab every male, both bond and free in Israel” (21:21). This contains language not unlike what Moses shares with Pharaoh in Exodus 11:4-5 and Exodus 12:12, regarding the plague of the death of the firstborn in Egypt. Elijah’s prophecy against the house of Ahab reaches fever pitch with the comparisons to both Jeroboam and Baasha; Ahab’s sin has become corporate, as he has made Israel sin. In 1 Kings 12, Jeroboam causes Israel to sin by not allowing them to return to Jerusalem to worship. He creates golden calves for the Israelites to worship in pagan high places, institutes feasts, and calls forth false priests who are not Levites. Ahab’s sin during his kingship is an echo of Jeroboam’s corporate sin toward the kingdom of Israel. Jeroboam’s house falls because Jeroboam disregards God’s calling of priests; Jeroboam ordains whomever he sees fit to serve as a priest: “This event became sin to the house of Jeroboam, even to blot it out and destroy it from off the face of the earth.” (1 Kgs 13:24).

Two chapters later, Baasha’s violent coup becomes the end of Jeroboam’s house: “[Baasha] did not leave to Jeroboam any persons alive, until he had destroyed them, according to the word of the Lord...because of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and which he made Israel sin, because of his provocation with which he provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger” (1 Kgs 15:29-30). The prophet Jehu calls out the wickedness of the kingship of Baasha with a word of the Lord in a prophecy of his impending doom: “I will consume Baasha and his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. Anyone of Baasha who dies in the city the dogs will eat, and anyone of his who dies in the field the birds of the heavens will eat.” (1 Kgs

16:3-4). The similarity in language with this final prophecy toward Baasha to that of the prophecy against Ahab and Jezebel in 1 Kings 21:24 cannot be overstated: “The one belonging to Ahab, who dies in the city, the dogs will eat, and the one who dies in the field the birds of heaven will eat.”

There is one further point of interest regarding covenantal understanding in 1 Kings 21. In the summary statement prior to Ahab’s moment of conviction in verse 27, there is a connection from the behavior of Ahab to sinful acts of the Amorites: “Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife incited him. He acted very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the Lord cast out before the sons of Israel” (1 Kgs 21:25-26). This charge of judgment connects all the way back to God’s covenant with Abram:

Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. God said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. “But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. “As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. “Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.” (Gen 15:12-16)

The Amorites’ wickedness is the threshold measurement of the idolatrous sin of Ahab. For Ahab to be mentioned in the same covenant context of judgment as the Amorites is an extreme indictment against his sinful kingship. To be held as a comparison alongside an example of iniquity found in the Mosaic covenant should rightfully strike fear into the heart of one whom God placed on the throne.

Symbolism and Typology and Christocentric Connections

Elijah confronts Ahab with the word of the Lord, and Ahab realizes to what he has been a part and he humbles himself: “It came about when Ahab heard these words, that he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and fasted, and he lay in sackcloth and went

about despondently” (1 Kgs 21:27). Understanding Ahab’s pattern of behavior as seen in 1 Kings 16-20, it would be easy to question his sincerity regarding his sin toward Naboth. However, God gives confirmation of Ahab’s humility: “Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ‘Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days, but I will bring the evil upon his house in his son’s days’” (1 Kgs 21:28-29).

Ahab’s acknowledgement of his sin, and his subsequent penance, has a NT connection to Peter’s confrontation of the Jews at Pentecost. In Acts 2:25-28, Peter preaches his Pentecost sermon to the Jews in Jerusalem (which began with a prelude from Joel and a proclamation of the identity of Jesus and the purpose of his coming) by quoting Psalm 16:8-11. Using this psalm, Peter makes a Christocentric appeal to the Jews based on covenantal understanding, which goes deeper than any memory or sentimentality. The response of the Jews in Acts 2 is an echo of Ahab’s response to Elijah’s charge: “Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren, what shall we do?’ Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 2:37-38).

For the sermon manuscript for 1 Kings 21, Christocentric connection to Jesus is realized through a contrast to the failed kingship of Ahab. This connection is shown through scriptures found in Ezekiel 34 and John 10.

Christocentric Connection and Eventual Sermon Content

The shepherd kings in Ezekiel 34. God gives an oracle to Ezekiel to pronounce against the shepherds of Israel in Ezekiel 34:2. The word for ‘shepherd’ (*ra’ah*: רֹעֵה - Strong’s 7462) can also be translated as ‘ruler and teacher of flock.’ Daniel I. Block gives biblical basis for this translation: “In Israel the designation of rulers as shepherds had a long-standing tradition . . . According to Numbers 27:17, Moses prayed that Yahweh would appoint a man over the congregation so they might not be like sheep

without a shepherd.”¹⁴

God gives Ezekiel the prophecy against the shepherd rulers of Israel: “Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock” (Ezek 34:2b-3). This accusation strikes at the heart of Ahab’s thievery of Naboth’s vineyard.

The Lord continues His oracle: “As I live . . . surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock, but rather the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock” (34:8). Block provides further insight describing both the situation of the abandoned flock and the resultant guilt of the shepherd kings: “The divine patron bemoans the desperate condition of his flock; they have become spoil and prey for all the wild animals. Responsibility for this state of affairs is placed squarely on the shoulders of the shepherds, who, having been appointed by Yahweh to care for his flock, have exploited the office for personal gain.”¹⁵

In verses 10-15, God takes His flock from the care of the lapsed kings in order to give the flock sole restoration from Him:

Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will demand My sheep from them and make them cease from feeding sheep. So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore, but I will deliver My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them . . . Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day . . . I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest,” declares the Lord God. (Ezek 34:10-15)

In Ezekiel 24:23, God gives a prophetic reminder of His covenant faithfulness: “Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he

¹⁴Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 281.

¹⁵Ibid., 285.

will feed them himself and be their shepherd.” According to Block, “The shepherd will be David. Although this ruler is explicitly identified as David only twice outside this book (Jer 23:5; Amos 9:11), Ezekiel’s identification of the divinely installed king as David is based on a long-standing prophetic tradition.”¹⁶ The link between shepherd, servant, and ruler is realized in verse 24: “And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the Lord have spoken.” The picture of God dwelling with His people is seen in verses 30 and 31 of this oracle: “Then they will know that I, the Lord their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are My people . . . As for you, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are men, and I am your God.”

Timothy Laniak provides additional contrast from the shepherd kings—and their rampant abuse of power—to a King who will care for His people and dwell with them:

The last kings of Judah had, like David (2 Sam 12:1-12) and Ahab (1 Kgs 21), made a fatal leadership mistake that was built upon a faulty supposition. Abusing others was an expression of the arrogant assumption that power is primarily privilege rather than responsibility. In a succinct summary the prophet says that ‘each of the princes of Israel . . . uses his power to shed blood’ (22:6). By contrast, Ezekiel sees ahead to a day when the community will be led by a prince who is satisfied with his own possessions (45:8-9). He will understand that ‘none of my people will be separated from his property’ (46:18). The fundamental assumption of the eschatological prince is that only God can call them ‘my people.’¹⁷

Block offers additional commentary on God’s covenant faithfulness, in spite of concern that God would break the covenant of kingship that He made with David in 2 Samuel 7: “If Yahweh appeared to have revoked the covenant in allowing this collapse [of the Davidic kingship] to happen, Ezekiel hereby announces that the ancient promise has not been forgotten. Yahweh would fulfill his irrevocable promise and his unending covenant to the house of David as the sole legitimate dynasty in Israel.”¹⁸ This ultimate

¹⁶Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 297-98.

¹⁷Timothy Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 149.

¹⁸Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 299.

covenant is realized in the coming (and coming again) of Jesus: “[God’s] promise to David of eternal title to the throne of Jerusalem still stands. These covenant hopes will all be fulfilled in the messianic age. At the time, when Yahweh’s people live securely in their land, are ruled by divinely appointed David, and enjoy the shalom of God’s presence and grace, they will finally acknowledge him as their Savior and covenant Lord.”¹⁹

The Good Shepherd in John 10. Jesus begins the parable of the Good Shepherd: “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep” (John 10:1-2). Jesus develops his “shepherd/sheep” imagery in verses 7 and 8 with self-identification: “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.” William Cook takes Jesus’ accusation against the religious leaders in Israel (10:8) and makes connection to Ezekiel 34: “They are following in the steps of those God condemned as failed leaders in the past (Ezek 34). Jesus repeats the thought that these failed leaders are ‘thieves’ and ‘robbers’ and that His sheep will not listen to them.”²⁰

Jesus extends his self-identification in verses 9-11 by incorporating elements of salvation, abundant life, and atonement: “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep” (John 10:9-11). The word used in John 10:10 for ‘shepherd’ is ποιμήν (‘shepherd’ or ‘feeder, protector, and ruler of a flock of men’ – Strong’s 4166), which bears a striking resemblance to רָעָה (*ra’ah*) in Ezekiel 34. Gerald Borchert gives contrast between the character of Jesus and

¹⁹Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 308.

