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THE NECESSITY OF A CHRISTOCENTRIC
KINGDOM-FOCUSED MODEL OF
EXPOSITORY PREACHING

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THE NECESSITY OF A CHRISTOCENTRIC
KINGDOM-FOCUSED MODEL OF
EXPOSITORY PREACHING

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To Judi,

“A woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.” (Prov 31:30b)

I praise you, my love.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Bib Sac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>

PREFACE

A dissertation is not an individual but a community project. I am aware that although my name is on this work, it would have never made it to completion without loving, supportive, sacrificial Christian community. Pastor Greg Belser taught me what faithful expository preaching was when I was an infant follower of Christ. His continued encouragement in my life and support in ministry have sustained me for two decades. I am not sure I would have received a Master of Divinity, much less a Ph.D., without the investment Darrell and Elaine Cook have made in my family over the years. I could never adequately express my appreciation for the sacrifices, gifts, and prayers the Cooks have provided on our behalf.

Space does not allow me to name the ways in which every church Judi and I have attended and served has blessed us. Morningview Baptist Church, Green Valley Baptist Church, First Baptist Church Roanoke, First Baptist Church Midfield, Raleigh Avenue Baptist Church, and Ashland Avenue Baptist Church have all encouraged us and helped us get to this point.

Ashland Avenue Baptist Church has shouldered the burden of their pastor's completing a Ph.D. They prayed for me the entire way. The congregation graciously allowed me a month-long writing sabbatical in 2010. Roger Holland, chairman of deacons, has encouraged me more than he will ever know. I also want to thank my amazing co-pastors and staff: Jeremy Haskins, Nate BeVier, Casey McCall, Todd Martin, Michelle Manning, Ryan Finch, Steve Cummings, and Lula Mae Pryor. They have sacrificially allowed me the flexibility to finish this project.

I also want to thank Cole and Joy Portis (and their neighbors too), who kindly allowed me to stay in their beautiful lake home to write. The view of the sunrise and sunset over Lake Martin regularly drove me to my knees in worship. Mary Jane Short consistently encouraged me throughout comprehensive exams and writing with delicious peanut butter and chocolate snacks. I am also grateful to Daniel Davis, who has given me his expertise on grammar and style issues throughout the entire writing process.

Thom Rainer, Daniel Akin, and Hershael York all encouraged me to pursue a Ph.D. and instilled in me the confidence necessary to obtain it. I want to thank each of them. Chuck Lawless served as a teacher and mentor and was helpful to me throughout the entire process. I am honored that Dr. York and Dr. Lawless, men for whom I have immense love and respect, are two of my committee members.

If a man has ever been blessed with loyal, faithful, inspiring friends, it is I. Russell Moore, Randy Stinson, and Jeremy Haskins are a band of brothers who have taught me, sacrificed for me, and confronted me when needed. I am a better father, pastor, and scholar because of their example and influence in my life. The keen insight and wisdom of these men has improved this dissertation and every aspect of my life. One of the joys of my life is to have known Russell Moore as my friend, boss, and Ph.D. supervisor. Few people inspire greater respect with greater familiarity, but Russell Moore is such a man.

I regret that my late mother, Blanche Prince, did not live to see this accomplishment. She was excited when I entered the Ph.D. program and always encouraged me to press on. I have been spurred on many times by remembering that she now knows the kingdom of Christ far more deeply than any description in this work. I also want to thank my sister, Julie Burns, a godly wife and mother and a constant encouragement, as well as my dad, Julian Prince, who instilled in me a determination that has served me well my entire adult life.

Perhaps nothing has spurred me to complete this dissertation more than my children. When I began the Ph.D. process, we had five children, and now we are blessed with eight. I want nothing more than for Luke, Will, Jonathan, Lydia Grace, Susannah Faith, Sarah Hope, Phoebe Joy, and AnnaBeth Mercy to live for Christ and his kingdom. Every time this work seemed abstract and distant to me, one of them would walk in my study, and I would remember why it was worth the effort.

To say “thank you” to my precious wife, Judi, is woefully inadequate. Without her I would never have accomplished this or many other things in my life. She is quiet and strong, a helper fit for me, who teaches me about the kingdom of Christ daily as I watch her love and serve our family. She never seeks applause for the things she does, and there would be no way for me to give her appropriate recognition. The best I can say is that I love her, enjoy her, and cannot imagine life without her. Judi, “Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all” (Prov 31:29).