²⁰William F. Cook, *John: Jesus Christ is God*, Focus on the Bible Commentary Series (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2016), 163.

the lack of care seen in the religious leaders of Israel: “The messianic figure here is Jesus who cares for his sheep like God does. But the enemies are identified with the uncaring leaders of Jesus’ day. They are like the leaders in the prophetic portrait of Ezekiel 34 who were rejected by God because of their unfaithfulness in leading God’s people.”²¹

Jesus continues his use of comparisons in verses 12 and 13, pointing to an identification of ownership of the flock: “He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep.” Cook provides further connection from John 10 back to the oracle of Ezekiel, highlighting the priests’ failure in responsibility: “Ezekiel 34 is the most important passage standing behind Jesus’ words here. Just as the religious leaders in Ezekiel’s day failed to care for God’s people, so the religious leaders in Jesus’ day failed to carry out the responsibilities for His people.”²²

Jesus gives revelation to his purpose of ultimate atonement for all in verses 14-16: “I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.” Jesus shows his relationship with the Father and his desire to bring in the Gentiles through his sacrifice. Jesus the Good Shepherd gives a promise of confidence to his flock in verses 27 and 28: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.” Cook summarizes the Christocentric connection between Ezekiel 34 and John 10:

²¹Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11*, New American Commentary, vol. 25a (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 329.

²²Cook, *John: Jesus Christ is God*, 161.

Jesus identifies Himself with God when He calls Himself the good shepherd . . . God is depicted as the shepherd of His people in the OT. Jesus is both Savior and Shepherd to those who believe in Him for salvation. As shepherd, He dies for His sheep, He knows them by name, His sheep know His voice, He guides them and they follow Him. In contrast, false shepherds care nothing about the sheep. Like the false shepherds in Ezekiel’s day they care only for themselves.²³

Part 3: Sermon Manuscript

“Character, Choice, and the Consequences of Sin”: Introduction

We talk about character from an early age. Our parents drilled into our heads the importance of good character—always telling the truth—as far back as we can remember. Those of us as parents have done the same thing with our children. Someone in our lives has stressed how crucial good character is. This morning, we’re going to look at character. We will look the character of four individuals; specifically the character of one of the kings of Israel. Most of the kings of Israel and Judah had character flaws. Well . . . we all have flaws, don’t we?

How should a king act? As you’re turning to the book of 1 Kings 21, allow me to introduce some of the characters in our story. In 1 Kings 16:28, Ahab, son of Omri (a wicked king), becomes king over Israel Ahab will reign 22 years in total; he is described in Scripture as the worse king to that point of Israel’s history (1 Kgs 16:30). Ahab marries Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal king of Sidonia; Ahab serves Baal-and builds altar for Baal and the Asherah, which is the pagan goddess mother of Baal²⁴ (1 Kgs 16:31-33).

Elijah the Tishbite, a man and prophet of God, first appears in I Kings 17. He gives a prophecy against the atrocities of Ahab; hence, there will be no dew or rain to fall on the nation.

²³Cook, *John: Jesus Christ is God*, 167.

²⁴Vinson, “Asherah,” 68.

Three years later, God tells Elijah to confront Ahab and that He will send rain. Elijah issues a challenge to Ahab: “Now then send and gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, together with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table” (1 Kgs 18:19). Both Elijah and the pagan prophets will each have a sacrifice to offer; the God who responds with a lighting of the respective sacrifice will be claimed by the Israelite nation as the one true God. At Mount Carmel, Israel will have to decide if they will follow God or Baal.

After the comical description of the wasted effort of the prophets of Baal and Asherah, Elijah calls the Israelites to himself. Elijah has his sacrifice drenched with water and then prays. God sends fire on the immersed sacrifice of Elijah. Israel claims the Lord is God, and Elijah tells them to seize the pagan prophets. Elijah then slays the prophets of Baal (18:40).

In 1 Kings 19, Jezebel is furious with Elijah. She threatens to do to Elijah as he did to her priests. Elijah flees to Mount Horeb and has encounters with God where he is admonished, encouraged, and told to go to Damascus. These four chapters (1 Kings 16-19) establish the tensions between Elijah, Ahab, and Jezebel, which serves to set up the turn of events in 1 Kings 21.

Scene 1: 1 Kings 21:1-4

Our story begins this way: “Now it came about after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which was in Jezreel beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria” (21:1). The conversation starts in verse 2: “Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, ‘Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden because it is close beside my house, and I will give you a better vineyard than it in its place; if you like, I will give you the price of it in money.’” Why did Ahab want this particular vineyard? This vineyard was very close to his palace.

Verse 3 reads, “But Naboth said to Ahab, ‘The Lord forbid me that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers.’” Naboth tells the king, “No! Heavens no! The Lord forbid me!” Why does Naboth have such a response to the king? If the President of the United States wanted to buy property from you, would you tell the President, “No”? This is Naboth’s inheritance from his fathers; however, this is not necessarily family property: “According to legal tradition, the land belonged to the Lord; the land owner was steward, not owner (Lev 25:23-24). Persons could not enrich themselves at the Lord’s expense by selling the patrimony for monetary gain.”²⁵ Smothers also says that “Ahab made what appears, on the surface, to be a fair offer of purchase, but Naboth refused to sell because the property was ‘the inheritance of my fathers.’”²⁶

Verse 4 states, “So Ahab came into his house sullen and vexed because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he said, ‘I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.’ And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and ate no food.” Is this appropriate behavior for an adult? Is it appropriate behavior for a king?

The Character of Naboth and Ahab

At first reading, there is nothing wrong with Ahab making an offer. The problem begins in Ahab’s response. Naboth understands the value and honor of inheritance (or birthright)—unlike someone like Esau (Gen 25:29-34) who sold his birthright to his brother Jacob for a bowl of what Esau called, “That red stuff there.” Esau had little regard for his birthright; he sold it for a bowl of lentil stew. What is the character of Naboth? Naboth is a godly man—he does not want to offend God and he was in the legal right to refuse Ahab.

Naboth is “typical of the fearless rural land holders of ancient Israel . . . the

²⁵Smothers, “1 and 2 Kings,” 313.

²⁶Ibid.

land was perceived as being the divine gift to God’s forbears and posterity. Recognizing the validity of Naboth’s position, Ahab gave in to Naboth’s decision but went home to pout.”²⁷ Ahab as king should have understood covenant details and probably should not have even made the request of Naboth. The problem begins in Ahab’s response—he is sullen, vexed, pouting, and has turned away his face.

Ahab is committing the sin of covetousness. This is Ahab’s heart of the problem—his covetousness:

Instead of respecting this tender feeling of shrinking from the transgression of the law and desisting from his coveting, Ahab went home to Samaria, sullen and morose, lay down upon his bed, turned his face to the wall . . . and did not eat. This childish mode of giving expression to his displeasure at Naboth’s refusal to comply with his wish, shows very clearly that Ahab was a man sold under sin.²⁸

How we handle everyday events such as disappointment reveals who we really are—our character. This calls to mind Genesis 4:6-7. You may remember the story of Cain and Abel: “Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it’” (Gen 4:6-7). Ahab’s attitude and response to Naboth is the beginning of what would be the downfall of his lineage. Our attitudes and responses to life events will influence our choices—for good or for bad.

Scene 2: 1 Kings 21:5-16

The story continues in this second scene: “But Jezebel his wife [yes, that same Jezebel, the Phoenician pagan princess and Baal worshipper who led her husband the Israelite king Ahab to build Baal an altar and to sponsor a Canaanite cult] came to him and said to him, ‘How is it that your spirit is so sullen that you are not eating food?’” (1

²⁷Cate, “Naboth,” 599.

²⁸Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 3:270.

Kgs 21:5). Despondently, Ahab replies to Jezebel in verse 6: “Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, ‘Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you a vineyard in its place.’ But he said, ‘I will not give you my vineyard.’” Jezebel replies to Ahab: “‘Do you now reign over Israel? Arise, eat bread, and let your heart be joyful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite’” (21:7). It sounds like Jezebel is really taunting Ahab, with a phrase such as “since you don’t have the courage to do it, I will give you the vineyard.” Following this conversation, Jezebel then takes matters into her own hands:

So she wrote letters in Ahab’s name and sealed them with his seal, and sent letters to the elders and to the nobles who were living with Naboth in his city. Now she wrote in the letters, saying, “Proclaim a fast and seat Naboth at the head of the people; and seat two worthless men before him, and let them testify against him, saying, ‘You cursed God and the king.’ Then take him out and stone him to death.” (1 Kgs 21:8-10)

It is interesting to note Jezebel’s use of the word “worthless.” It is the same word that is used in the NT in 2 Corinthians 6. The word “worthless” is translated as “belial” (Satan). These two worthless men can be called “sons of the devil.”

The story continues to unfold in verses 11 and 12: “So the men of his city, the elders and the nobles who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent word to them, just as it was written in the letters which she had sent them. They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth at the head of the people.” At that point, the sons of the devil take their place in the drama: “Then the two worthless men came in and sat before him; and the worthless men testified against him, even against Naboth, before the people, saying, ‘Naboth cursed God and the king.’ So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death with stones” (21:13). Naboth is not the only one to die. Second Kings 9:26 reveals that Naboth’s sons are also put to death. What we see is a picture of absolute debasement in the town leaders: “The elders of Jezreel executed this command without delay; a striking proof both of deep moral corruption and of slavish fear of the tyranny of the ruthless queen.”²⁹

²⁹Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 3:271.

Following this travesty, the deed is done: “Then they sent word to Jezebel, saying, ‘Naboth has been stoned and is dead’” (21:14).

The final two verses end this second scene: “When Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, ‘Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth, the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead.’ When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it” (21:15-16).

Character, Choices, and Consequences

Our character certainly will impact our choices and decisions. Our choices impact and influence events and individuals all around us. With Jezebel and her lack of character, these consequences were deception and death. One author I read said that “Jezebel ordered the fasting for a sign, as though some public crime or heavy load of guilt rested upon the city, for which it was necessary that it should humble itself before God.”³⁰ The entire fast was a sham, from top to bottom: “The intention was, that at the very outset the appearance of justice should be given to the legal process about to be instituted in the eyes of all the citizens, and the stamp of veracity impressed upon the crime of which Naboth was to be accused.”³¹

This charade involved not only city officials but also the king. Ahab was the beneficiary of the murder of Naboth and his family: “As Naboth’s sons were put to death at the same time (2 Kgs 9:26), the king was able to confiscate his property; not, indeed, on any principle involved in the Mosaic law, but according to a principle involved in the very idea of high treason.”³² Jezebel’s accusation against Naboth involved both God and king.

³⁰Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 3:270-71.

³¹*Ibid.*, 271.

³²*Ibid.*

Jezebel took action in the name of Ahab. It's as if she said, "Daddy . . . Mama's gonna make it alright." And that's just what she did. She inasmuch says to Ahab: "Don't cry! Get up and eat and be happy—I'll take care of it." She orchestrates a plot to frame poor innocent Naboth who was only trying to honor God and protect his birthright. He was innocent of any wrongdoing against God and the king. So off Ahab goes.

Our choices have consequences. With Ahab, these consequences were destruction. Ahab told his spouse what happened, but did not stop his spouse from taking action. Ahab's spouse resorted to intentional deception, lies, and murder—making Ahab an accomplice and recipient. Remember, Jezebel sent the letters in Ahab's name and with his seal. We don't know if he knew the dirty details of what transpired. Or, perhaps as in an old Hollywood scenario—when the crooked fixer speaks to his boss: "Do you wanna know the details, or do you just want me to take care of it?" We don't know. The text doesn't tell us.

I looked up some additional information on Jezebel, which also confirmed Ahab's involvement:

Jezebel is also the villain in an episode about Naboth's vineyard (1 Kgs 21). Naboth refused to surrender a family vineyard the king wanted, a right protected by Israel's covenant tradition. Ahab pouted but understood that the king, like all Hebrews, was bound by covenant. Not so Jezebel. She, believing that the king's wish was above law, arranged Naboth's death and confiscated the vineyard for Ahab. For the biblical narrator, Ahab is no less guilty than Jezebel.³³

Scene 3: 1 Kings 21:17-29

God is holy and will not tolerate sin. God cares for us and places individuals in our lives to confront us; this is a sign of His mercy. At the beginning of this final scene, God tells Elijah to prepare to meet Ahab: "Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 'Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold,

³³Robert W. Crapps, "Ahab," in *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, 16.

he is in the vineyard of Naboth where he has gone down to take possession of it” (1 Kgs 21:17-18). Elijah is then told explicitly by God what he is to say to Ahab: “You shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord, ‘Have you murdered and also taken possession?’” And you shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord, ‘In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth the dogs will lick up your blood, even yours’” (21:19).

Ahab says to Elijah, “Have you found me, O my enemy?” If you remember, these two had a history. Elijah answers, “I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the Lord. Behold, I will bring evil upon you, and will utterly sweep you away, and will cut off from Ahab every male, both bond and free in Israel” (21:21). God gives Elijah a devastating prophecy to pronounce upon Ahab: “I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and because you have made Israel sin” (21:22). Who were these two kings that Elijah is comparing to Ahab? Learning about these kings and their sin is crucial to understanding God’s covenant with the Davidic kings:

Jeroboam was the first king of the separate "kingdom of Israel" and practiced idolatry. He saw that the national assemblies for worship in the temple at Jerusalem would, sooner or later, unite the tribes again under one king. To prevent his people from turning again to the house of David, he set up two golden calves, one in Beth-el and the other in Dan, saying "these are thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."³⁴

The second king that Elijah mentions is connected to Jeroboam and to Jeroboam’s sin: “Baasha, The third king of the separate kingdom of Israel, usurped the throne of the son of Jeroboam and exterminated the house of Jeroboam. . . . He is told by the prophet Jehu that because of his sinful reign the fate of his house would be like that of Jeroboam.”³⁵

³⁴A. Rowland, “The Sin of Jeroboam,” *The Pulpit Commentary*, accessed December 4, 2018. https://biblehub.com/sermons/auth/rowland/the_sin_of_jeroboam.html

³⁵A. L. Breslich, “Baasha,” in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, accessed December 4, 2018. <https://www.biblestudytools.com/encyclopedias/isbe/baasha.html>

Elijah continues to unfold this prophecy against Ahab, now addressing the king's family: "Of Jezebel also has the Lord spoken, saying, 'The dogs will eat Jezebel in the district of Jezreel.' The one belonging to Ahab, who dies in the city, the dogs will eat, and the one who dies in the field the birds of heaven will eat" (21:23-24).

What follows is an interesting character description summary of King Ahab: "Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife incited him. He acted very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the Lord cast out before the sons of Israel" (21:25-26).

Who are the Amorites? What do they have to do with King Ahab? This sobering character statement regarding Ahab connects all the way back to Genesis 15 and God's covenant with Abram:

Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. "But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. "As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. "Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete." (Gen 15:12-16)

The Amorites' wickedness is a threshold measurement of judgment, connecting to the Israelites' slavery in Egypt. What if you or I was mentioned in the same covenant context of judgment? We should read these words and feel a sense of awe and respect, albeit mixed with a healthy dose of fear. This is extremely frightening to see the scope of God's judgment.

Ahab's Response to God's Character

God is merciful but just. Ahab is given a choice to make—what would he choose? Would Ahab choose destruction or deliverance? The covenant connection mentioning the Amorites—this got Ahab's attention. In verses 27, we see Ahab's response to what God said through Elijah: "It came about when Ahab heard these words,

that he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and fasted, and he lay in sackcloth and went about despondently.” Ahab repented of his sin. Ahab has been given spiritual illumination and, as a result, has humbled himself before God. Verses 28 and 29 provide the conclusion to 1 Kings 21, and point to the end of the saga of Naboth’s vineyard and the fall of the lineage of Ahab: “Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, “Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days, but I will bring the evil upon his house in his son’s days.”

God will Fulfill His Word

God fulfills His Word with bringing the end to the house of Ahab in 2 Kings 9. This is what happens. Evil does fall on Joram, the son of Ahab, in 2 Kings 9. King Joram meets Jehu (who has just been anointed as king of Israel by one of the prophets with Elisha) at the property of Naboth. Jehu shoots Joram in the heart with an arrow. Then Jehu says to his officer, “Take [Joram] up and cast him into the property of the field of Naboth, for I remember the Lord’s oracle against him: ‘Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons,’ says the Lord, ‘and I will repay you in this property,’ says the Lord. Now then, take and cast him into the property, according to the word of the Lord.” (2 Kgs 9:25-26).