I offer this dissertation with the hope that it will have some influence in pointing preachers, those who hear them, and the whole world to Christ and his kingdom until the day when the church fully and finally can say, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (Rev 11:15).

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Preach the Word!” That simple, forceful command from Paul to young Timothy, found in 2 Timothy 4:2, frames the act of preaching as one of obedience or disobedience.¹ Obedience to this command requires a correct understanding of what it means to preach the Word, but its definition has proven to be an elusive task even for conservative evangelical scholars committed to expository preaching. The lack of clarity is readily apparent in the diversity of definitions of expository preaching offered in standard evangelical texts.² Graeme Goldsworthy has noted, “A cursory glance at the

¹R. Albert Mohler, “A Theology of Preaching,” in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, ed. Michael Duduit (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 13. Mohler writes, “Preach the word! . . . That is where any theology of preaching must begin.”

²Consider the following definitions. Hershael W. York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 33: “Expository preaching is any kind of preaching that shows people the meaning of a biblical text and leads them to apply it to their lives.” John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 126: “To bring out of the text what is there and expose it to view.” Harold Bryson, *Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 39: “Expository preaching is the art of preaching a series of sermons, either consecutive or selective, from a Bible book.” Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 11: “To exposit the word.” Richard Mayhue, “Rediscovering Expository Preaching,” in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, ed. John MacArthur (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1992), 9-13: Mayhue provides a list of ten things that expository preaching is not and then a list of five things expository preaching is. Stephen Olford and David Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 69: “Expository preaching is the Spirit-empowered explanation and proclamation of the text of God’s Word with due regard to the historical, contextual, grammatical, and doctrinal significance of the given passage, with a specific object of invoking a Christ-transforming response.” Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 29: “A discourse that expounds a passage of Scripture, organizes it around a central theme and main divisions which issue forth from the given text, and then decisively applies its message to the listeners.” Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 19: “the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality of the preacher, then through him to his hearers.” H. C. Brown Jr., H. Gordon Clinard, and Jess J. Northcutt, *Steps to the Sermon: A Plan for Sermon Preparation* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1963), 54: “The expository sermon secures its major and first sub points primarily from the text.” John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 7th ed. (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1979), 303: “An expository discourse may be

available literature will enable us to ascertain that the term ‘expository preaching’ is fairly elastic.”³

Defining Expository Preaching

Goldsworthy explains, “The basic etymological definition of expository is, ‘to expose the meaning of the text.’”⁴ The opposite of exposition is imposition, which means to impose on the text what is not there.⁵ However, for a functional definition that provides clarity concerning the actual task of preaching, it seems that there needs to be a more substantive definition than the mere etymological meaning of the word *expository*. What biblical preacher does not think he is exposing the meaning of the text? If expository preaching means everything, it means nothing.⁶ But there is equal danger in an overly expansive definition; the preacher needs to be able to judge if his actual practice qualifies as “expository.”

This dissertation will argue for 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 Christocentric, kingdom-focused canonical contexts, thereby exposing the meaning of the human and divine authors for the purpose of gospel-centered application.⁷ It will also seek to demonstrate that faithful application of this definition

defined as one which is occupied mainly, or at any rate very largely, with the exposition of Scripture. It by no means excludes argument and exhortation as to the doctrines or lessons, which this exposition develops. It may be devoted to a long passage, or to a very short one, even part of a sentence. It may be one of a series, or may stand by itself.”

³Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 119.

⁴*Ibid.*, 121.

⁵Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 126.

⁶Phillip Jensen called for an end to using the term expository preaching in favor of the term “explicatory preaching” because, according to him, expository preaching has lost all meaning. “An Interview with Phillip Jensen,” Center for Church Reform Interviews (Sound Word Associates: March, 2001), audiocassette, available from Sound Word at 1-219-465-6919.

⁷The term “text” is used in this dissertation to refer to a complete literary unit, whether it be a

will yield sermons that are truly expositional; and, because of that, they will proclaim every text in light of Jesus Christ and eschatological fulfillment in him.

The Kaiser Method

The issue of how one defines expository preaching is important. The preacher's understanding of it will ultimately shape the content of his sermon. The divergent understandings of expository preaching are manifest in the debate over whether expository preaching demands Christocentric teaching from the whole Bible. Old Testament scholar Walter C. Kaiser argues for understanding a text via the single intended meaning of the original author. Added to this is another principle, which he calls "the analogy of (antecedent) Scripture." According to this principle, interpreters should be "limiting our theological observations to conclusions drawn from the text and from texts which preceded it in time."⁸ While Kaiser asserts that "the central theme of both the Old and New Testaments is Christ," the methodology he advocates leads the interpreter of the Old Testament to understand the text only by looking backwards and forces the interpreter to ignore where the text fits into the total unity of biblical revelation.⁹ Such an

sentence, paragraph, or longer narrative of Scripture.

⁸Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1981), 137. Kaiser serves as an excellent representative of the single-intended-meaning-of-the-original-author approach to biblical interpretation because of his pervasive influence on an entire generation of conservative preachers and teachers. Richard Schultz points out in his review of *Toward an Exegetical Theology* that the approach Kaiser teaches is so prominent that it is simply known among students as "the Kaiser method" (review of *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, by Walter C. Kaiser, *Westminster Journal of Theology* 45 [Fall 1983]: 414). For Kaiser's own defense of his view, see "The Single Intent of Scripture," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 55-69; idem, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1985), 63-65; and idem, "Legitimate Hermeneutics," in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), 125-27. One should also note that Kaiser's approach follows that of E. D. Hirsch. Therefore, see Hirsch's *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967) and *Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976). Robert H. Stein also advocates this methodology in *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 17-36.

⁹ Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 41, 140. Kaiser writes, "However, in no case must that *later* teaching be used exegetically (or any other way) to unpack the meaning . . . of the individual text which is the object of our study." Wilhelm Vischer critiques this attitude: "It interprets the testimony backwards, in order to

approach precludes the interpreter from understanding and interpreting each text in light of its relationship to Jesus Christ and eschatological fulfillment in him. The method functions, as Millard J. Erickson observes, on the faulty “assumption that the Bible was written like any other book” and functionally ignores the fact that the Bible is divinely as well as humanly authored.¹⁰ Further, Erickson contends that the Kaiser method moves forward on “ant supernaturalist (or at least nonsupernaturalist) assumptions.”¹¹

Such an approach to biblical interpretation, preaching, and teaching can have negative consequences; it may, for instance, occlude the biblical metanarrative from the local congregation. Another consequence is to find moral commands and principles for living in the text but fail to understand the commands and principles in the fabric of the unity of biblical revelation.¹² Paul Hiebert asserts,

discover records of something which has happened, instead of being ready to look forward to that which should come as the records indicate. Since it is the characteristic of the Old Testament to look forwards and not backwards, that can be done only by a violent dissolution and reconstruction of the text” (*The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ* [London: Lutterworth, 1949], 29). Kaiser acknowledges that we come to the Bible as Christian exegetes and concedes that “no Christian exegete can or should forget that part of the Bible which was completed after the text under investigation. . . . Subsequent developments in the revelation of theology (subsequent to the passage we have under consideration) may (and should, in fact) be brought into our *conclusion* or *summaries after* we have firmly established on exegetical grounds precisely what the passage means” (*Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 140). This position wrongly assumes that subsequent revelation of Christ is not integral to the correct and full interpretation of the text. As McCartney says, “This is not to say that OT interpretation prior to the NT could not be a proper interpretation. It could still be compatible with biblical world view and have a correct hermeneutical goal so far as it was known. But it is to say that without the NT a complete and whole picture of the meaning of the OT was not possible” (“New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” in *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, A Challenge, A Debate*, ed. Harvie Conn [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998], 116).

¹⁰Millard J. Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation: Perspectives on Hermeneutical Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 30-31. See also, Dan G. McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 170-171. McCartney and Clayton write, “If God is the author of the whole (both the history and the text), then surely the later is latent in all the former, and meaning in the former is expanded by the appearance of the later. Do we not as authors expect that our readers will understand our first chapter in light of the later ones?”

¹¹Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation*, 31.