Jehu comes to Jezreel and is taunted defiantly by Jezebel. He yells to the window of her abode and says, “Who is on my side? Who?” Two or three officials looked down at him. Jehu says, “Throw her down.” These two or three toss Jezebel over and Jehu tramples her under foot. They went to bury her, but they found nothing more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. (2 Kgs 9:30-33, 35) Jehu’s final words in 2 Kings 9 point to the sovereign authority of God’s Word regarding the prophecy given to Elijah: “This is the word of the Lord, which He spoke by His servant

Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ‘In the property of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel’” (2 Kgs 9:36).

Sermon Climax

You know, Ahab was a wicked king, and God gave a message to Elijah to give to Ahab in an attempt to turn him around. God gave messages to other wicked kings during those days of the OT. In those days, kings were entrusted to shepherd their people. The Israelites were a flock; thus, the kings were known as shepherds.

In the book of Ezekiel, in chapter 34, God gives Ezekiel a prophecy against the shepherd rulers of Israel: “Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock” (Ezek 34:2b-3). This accusation strikes at the heart of those shepherd kings that committed sins not unlike Ahab’s slaughter of Naboth and the theft of his vineyard.

The Lord continues His prophecy against rulers like Ahab: “As I live . . . surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock, but rather the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock” (34:8). In verses 10-15, God takes His flock from the care of the lapsed kings in order to give the flock sole restoration that would come from Him:

Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will demand My sheep from them and make them cease from feeding sheep. So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore, but I will deliver My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them . . . Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day . . . I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest,” declares the Lord God. (Ezek 34:10-15)

In Ezekiel 34:23, God gives a prophetic reminder of His covenant faithfulness: “Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd.”

And that is just what God did. He fulfilled what He said in Ezekiel 34:23. God has set over His people one shepherd to feed them. This one shepherd came to bring life, and to bring it abundantly. Not like Ahab, whose greed and selfishness resulted in murder and theft, and not like those priests of Israel—who really did not care for the sheep. Those priests were like hired hands, not shepherds, not the owners of the sheep, who would see the wolf coming, and leave the sheep to flee. They flee because they are really not too concerned about the sheep.

This one shepherd said, “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief (like old Ahab) comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep” (John 10:9-11).

Jesus says: “I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep” (John 10:14-15). And Jesus the Good Shepherd gives us this promise: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:27-28). Aren’t we glad that we have a Good Shepherd who knows us, feeds us, protects us, and has given us abundant life here and life forever?

Conclusion

In this chapter, an original expository sermon of an OT narrative passage was presented using the homiletic model created from chapter 2. The three sections of the sermon preparation—exegesis, application of the model, and subsequent sermon manuscript—show that the hallmarks of Clowney’s preaching theology can be used to craft a Christocentric sermon from an OT narrative passage with relative ease. In the following (and final) chapter, there is an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Clowney

hermeneutical model. This has been accomplished by assessing its implications for preachers, teachers, and discipleship programs, as well as other biblical literary genres.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATIONS AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The four hallmarks of Edmund Clowney's preaching theology that comprise this thesis are consistent factors that Clowney observed in his study of Scripture in order to tell the story of the Bible: the Word of God as sovereign authority of truth; God speaking words that are the source of the inspired text of Scripture; relying on covenant understanding as the background for reading both the Old and New Testaments; and Christocentric connections to promise/fulfillment by symbolism and typology. Chapter 2 contained a summation of Clowney's preaching theology gleaned from his homiletic writings, which gave a foundation to a sermon 'design template,' in which a preacher could create a Christocentric sermon using an OT narrative text. Chapter 3 was comprised of analyses of Clowney's OT narrative sermons, which provided consistent proof of the hallmarks of Clowney's preaching theology. Chapter 4 was a demonstration of how to build an OT narrative sermon using the Clowney 'template.'

In this final chapter, I evaluate the effectiveness of the Clowney hermeneutical 'template,' by assessing its implications for preachers, teachers, and discipleship programs, as well as other biblical literary genres. In this chapter, there are other scholarly voices that give support to these hallmarks of Clowney's biblical theology.

Implications for Preaching Ministry

The four hallmarks of Clowney's preaching theology have the greatest impact on ministries that directly involve the study of Scripture. There are overt implications for pastors in the preaching ministry. Four facets of preaching will be addressed: the Word of God as sovereign authority of truth; the Word of God as the source of Scripture;

covenantal understanding and biblical reading; and symbolism and typology and Christocentric promise/fulfillment.

The Word of God as Sovereign Authority of Truth

Preachers must rest in the knowledge that the proclamation of God's Word has inherent authority. Mankind knows of God because of His Word. God's mighty acts have been recorded since the beginning of time, when He spoke creation into existence. We are able to have an intimate relationship with a sovereign and holy God due to the mighty act of atonement by His Son, Jesus, on the cross. We have become aware of the Resurrection of Jesus because of His revelation to His disciples. John writes: "what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life" (1 John 1:1). These messages have been shared from His disciples, from the early church to the church of today—by the way of preaching and by the written recordings of God's divine revelation—all directed by the Holy Spirit of God.

God has sovereign power and authority, and has revealed His divine will in His Word. Because these are the spoken words of God, these Scriptures—borne of divine revelation—have authority. Proclamation of God's Word, therefore, is imbued with His divine intent. The authority in the act of preaching comes solely from the Word of God.

The Word of God as the Source of Scripture

Scripture must be the source of preaching. The authority that comes from the Word of God infuses the biblical text. The process of inscripturation comes from God speaking His words into creation. This is an essential hallmark of Clowney's theology that should have unquestioned bearing on the work of the preacher. Peter Adam claims that "any human ministry of the Word depends on a God who is not silent. If God is dumb, then we may have a ministry of words, but not of the Word, God's Word. And it is

clear that the God of the Bible is a God who speaks.”¹ Adam provides argument using both Scripture and logic, using the Creation account as one basis: “God, the speaking God, makes humans in his own image and speaks to them. Our speech and hearing are a sign that God speaks and hears (Ps 94:9-10).”² Like Clowney, Adam also espouses that the understanding that God’s words have been captured as Scripture for the purpose of God’s ongoing revelation and communication to humankind.

Bryan Chapell, like Clowney and Adam, endorses the preacher’s reliance on the authority of the Word. In addition, Chapell addresses the church’s trust on the preacher’s dependence on biblical text. He says that “expository preachers and the people who sit before them each week are convinced that Scripture can be mined to extract God’s wisdom and power for daily living.”³

Covenantal Understanding and Biblical Reading

Clowney addressed having a high regard for biblical text. This high regard will impress the need upon preachers to read Scripture with covenantal understanding. Clowney’s two-layer approach to interpreting Scripture (seeing the biblical text in regard to both its historical period and in God’s total revelation) is an essential hallmark for preachers to have a “widescreen” approach to understanding and preaching the story of the Bible.

Regarding the biblical text in its historical period. The biblical text in its historical setting should frame the initial context of the sermon. Study methods should be appropriate to the hermeneutical approach of the text. Therefore, the biblical text in its

¹Peter Adam, *Speaking God’s Words: A Practical Theology of Preaching* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1996), 15.

²Ibid., 17.

³Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 83.

original setting must establish the core of the message before any other application may be drawn out or inferred. Even as the historical basis is established to provide the backdrop, the wider-focus application must tie to the text.

Regarding the biblical text in God’s total revelation. The biblical text in the scope of God’s total revelation of salvation must be the goal of the sermon. Once the exegetical work with the text is complete, the preacher can peer through the various lenses of application. Clowney applies his appropriate ‘horizon’ terminology to this hermeneutic principle: “once the text is seen in terms of its own theological horizon, and the more immediate theological context is related to the broader structure of the period of that revelation, we are ready to proceed to a consideration of the revelation of the text to the whole of revelation and its significance for us.”⁴ This multi-layered approach requires building a bridge that links the biblical text and history to our era. It is essential that we view Old Testament passages and theology through New Testament revelation, specifically through the revelation of Jesus. Everything must come through the cross of Christ. The complete revelation of Jesus, found through the entirety of the Bible, must be the ‘lens’ through which Scripture is viewed if application is going to be made to the present day.

Covenant reading finds its origin in the book of Exodus. The inscripturation of God’s spoken Word occurs at Mount Sinai. This ‘written word preached’ is the Word of God given first to Moses as the divine, authoritative source for biblical covenant and community life. Christopher Ash builds on the understanding of the Sinai covenant as foundational to the preaching ministry: “The written covenant was the anchor that ties the true prophet into the succession of true prophets. True prophets were preachers of the written covenant. Both were needed...Neither the written word alone, nor the prophet

⁴Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 98.

alone is sufficient, but rather the written word preached.”⁵ Peter Adam gives the model of God’s covenant with Abraham (which is fully realized in Jesus) as a core revelation, and Moses’ preserving this promise, as he “was the first writing prophet and, on Sinai and beyond, his writing ministry was crucial not only to the institution of the covenant, but also to his ongoing ministry of the Word to the people of Israel until the end of his life.”⁶

Symbolism/Typology and Promise/Fulfillment

Another of Clowney’s essential hallmarks of his preaching theology is the relationship between symbolism, typology, and Christocentric promise/fulfillment. These occurrences are actions of divine revelation. One of Peter Adam’s claims regards the biblical basis for understanding that actions of God are accompanied by words of God. It is in God’s character to communicate, even in His glory. It is not just that God is able to speak, but that it is essential that He does. Adam states the following: “The biblical assumption is not only that God may use human words to reveal himself, but that he has done so. Revelation that is presence or act or sign, without verbal interpretation, is incomplete.”⁷ According to Adam, God continuously reveals himself through any means, but does not always necessarily use the spoken word. Adam gives the example of the revelation of Jesus. He writes that “God’s speaking through the prophets in ‘various ways’ included words, signs and visions. And God’s speaking through his Son includes his suffering and death, as well as his words.”⁸ Adam underscores Clowney’s hallmark of symbolism, typology, and promise-fulfillment.

⁵Christopher Ash, *The Priority of Preaching* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2009), 26-27.

⁶Adam, *Speaking God’s Words*, 28.

⁷Ibid., 22.

⁸Ibid., 23.

Tim Keller draws together the interlocking relation between Clowney’s four hallmarks; in fact, Keller shows a progression from the Word of God to Christocentric fulfillment. According to Keller, Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, and that this understanding is paramount if one is to preach the whole of scripture:

To show how a text fits into its whole canonical context, then is to show how it points to Christ and gospel salvation, the big idea of the whole Bible. Every time you expound the text, you are not finished unless you demonstrate how it shows us that we cannot save ourselves and that only Jesus can. That means we must preach Christ from every text, which is the same as saying we must preach the gospel every time and not just settle for general inspiration or moralizing.⁹

Implications for Teaching Ministry

In addition to the ministry of proclamation, the Clowney ‘template’ can frame teaching methods that are used in the ministry of theological education. Regardless of the setting—be it church-based or college/seminary—an understanding of Clowney’s homiletic theory can influence how a teacher can better comprehend biblical theology and exposition. In this section, there are also considerations for synthesizing biblical narrative and history, along with some cautionary concerns.

Biblical Theology and Exposition

One of Clowney’s theological convictions was to adhere to understanding of the relationship between a redemptive/historical theology and biblical exposition. Clowney promoted an overarching principle of ‘biblical theology,’ which weds the exposition of the biblical text to the backdrop of the ‘grace’ narrative of the Bible. He wrote, “‘Biblical theology’ is the term now used in the special sense of theology that is not only biblical, but is drawn from the history of revelation in the Bible.”¹⁰ God’s

⁹Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 48.

¹⁰Edmund P. Clowney, *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments*, ed. Rebecca Clowney

activity in the life of humankind has always been about creating or restoring fellowship, from the Garden unto the cross unto the end of time. Humankind has been made aware of God's presence and activity through His Word: "Biblical Theology . . . summarizes the teaching of the Bible by following the history of God's revelation in the periods or epochs of God's work in creation and redemption. Biblical Theology follows the *story* of the Bible rather than the *topics* found in the Bible."¹¹

Also, exposition of the biblical text should reinforce scriptural consistency and continuity of the entire Bible. According to Clowney, "neither exegesis on one hand, nor systematic theology on the other, can ignore the progressive unfolding of revelation in the history of redemption, and it is the task of biblical theology to study that revelation without losing sight of either its continuity or its progressive and epochal structure."¹²

One example is biblical language and its consistency with itself. For instance, some of the Hebrew text used in Genesis 3:6—(*raah* [to see], *tov* [beautiful or good], *chamad* [to covet or desire], *lachach* [to take]) mirrors language found in Joshua 7:21—these are two different verses but with consistent text in a consistent order. An understanding of this type of theology not only shows unified thought and organization but also reinforces the inerrancy of Scripture, because biblical theology is consistent with its message. This concept is compatible with Clowney: "in tracing the progress of revelation, biblical theology rests upon the unity of the primary authorship of Scripture and the organic continuity of God's work in redemption and revelation."¹³ In terms of exegesis, Daniel Doriani asserts that the original meaning of Scripture comes before any contemporary interpretation. He says, "When analyzing an event or a word from God's

Jones (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), xii.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 87.

¹³Ibid.

spokesmen, we should always ask how the original audience most likely understood it. This entails knowledge of their culture, their language, and their spiritual position . . . ‘Where did they stand in covenant history?’”¹⁴ Conservation theological education demands a unified understanding of the relationship between biblical text and redemptive/historical theology. Clowney’s preaching theology was based on this foundation; in addition, awareness of covenantal theological events and their unfolding action is a non-negotiable in theological education. Regarding theologians’ understanding of covenantal events, Doriani says that “[they] should know these things as eleven-year-olds know multiplication tables.”¹⁵

A final observation regarding biblical theology: God’s people have a historical basis for reading the Bible in this manner. Teaching Clowney’s homiletic theory will provide a system that can systematically teach a student how to read and understand not only biblical narrative, but the whole of Scripture. Old Testament histories and occurrences have been verified and Old Testament prophecies have been fulfilled in the New Testament. Clowney wrote that “the Old Testament saints looked forward to Messiah’s day; they saw it and were glad. We, too, who know Christ’s finished work which brought in the end of the ages, look forward to the blessed hope of his appearing.”¹⁶ As a result, New Testament prophecies are given a basis of belief, faith, expectation, and anticipation.

Regarding Biblical Narrative and History

In Clowney’s treatment of OT narrative, there was consistent use of sermonic allusions toward non-biblical historical events. This establishes timelines and factual

¹⁴Daniel Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001), 4.

¹⁵Ibid., 5.

¹⁶Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 87-88.

tethers to the student. By use of the Clowney ‘homiletic,’ there is a bridge established between events that are secular to those of the sacred. Biblical educators, such as Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard Patterson, give endorsement to this practice. They state that “although historical information may be presented in story form, this does not mean that the information is non-factual. . . . certainly, the stories of the Old Testament tell of real events.”¹⁷ Köstenberger and Patterson provide support for this statement by endorsing archeological and primary/secondary sources. For instance, in their book, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology*, they give an example of a description by the Greek historian Herodotus of King Xerxes’ personality and character traits, consistent with their depiction in the book of Esther.¹⁸ This information is extremely helpful in not only theological education—but apologetics as well—to have historical cross-reference source materials in which to refer. Regarding historical context and OT narrative, interpreters should not dismiss these stories as merely incidental. Köstenberger and Patterson assert that “these stories carry the historical narrative along, even while helping the reader to see the true nature of conditions in the larger context. Thus they are important in their own right.”¹⁹ These are actual persons in actual settings responding to actual overtures of activity by God. Teachers using Clowney’s method would develop an ease with weaving non-biblical historical vantage points appropriately into teaching Scripture.

Biblical Narrative and Caution

Warning must be given regarding certain practices in the teaching of Old Testament narratives. Teachers should be certain of the literary context of the narrative

¹⁷Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 239.

¹⁸Ibid., 118.

¹⁹Ibid., 239-40.

and its place in overall redemptive history, as well as certainty of the appropriate textual structure. According to Köstenberger and Patterson, textual allegorization of the narrative is deemed “unfaithful to the text,”²⁰ and caution is given to ‘imposition’ of imagination onto details that are not clarified in the narrative:

Be careful not to project onto the characters and events things that you are not specifically told. This does not mean that it is always improper to read emphatically between the lines. It is important, however, to be keenly aware of what the text explicitly says and what we supply by our own imagination. Only what is in keeping with the authorial intention expressed in the text carries with it biblical authority.²¹

However, God has given humankind the gift of imaginative process.