¹²Kaiser is thorough, thoughtful, and nuanced, very carefully and stringently arguing for his position in light of the objections of his opponents. He is to be commended for his opposition to all forms of liberal subjectivism in interpretation, but such appreciation should not entail uncritical acceptance of his method. See Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation*, 12. Erickson contends, “In the desire to reject and refute these views, perceived as erroneous, the authorial intent approach has inadvertently accomplished more than it intended.” See also Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Biblical-Theological*

Most Christians have a smorgasbord theology—based on the study of specific Biblical passages in sermons, Sunday School classes, and Bible studies—which answers certain questions and focuses on individuals and their needs. . . . We have a fragmented story—of Jesus, Ruth, David, Mary, and Peter. No longer do we see ourselves as part of a movement far greater than ourselves and a universal history that gives meaning to our lives because it shows us our place in a cosmic story.¹³

The Bible, like a great painting, can be appreciated in its incomplete form but is always meant to be interpreted and appreciated as a completed work of art in its finished form. In a similar way, God is the divine author of his masterpiece, the Scripture, and he intends it to be understood and appreciated in its fullness, in its canonical context. The pursuit of historical meaning is necessary; but, as an interpreter seeks the intended meaning of the original author, he must not ignore the ultimate divine author.

Redemptive-Historical Preaching

On the other side of the spectrum there are those who argue for preaching Christ from the whole Bible, an approach that has assumed the label “redemptive-historical preaching.” Michael S. Horton defines it as preaching that “will focus on every text as a part of one seamless fabric of promise and fulfillment . . . the unfolding of God’s redemptive plan in Christ from Genesis to Revelation.”¹⁴ Or, as Sidney Greidanus puts it, “Christocentric preaching is the preaching of God’s acts *from the perspective of the New Testament*. In other words, Christocentric preaching requires that a passage receive a theocentric interpretation not only in its own (Old Testament) horizon but also in the broader horizon of the whole canon.”¹⁵ And Edmund Clowney asserts,

Foundations and Principles (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 180. Goldsworthy observes, “The irony of modern evangelicalism is that many of its aberrations have occurred because of a siege mentality and an attempt to ward off the effects of the Enlightenment. When evangelicals become reactionary, they can often flee unwittingly into the arms of another enemy waiting in the wings.”

¹³Paul Hiebert, foreword to Arthur Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom: The Story of God’s Mission in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 7.

¹⁴Michael S. Horton, “What Are We Looking for in the Bible? A Plea for Redemptive-Historical Preaching,” *Modern Reformation*, May/June 1996, 7.

¹⁵Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 119.

Preaching Christ from the Old Testament means that we preach, not synagogue sermons, but sermons that take account of the full drama of redemption, and its realization in Christ. To see the text in relation to Christ is to see it in its larger context, the context of God's purpose in revelation.¹⁶

This redemptive-historical approach to the text recognizes the fact that Scripture is not only the product of human authors but is also, and ultimately, the product of the divine author, representing his self-revelation to humanity. Redemptive-historical preaching recognizes the Scripture as “the very word of God addressed to human beings. What the Bible says, God says.”¹⁷ Therefore, this approach recognizes that the Bible possesses a divine unity as it progressively unfolds redemptive history, which points toward Jesus Christ, the one in whom all of the promises of God are “Yes” and “Amen” (2 Cor 1:20). In light of God's divine disclosure in the Scriptures, human “authorial intent does not exhaust the meaning of meaning.”¹⁸ Redemptive-historical preaching is also reflective of the approach to the Scripture that we find in apostolic preaching. As Greidanus reminds his readers, “The heart of apostolic preaching is Jesus Christ,” by which he means “preaching sermons which authentically integrate the message of the text with the climax of God's revelation in the person, work, and/or teaching of Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament.”¹⁹

But within the redemptive-historical camp there are unhealthy excesses. A few advocates hold a view that diminishes application.²⁰ But most troubling is that many who

¹⁶Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 11. Clowney's book *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, his numerous writings, and his teaching ministry at Westminster Theological Seminary have pointed a generation of preachers toward a redemptive-historical approach to interpretation and preaching.

¹⁷Vern S. Poythress, *God-Centered Biblical Interpretation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1999), 28.

¹⁸McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand*, 293.

¹⁹Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 4, 10.