Clowney’s imaginative approach to creating sermons with narrative texts is a model beneficial to the modern church setting, either in the pulpit or in the classroom. Clowney told a story when he preached. For example, in the sermon on 2 Kings 5 (‘Naaman healed of leprosy’—see the analysis in chapter 3), Clowney began the story by giving the unidentified Israelite servant girl in Naaman’s household the name ‘Amah’ (Hebrew: female slave) and told what her background could have been—complete with family and friends—prior to being captured by the Syrians. He ascribed personality to all of the characters in the narrative and gave vivid description to hypothetical conversations between them.²² This sermon is an example of how the narrative method can be both disarming in approach and extremely gripping in application. If appropriate exegesis is applied as foundation, teaching by telling a Scripture story is extremely effective.

The ‘imposition’ of imagination is a means of freshening up the perspective of the exegete. In teaching and preaching, familiar biblical characters, situations, and storylines must NOT be altered, as integrity of the biblical text is a nonnegotiable tenet. However, historical and situational context can influence the preacher and teacher to post

²⁰Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 742.

²¹*Ibid.*, 742-43.

²²Edmund P. Clowney, “2 Kings 5 – Naaman Healed of Leprosy,” recorded October 3, 1999, accessed July 15, 2016, <http://www.sermonaudio.com/playpopup.asp?SID=121907137550>.

questions that the text cannot answer. These questions can build a framework of “what if” or “just imagine” if authorial intent is not jeopardized. Köstenberger and Patterson, however, give to encouragement for the theologian to “be ready to address familiar characters from a fresh perspective.”²³

Implications for Discipleship Ministry

There are manifold benefits to a congregation’s understanding and living-out of Scripture, namely in the area of discipleship. The Clowney ‘template’ is undergirded by a biblical understanding of the need for discipleship. In addition to preaching and teaching perspectives, benefits to a congregational discipleship program would be greater biblical literacy, a growing familiarity with Scripture, accuracy in the understanding of biblical analogy, the use of Scripture to explain Scripture, as well as missional considerations.

The Biblical Essential of Discipleship

Matthew 28:18-20, the Great Commission, provides Jesus’ command to His disciples for missions: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” It is in Jesus’ preaching that He admonishes the disciples to go forward and ‘replicate’ themselves—to disciple others. Jesus continues the charge to them, as they are to baptize their disciples and teach them all that Jesus has said. With the Great Commission as a template, Conrad Mbewe exhorts that preaching is to be both evangelistic (by making disciples) and pastoral (by teaching Jesus’ commands). Mbewe argues that “some sermons will fulfill both functions: evangelizing unbelievers and edifying believers.”²⁴

²³Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 743.

²⁴Conrad Mbewe, *Pastoral Preaching: Building a People for God* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Partnership International, 2017), 14.

We are given the mandate for raising disciples. Clowney’s hallmarks of preaching are congruent with the growing of disciples.

In present day, preaching and teaching provides the opportunity for ‘large-group’ discipleship in addition to evangelism. In the same manner as Jesus’ followers, we are to teach all that Jesus has commanded, so that we can—through the work of the Holy Spirit—form disciples that will go forward on mission. God’s Word gives a key Scripture text that provides the foundation for establishing the priority of the Word in regard to discipleship—2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Paul reestablishes for Timothy (and for us) the foundation of the importance of God’s Word for theological education and discipleship. Paul writes that “all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Paul writes that Scripture is “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.” What Scripture accomplishes from the pulpit and classroom, Scripture will accomplish on the mission. In regard to teaching, Scripture provides the doctrines of our faith and belief as God’s redeemed people. We are able to learn who God is according to His inspired Word. We are able to learn such things as His character attributes, His mighty acts of intervention into human life, and His great and final revelation of salvation—His Son, Jesus. His Word is profitable for reproof, or the exposure of sin. When we place our lives next to Scripture, we are confronted with the reality that our lives are not always consistent with His model. Because God is holy, He will not tolerate sin. As we all have sinned (and will continue to), His Word provides examples of correction, and He will lead us back into His design and direction for life. When we are redirected to the things of God, the Scriptures provide training for righteousness by providing sufficient instruction on how to live in a godly manner. Because of their sufficiency in every way, Paul writes that the “man of God” (the

followers of God) may be adequately equipped for every good work (v. 17). Discipling consists of teaching and training, rebuking and correction—all in order to help grow Christ-followers. Clowney's 'template' asserts consistent reading and teaching of Scripture to equip disciple-making.

Biblical Literacy

Practical application resulting from Clowney's preaching theology is the preaching and teaching of a redemptive/historical perspective to a congregation. This practice will increase knowledge of the 'whole counsel of God' (and the complete story of redemption) to the entire church. As a result, congregations will become more biblically literate.

Familiarity with Scripture

An almost immediate application of Clowney's homiletic theory for discipleship is the fostering of the desire and need to memorize God's Word. Clowney had such a degree of familiarity with the biblical text that explanation of Scripture by Scripture was 'second nature.' This process and practice could be developed in a regular systematic fashion, also incorporating exegetical means. Knowing the context of the biblical exposition will help Scripture memory, as well as guiding life /discipleship applications.

An Accurate Understanding of Analogy

Discipling a congregation will entail developing a church-wide hermeneutical approach. Part of discipleship demands a biblically accurate understanding of the use of analogy. Clowney wrote that (1) "biblical hermeneutics...must take account of the text of Scripture, including the symbolism found in it. (2) The Lord made us in his image, and the principle of analogy is fundamental in God's creation and revelation."²⁵ As analogy

²⁵Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 21.

and symbolism are prevalent in the Bible, it is essential for study techniques used for exegesis of the text to address these functions. The literal and/or symbolic meaning will become evident with exegesis; interpretation should address both meanings.

Clowney provided an excellent model in his sermon on Genesis 32. In this exposition of Jacob wrestling with God, Clowney presented an example of his definition of the function of analogy, as he sets the stage for their encounter: “But now Jacob encountered, not a band of angels, but One who is more to be feared by far, the very Angel of the Lord, the appearing of his own presence.”²⁶ Clowney went a step further in his imagery, as he ascribed a greater degree of Christlikeness to the divine presence: “[Jacob] grasps the One who is the Giver and the Gift, The Lord of life and hope.”²⁷

As the wrestling match is coming to a close, Clowney began to turn the sermon to emphasize Jesus: “[Jacob] knew the Lord, and as he received the blessing he saw in the dawning light the face of the Lord. Here is the height of the blessing Jacob sought: to see the Lord face to face.”²⁸ Clowney begins to accelerate the analogy, and his interpretation clarifies the presence of Christ in this passage: “Now Jacob has deeper fellowship with the Lord, for he caught the vision of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Cor 4:4). Jesus said, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9, KJV). God whose morning light shone on Jacob at Peniel has made his light to shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Christ.”²⁹ Using the symbolism of glory and the analogy of wrestling and suffering, Clowney presented the core of the message with Christ at the heart:

Christ is also foreshadowed in Jacob, the seed of the promise, and the servant of the Lord. Christ is the true Israel, as the prophet says: “He said to me, ‘You are my

²⁶Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 90-91.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 91.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 92.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 92-93.

servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor” (Isa 49:3, NIV). Isaiah goes on to describe the suffering Servant, smitten of God and afflicted for our transgressions. Indeed, there is symbolism that points to Christ in the very stroke that Jacob received as he wrestled. The thigh in the Old Testament was a more delicate way of referring to the organ of generation in the two other passages where Jacob’s thigh is mentioned, it is his progeny who are represented by the term (Gen 46:26; Exod 1:5). Jacob suffers the crippling touch with reference to his progeny, to the One who will be born of his descendants, the Messiah.³⁰

Clowney this contrast: “Jesus Christ wrestles in the agony of Gethsemane’s garden. The Father hides his face from him in the darkness of Calvary that we might see his glory. He is the Victor because he is the Victim. Dying, he lives; struck down, he is exalted over all. He will not let go till he has received the blessing. His prayer to the Father is that one day we might see his glory.”³¹

Until the Lord returns, His church will not understand Scripture in full—“For now we see through a glass, darkly” (1 Cor 13:12 KJV). Until that day, the church will wrestle with an accurate understanding of symbolism, typology, and analogy as seen in the Bible. Clowney’s ‘template’ would be an asset to further enable a congregation to read and comprehend Scripture consistently.