²⁰William D. Dennison, “Biblical Theology and the Issue of Application in Preaching,” in *Reformed Spirituality: Communing with Our Glorious God*, ed. Joseph A. Pipa, Jr. and J. Andrew Wortman (Taylors, SC: Southern Presbyterian Press, 2003), 119-51. Contra, see Hershael W. York and Scott A. Blue, “Is Application Necessary in the Expository Sermon?” *SBJT* 3 (Summer 1999): 70-84. York and Blue summarize this view: “Still others object to any strong emphasis on application by insisting that no chasm

advocate a redemptive-historical method have abandoned a commitment to rigorous, verse-by-verse, expository preaching. Michael Horton judges it “an inadequate way of preaching, reading, or interpreting the sacred text.”²¹ In his opinion, expository preaching “misses the forest for the trees” in its focus on the nuances of words and fails to see the larger context of what “God intended as one continuous story.” Horton also suggests that classic expository preaching fails to appreciate the biblical genres and alienates the ordinary listener from the text of Scripture.²²

While many of his concerns certainly have a measure of validity, Horton wrongly creates a disjunction regarding expository preaching and redemptive-historical preaching (Christocentric preaching). Derek Thomas has noticed this trend among redemptive-historical advocates: “There is a view of redemptive-historical preaching currently that is deeply critical of expository preaching styles of the past,” which has “led some in a direction away from consecutive expository preaching.”²³

of relevance exists between the biblical text and contemporary hearers. Charles G. Dennison strongly rejects the ‘gap theory’ proposed by Sidney Greidanus. His objection springs from the similarity he sees between Greidanus and Rudolf Bultmann. Greidanus’s attempt to bridge the chasm between the ancient text of Scripture and the modern preacher is too closely akin to Bultmann’s insistence on the distance between the biblical world and our own” (70). See also John Carrick, *The Imperative of Preaching: A Theology of Sacred Rhetoric* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2002). Carrick argues that the redemptive-historical movement has gone astray in its failure to recognize and implement the indicative-imperative pattern found in Scripture. Even Richard Gaffin, who is a fierce proponent of redemptive-historical interpretation, has expressed concern about how some models of redemptive-historical preaching have completely abandoned the applicational imperative. See tape 3 of “Reformed Hermeneutics,” (lectures given at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 1998), audiocassette.

²¹Michael S. Horton, “Preaching Christ Alone,” *Modern Reformation*, March/April 1993, 3.

²²Ibid. See also Horton, “What Are We Looking for in the Bible?” 5: “This method isolates a text or the person or event from the whole fabric of redemptive history. Instead of asking, ‘Where does Aaron or Peter fit into the broad sweep of God’s fulfillment of his covenant promise in Christ?’, one asks, ‘What does this one verse mean?’; verse-by-verse approaches as well as inductive Bible study methods fall into this category and while the preacher may feel some sense of accomplishment in having dissected the sentence, it is hardly the Bread of Life.”

²³Derek Thomas, “Expository Preaching: Keeping Your Eye on the Text,” in *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching*, by R. Albert Mohler Jr. et al. (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2002), 79-80.

Thesis

This dissertation considers any move away from expository preaching or any approach to expository preaching that does not seek to preach Christ from all of the Scripture to be unfaithful to the preaching task and unhealthy for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.²⁴ The preacher of God's Word should be committed to rigorous, biblical exegesis and verse-by-verse expository preaching, which, when rightly understood, will mean that every passage of Scripture is viewed in light of Jesus Christ and his kingdom. The preacher must recognize that every single word, verb, and phrase appears in the text according to the design of God and fits into the larger biblical narrative. Jay Adams, a proponent of Christocentric preaching, nevertheless warns,

The general problem is that the sermons of some who have become enamored with biblical theological preaching turn out to be journeys through the Bible that follow the trail of a word, metaphor, theme, or concept from Genesis to Revelation. . . . That means that little justice is given to particular passages. The big picture is constantly held before a congregation; the emphasis is on the forest, not on the trees. Such preaching tends to bypass the *telos* of these passages in favor of a few, great concerns.²⁵

Preachers of the Word of God must be committed to expository preaching that reflects a disciplined exegetical model such as the one advocated by Walter Kaiser in *Toward an Exegetical Theology* but without adopting his hermeneutical stance. This dissertation will argue for the necessity of adopting a Christocentric, kingdom-focused approach to expository preaching. This expository approach seeks to understand the text according to the human author in its immediate and antecedent context but also seeks to

²⁴D. A. Carson, "Accept No Substitute: 6 Reasons Not to Abandon Expository Preaching," *Leadership Journal*, Summer 1996, 87-88.