The Use of Scripture to Explain Scripture

One of the primary strengths of Clowney’s ‘template’ is the use of Scripture to explain Scripture. One such example is in his sermon on Exodus 34:1-9. During the message, Clowney referenced Exodus 23, in which God tells Moses that He will send an angel to go before the Israelites, and He gives a warning and a somewhat veiled identity of the angel. Clowney wrote that “this Angel is just as dangerous in his fearful holiness as the Lord, for he is an appearing of the Lord. “Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him. For He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in him” (Exod 23:21, NKJV). The Angel bears God’s name; he is God the Son.”³² As he circled back to

³⁰Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 93.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., 97.

Exodus 34:6, Clowney continued with his discourse on the Name of God with other references in Exodus, as well as John 1—even presenting Christ at this point of the sermon, when he presented a response from God to Moses:

“Yahweh, Yahweh El, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in grace and truth” (Exod 34:6, NKJV, using the Hebrew names of God). This is the name Moses heard at the burning bush. It is the name God used in declaring the Ten Commandments: “I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Exod 20:2, ESV, using the Hebrew name of God). It is the name John uses in reference to Exodus 23, when he says, “The Word became flesh and dwelt [“tabernacled”] among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, ESV).³³

Clowney’s writings graft Scripture upon Scripture in the same way that John Milton’s allusions of Homer’s writings are interspersed into his Creation account in *Paradise Lost*. With Clowney, one immediately perceives both his wealth of Scripture knowledge, and the ease with which he ‘breathed’ it into his writings. Some readers might read Clowney’s writings and see the seemingly unconnected use of Scripture and be concerned about ‘proof texting.’ However, true to his theological convictions regarding biblical theology and the view of the biblical text, he kept the appropriate ‘theological horizon’ in focus.

Missional Considerations

With the Clowney ‘template,’ there are missional considerations for a congregation of Christ-followers. A heart for Gospel mission is the natural outflow from a congregation who is being disciplined with biblical accuracy and understanding. Missional theology for the church reflects the preaching theology of that church’s pastor. Clowney’s preaching theology was most accurately described as expository preaching. David E. Prince defines expository preaching as “preaching that takes a particular text of Scripture as its subject, proclaiming the truth of that text in light of its historical, epochal, and

³³Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 98.

Christocentric, kingdom-focused canonical contexts, thereby exposing the meaning of the human and divine authors for the purpose of Gospel-centered applications.”³⁴

One benefit of Clowney’s ‘template’ is an overarching view of the entire narrative of Scripture that tells the whole story of the Bible with Jesus as the central protagonist. All of redemptive history is seen through Jesus’ atoning death on the cross and his resurrection, with the final culmination being the coming Kingdom and the new heavens and earth. Missional urgency is heightened when one sees his or her ministry in light of the whole biblical narrative. This missional urgency will culminate in following Jesus’ command for us to make disciples. Disciple-making based on biblical exposition through the Clowney ‘template’ will not be limited to only Sunday morning or Wednesday sermonic events. Missional worldview can (and should) be taught and caught from a church’s complete weekly programming. This paradigm is an essential non-negotiable for all those who preach and teach in the local church: “Everyone who follows Christ must be engaged in calling others to follow Christ. Pastors and other church leaders must strive to connect every ministry and every activity—from Vacation Bible School to women’s ministry...to the purpose of reaching the nations.”³⁵

By its inherent design, expository preaching is a historically proven, biblically-based, scripturally-undergirded means to drive missional thrust to the nations. The Clowney ‘template’ is a vehicle best suited for expository preaching. When a congregation is shown the Word in such a way that the entirety of Scripture is visualized as one overarching narrative of redemption seen through the lens of the work of the cross, the Bible and its message are understood in such a way that the story of salvation becomes, in a sense, easier to tell. When one knows the full story, one is more apt to

³⁴David E. Prince and Ashland Staff, *Church with Jesus as the Hero* (Lexington, KY: Ashland Publishing, 2015), 57.

³⁵Prince, *Church with Jesus as the Hero*, 86.

share the Gospel in a Spirit-led, confident manner. The church becomes emboldened to mission to tell the story of Jesus. This sense of mission will pervade every level of the local church. The Clowney ‘template’ can be a means for preachers, teachers, lay ministers, and missionaries to show salvation through Christ alone in OT narrative, as well as other biblical literary genres.

Considerations for Other Biblical Literary Genres

The focus of this project has been primarily for the promotion of a vehicle for the preaching of OT narrative. However, the hallmarks of Clowney’s preaching theology can easily be applied to any biblical literary genre. Regardless of the type of book or letter, Scripture is the source of the Clowney ‘template.’ The hallmarks of Clowney’s preaching theology—the claim of the Word of God as sovereign authority of the truth; God speaking words that are the source of the inspired text of Scripture; covenant understanding as the background for reading both the OT and NT; symbolism and typology and their Christocentric connections to promise/fulfillment—are based solely on Scripture. There are parallels that will be shown in this section—with regard to the connection of narrative to poetry; prophetic writings with links to Christocentric promise/fulfillment; corresponding developments between poetry, prophecy, and Christocentric fulfillment; and the association between OT psalms and NT narratives.

The Connection of Narrative to Poetry

In his sermon on 2 Samuel 23:13-17, Clowney presented the story of David and his three warriors in an engaging way. As David is at the Cave of Adullam, and with the Philistines in Bethlehem, he expresses his longing for a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem. The three warriors break through the camp of Philistines, draw water from the well, and bring it to David. Clowney compared David’s musing for a drink from the

well to the congregationally collective and sentimental memory of a spring in “that you may remember from the countryside of your past.”³⁶ Clowney begins to humorously recount the water from his childhood in Philadelphia, and said, “That tap water comes to mind whenever I am in a swimming pool. It’s the nostalgic taste of chlorine.”³⁷ Coming back to the text, Clowney presented a possible scenario of the journey of the three: “After hiking for miles, they at last went up the hill to the town, were they were surely recognized and challenged. Perhaps two fought off Philistines while the third drew the water.”³⁸

This dramatic retelling of the events of 2 Samuel 23:13-17 can be connected to Psalm 84:6. Derek Kidner wrote the following concerning both the psalm and narrative passage: “Rephaim, the only vale of such trees named in the Old Testament, was once made a place of refreshing beyond all expectation for a thirsty and dispirited David, through the devoted daring of his friends.”³⁹ With Clowney’s homiletic method, one of David’s psalms could easily be connected to the narrative passage where corresponding events are taking place. As Psalm 84 is attributed to the sons of Korah, affixing poetic imagery to cross-referenced Scripture would be appropriate [I referenced the above connection from 2 Samuel 23:13-17 to Psalm 84 in a recent midweek Bible study].

In addition to the strength of theology that Clowney brought to preaching was the powerful use of imagery and imagination. Some theologians may think that Clowney took too much liberty with his conjecture. They might ask, “Would this be considered expository preaching? Is there too much of his imagination at work in the sermon?” Several of Clowney’s sermons consistently used this same level of imagery. As well,

³⁶Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 111.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Derek Kidner, “Psalm 84,” in *Kidner Classic Commentaries: Psalms 73-150* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 336.

Clowney’s willingness to ask questions of the text with a desire to imagine possible backstories provided a new level of engagement for the listener. Clowney reflected his theological conviction by consistently undergirding his inquisitiveness with exegesis—and thereby defended his method of delivery.

As always, Scripture will be the supreme influence on our preaching regardless of genre, as Scripture must set the tone for the sermon. Christopher Ash underscores the importance of biblical proclamation and its dependence on the authority of Scripture, as he addresses allegorical preaching without scriptural undergirding: “Without the written word, the prophet becomes simply a ‘dreamer of dreams.’”⁴⁰

Prophecy and Christocentric Promise/Fulfillment

The use of Clowney’s four hallmarks easily connects OT prophecy to Christocentric promise/fulfillment. Timothy Laniak draws connections between OT prophets and the One who would become the fulfillment of what they taught. One of Laniak’s recurring themes is that of warning (or “Woe!”) to the shepherds of God’s flock. Laniak highlights major character flaws found in those that shepherd God’s people prior to the Exile using OT Prophetic writings as the backdrop. God calls up prophets such as Jeremiah and Zechariah to address the leaders’ self-centered misuse of power. These prophecies foretell the self-serving leaders’ removal from service and God’s subsequent raising-up of shepherds who will care for the people, as well as the ultimate arrival of the Davidic/Shepherd Messiah.