²⁵Jay E. Adams, "Proper Use of Biblical Theology in Preaching," *Journal of Pastoral Practice* 9 (1987): 47. See also Adams's critique of an overemphasis on biblical-theological preaching at Westminster Theological Seminary in "Westminster Theology and Homiletics," in *The Pattern of Sound Doctrine: Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, Essays in Honor of Robert B. Strimple*, ed. David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 261-68. For an example of his advocacy of Christocentric preaching, see *Preaching With Purpose: The Urgent Task of Homiletics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 146-52. He writes, "If you preach a sermon that would be acceptable to the members of a Jewish synagogue or to a Unitarian congregation, there is something radically wrong with it. Preaching, when truly Christian, is *distinctive*. And what makes it distinctive is the all-pervading presence of a saving and sanctifying Christ" (147).

understand every text in light of the meaning of the divine author, in the Bible's redemptive-historical canonical context. Such an approach to preaching is not atomistic (Horton's concern about expository preaching), nor is it holistic to the neglect of the unique contribution of individual authors (Adams's concern about redemptive-historical preaching). This Christocentric, kingdom-focused approach to expository preaching is rooted in the premise that the unifying theological center of both interpretation and homiletics is the glory of God in Jesus Christ and his kingdom.²⁶

This view should not be considered novel among theologically conservative preachers. For instance, *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics* (1982) states, "We affirm that the person and work of Jesus Christ are the central focus of the entire Bible. We deny that any method of interpretation which rejects or obscures the Christ-centeredness of the Bible is correct."²⁷ While many evangelical pastors would affirm, in principle, the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics*, they would do so more in theory than in practice.²⁸ The lack of Christocentric focus in evangelical preaching manifests itself in the scarcity of discussions of the hermeneutical (and therefore homiletical) centrality of Christ in the standard textbooks on expository preaching.²⁹ This

²⁶Vern S. Poythress, "Christ the Only Savior of Interpretation," *WTJ* 50 (1988): 305-21. Poythress contends that "Christ is the central content of the Bible's message," Christ is "the Lord of interpretation," and that "Christ is our redeemer with respect to interpretive sinfulness" (305-06). See also Willem VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 27. VanGemeren contends, "The center of the Bible is the incarnate and glorified Christ, by whom all things will be renewed."

²⁷Quoted in James Montgomery Boice, *Standing on the Rock: Biblical Authority in a Secular Age* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 161-62. The statement was developed at Summit II of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy meeting in Chicago, IL on November 10-13, 1982. The group stated, "While we recognize that belief in the inerrancy of Scripture is basic to maintaining its authority, the values of that commitment are only as real as one's understanding of the meaning of Scripture" (Preface, 161).

²⁸Edmund Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 74. Clowney writes, "He who would preach the Word must preach Christ. Yet even where this principle has long been acknowledged, the practice of preaching often falls far short of this ideal."

²⁹For some exceptions, see Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*; Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*; Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994); Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007).

dissertation concurs with Edmund Clowney: “If we are to preach from the whole Bible, we must be able to see how the whole Bible bears witness to Jesus Christ.”³⁰

Methodology and Chapter Organization

This dissertation will argue for the necessity of Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching and will critically examine the hermeneutical method and homiletical outcomes of the non-Christocentric approach representatively advocated by Walter C. Kaiser. This work will also critique the trend of some contemporary redemptive-historical advocates to reject verse-by-verse expository preaching. The result of the study will be a reinforcement of the type of rigorous exegetical theology advocated by Kaiser as the preacher moves from text to sermon.³¹ But the strengths of Kaiser’s approach will be matched with biblical-theological reflection that methodologically acknowledges the divine authorship of the Bible and the progressive nature of Christocentric redemptive-historical revelation.

The limited scope of this study will prevent a discussion of the entire process that brings the preacher from study to pulpit. Vital things such as prayer, meditation, text selection, series preparation, introductions, outlines, illustrations, and conclusions will not be discussed. Nor will this study provide a comprehensive analysis of the entire process of exegesis for preaching.³² Although this dissertation maintains that the normative pattern of a faithful expository preaching ministry should be verse-by-verse

³⁰Edmund Clowney, “Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures,” in *The Preacher and Preaching*, ed. Samuel T. Logan Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1986), 164.

³¹Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 22. Kaiser correctly contends, “In effect, the proclaimer must exhibit in his own person the professional unity of the exegetical professor and the practical preacher. . . . We have tolerated various forms of mediocrity in preaching and exegesis for too long now.”