Laniak also recounts Moses’ challenging relationship with the stiff-necked Israelites, which results in tragedy for Moses and the generation that will not cross over into the Promised Land (Ps 106:32 chronicles the provocation of God’s wrath by the Israelites that “went hard with Moses on their account”). Connections between those

⁴⁰Christopher Ash, *The Priority of Preaching* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2009), 27.

servants that prophesy and the Good Shepherd, who would be the ultimate fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, are identified by Laniak; these connections will be symmetrical to ones that can be developed by Clowney's preaching theology: "Moses became a type of the vicariously suffering servant that resurfaces in the book of H and prefigures the rejected Messiah in the Gospels. To be a shepherd means to lay down one's life for the flock."⁴¹

Poetry, Prophecy, and Christocentric Fulfillment

There can be corresponding development in the interrelation between poetry, prophecy, and Christocentric fulfillment. David understood that salvation through his Heir to the throne was meant for all people over all generations. In Psalm 22:27-31, David gives a portent of the span of Gospel fullness and the coming Kingdom:

All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will worship before You. For the kingdom is the Lord's and He rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth will eat and worship, all those who go down to the dust will bow before Him, Even he who cannot keep his soul alive. Posterity will serve Him; it will be told of the Lord to the coming generation. They will come and will declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has performed it. (Ps 22:27-31)

The final picture of the totality of the Kingdom of Christ is shown in the Book of Revelation. John, in the revelation given to him on the Lord's day, presents the fulfillment of the prophecy in Psalm 22: "Behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb'" (Rev 7:9-10). There is clear, linear expansion from the Psalm (which has prophetic language) to the final revelation of Christ's return.

⁴¹Timothy Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 90.

OT Psalm to NT Narrative

Using the Clowney ‘template,’ the preacher can prepare a series of sermons on the psalms in order to connect to salvation through Christ. If Psalm 16 is preached, the entire psalm of confidence would be a pericope that will connect to the Books of Acts. Peter uses only verses 8-11 of Psalm 16 in the Acts 2 setting. The preacher can make the New Testament connection of Psalm 16 to Acts 2 to show David’s prophetic foresight as interpreted by Peter. Keil and Delitzsch give support to Clowney’s preaching theology, with their observations on this Davidic prophecy: “Consequently the words of the Psalm are a prophecy of David concerning Jesus, the Christ, who was promised as the heir to his throne, and whom, by reason of the promise, he had prophetically before his mind. If we look into the Psalm, we see that David, in his mode of expression, bases that hope simply upon his relation to Jahve [Yahweh], the ever-living One.”⁴²

In terms of textual application and Christocentric fulfillment, Peter presents Jesus as the Acts 2 fulfillment of the Davidic prophecy in Psalm 16. Jesus is the steadfast sustainer who is found in Psalm 16:8/Acts 2:25. Jesus is the Hope and Glory that brings his abundance to life—regardless of the situation in Psalm 16:9/Acts 2:26. Jesus is the One close by who will not abandon his bride in Psalm 16:10/Acts 2:27. Jesus is the Life who has made his way known to his children in his Word, and his is the Presence who brings fulfillment, restoration, and completion in Psalm 16:11/Acts 2:28.

The Legacy of Edmund Clowney

The influence and inspiration found in the life and ministry of Edmund Clowney will, no doubt, continue to have tremendous impact in the life of the church. In terms of the man *behind* the theologian’s desk, Clowney’s personality and character was reflected in his vision and ministry: “Ed was known for his humble and gentle spirit, his

⁴²C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 5, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 230.

fair-mindedness, his passion for seeing and preaching Christ from all the Scriptures, his visionary creativity for Kingdom work, his enthusiasm for children’s ministries, and his dry humor.”⁴³ In a tribute article produced by Westminster Seminary is the following statement regarding his biblical theology toward preaching:

Ed will be supremely remembered by many as a preacher, perhaps the most gifted proponent and practitioner of redemptive-historical preaching of this generation. He was unique in his ability to pick up the threads of redemptive history and to weave a rich expositional tapestry that brought Christ in all his perfections and glory before God’s people so that they were drawn to love and worship the Redeemer....His writing displays the great theme of his life, namely Christ’s presence in the whole of Scripture and his present work in the church.⁴⁴

On the blog *Prince On Preaching*, David E. Prince posted the following statement about Edmund Clowney and his theological convictions:

Clowney stands as a preeminent practitioner and champion of preaching and teaching Christ from all the Scripture. Reading Clowney and listening to his sermons will help any preacher cultivate the Christ-centered preaching instincts. He authored *Preaching and Biblical Theology* in 1961, during a time when the discipline of biblical theology had largely been cultivated by theological liberals who rejected the very idea of divinely inspired organic unity throughout the Scripture....Clowney’s writings and preaching ministry reinforced that preaching Christ from all the scriptures is not an automatic product of an abstract hermeneutical method but rather reading the Bible with Jesus the Messiah as the hero of the entire narrative.⁴⁵

Westminster Seminary presented the following statement regarding Clowney’s spirit and presence:

His sense of humor and his love for people left a mark wherever he went. In the last week of his life, one attending nurse, laughing as she left his room, exclaimed, “What a sweet man!” Those who knew and loved him would agree. His tender-hearted encouragement and wisdom will be greatly missed, but his work will be established by his Master who has now welcomed him with those reassuring

⁴³Edmund P. Clowney, *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments*, ed. Rebecca Clowney Jones (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), 162.

⁴⁴Mindy Withrow with Bill Johnson, “July 30: Birth of Edmund Clowney,” *This Day in Presbyterian History*, July 30, 2014, accessed June 15, 2016, <http://www.thisday.pcahistory.org/2014/07/july-30/>.

⁴⁵David E. Prince, “Evaluating Edmund Clowney’s Approach to Christ-Centered Preaching,” *Prince On Preaching*, January 21, 2015, accessed July 15, 2016, <http://www.davidprince.com/2015/01/21/evaluating-edmund-clowneys-approach-christ-centered-preaching/>.

words: “Well-done, good and faithful servant, enter now into the joy of your Lord!”⁴⁶

An understanding of the hallmarks of Clowney’s preaching theology and subsequent exploration into usage of the Clowney sermon ‘template’ will hopefully lead the theologian and audience to the most important spiritual goal: a deeper worship of God. The benefits of the Clowney ‘template’ can be a vehicle for a greater intimacy with the things of God; this will impact both the lives of the preacher and congregation.

The worship of God—the desire to be in the presence of God—will truly be the ultimate goal of the preacher. Clowney’s passing provided a striking picture of the worshipping believer at the end of mortal life. Clowney’s daughter and editor, Rebecca Clowney Jones, wrote these words in the forward of her father’s last book, *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments*:

In the last weeks of his life, my dad (never known for his musical talent) made a reputation for himself as a singer. Comforted by the hymns sung by his family and his friends from Trinity Church, he was so eager to sing Christ’s praises himself that he sang in the emergency ward, right through his oxygen mask. By the time he was settled into his hospital room, the nurses were whispering, “That’s the man who was singing in the emergency ward!” My father’s voice did not end with his death. This volume, with the others he wrote, will sing on: “I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you” (Ps 22:22).⁴⁷

I am beyond grateful to have been introduced to Edmund Clowney at the beginning of my doctoral work. His love of God’s Word has challenged me to a new level of dedication and devotion to the love of God, His Word, and His church.

⁴⁶Withrow, “July 30: Birth of Edmund Clowney.”

⁴⁷Clowney, *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments*, vi-vii.

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ABSTRACT

SCRIPTURAL STORYTELLING: USING THE HOMILETIC THEORY OF EDMUND CLOWNEY FOR CHRIST- CENTERED PREACHING OF OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVES

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This thesis presents a model for Christ-centered expository preaching based on the preaching theology of Edmund Clowney. The first chapter presents a summation of Clowney's biblical theology, his regard for the biblical text in both its historical context and scope of God's total revelation, and preaching of Christ throughout all of Scripture. The second chapter provides an analysis of Clowney's homiletical writings in order to develop a hermeneutic template for preaching Old Testament narrative. The third chapter presents the application of the hermeneutic template to five of Clowney's OT narrative sermons. The fourth chapter contains an original expository sermon of an OT narrative passage using the homiletic model created from the second chapter. The fifth chapter presents an evaluation of the effectiveness of the model, and assessment of its implications for preachers, teachers, discipleship programs, and other biblical literary genres.

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