³²While this dissertation argues against Kaiser’s position regarding the analogy of antecedent Scripture, his *Toward an Exegetical Theology* is an otherwise invaluable aid to preachers, covering contextual, syntactical, verbal, theological, and homiletical analysis.

exposition of consecutive texts, argumentation for that position exceeds the present scope.³³

The dissertation will seek to demonstrate that no one preaches a text properly apart from its relationship to Jesus Christ, the eternal λόγος, in whose incarnate person the kingdom of God was already at hand, invading the present evil age with the glories of the age to come, and in whose person the kingdom will be consummated. There is a very real sense in which preaching the glory of God in Christ is preaching the kingdom of God.³⁴ While the preacher must recognize the God-ordained diversity of biblical revelation, he must also affirm the Scripture as one organically unified book that centers on Jesus Christ and eschatological fulfillment in him. To preach Christ is to preach the one who has come and is to come.

Chapter 2 will establish the biblical and theological foundations of a Christocentric, kingdom-focused model of expository preaching. The chapter will state foundational presuppositions and define important terms. It will analyze key biblical texts related to the redemptive-historical progression of the Scripture to reveal the Christocentric and eschatological nature of all Scripture. The chapter will argue that any contemporary hermeneutical approach for preaching must conform itself to apostolic hermeneutics as recorded in the Bible, which are consistently Christocentric and

³³For a compelling article arguing that approaches other than book studies can be expository see Irvin A. Busenitz, "Must Expository Preaching Always be Book Studies? Some Alternatives," *Master's Seminary Journal* vol. 2, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 140-57. Conceding that expository preaching does not always have to be book studies does not negate the contention that it should consistently be marked by book or sections studies. A consecutive approach always allows clearer contextual analysis and forces the preacher to tackle even the difficult texts, honoring all Scripture as God-breathed over the long course of a faithful preaching ministry (2 Tim 3:16). Consistently jumping around from text to text makes clarifying context more difficult, runs the danger of the preacher gravitating toward texts that he is more comfortable with and would result in some texts being avoided even during a lengthy pastoral tenure. See Michael Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 17. Fabarez argues, "Though some decide to exposit a text from one part of the Bible one week and from an entirely different part the next, most expository preachers find it difficult to give adequate attention to the study of such varied contexts week after week. . . . I suggest moving from one portion of Scripture to the following portion, because so much of the contextual flow already has been established and mastered the previous week."

³⁴Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 7.

kingdom-focused. This hermeneutical understanding will lead to the affirmation of a *sensus plenior* of Scripture, one controlled by canonical context and revealing an organic relation to the historical meaning of the biblical text. The chapter will show Christocentric, kingdom-focused exposition to be exemplified in apostolic preaching, and it will argue for the kingdom of Christ as the unifying theological center of the Bible.

Chapter 3 will develop a Christocentric, kingdom-focused model of expository preaching. It will address what Walter C. Kaiser has called *the* Christian problem: how to preach the Old Testament.³⁵ The chapter will argue that the Old Testament is a Christian book in character, always meant to be understood in the context of redemptive history and its fulfillment in Jesus Christ and his kingdom. The analysis will continue to clarify the inseparable relationship between hermeneutics and proclamation. To borrow the terminology of Vern Poythress, this study will contend that Christ is not only the savior of sinners but also the savior of biblical interpretation.³⁶ The goal of the chapter is to develop the foundation for an exegetical, expository, redemptive-historical model of preaching. The pathway to this Christocentric, kingdom-focused homiletic is the Scripture-saturated interpreter's commitment to understand the text in light of Jesus Christ and his kingdom.

Chapter 4 will analyze and critique the thought of four contemporary advocates of Christocentric preaching: Edmund Clowney, Bryan Chapell, Sidney Greidanus, and Graeme Goldsworthy. The chapter will offer a brief survey of the historical context from which the works of these authors arose and review each author's most influential and

³⁵Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 13.

³⁶Poythress, "Christ the Only Savior of Interpretation," 305.

representative volume on Christocentric preaching.³⁷ The chapter will conclude with summary evaluations of their works, contributions, and limitations.

Chapter 5 is devoted to detailing the importance of Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching for the local church. Far too often, academics discuss hermeneutics and homiletics without an eye toward the local church. As this dissertation has already asserted, the unifying theological center of interpretation, preaching, and all of life is the glory of God in Jesus Christ and his eschatological kingdom. But one must also recognize that one cannot fully comprehend the glory of God in the kingdom of Christ apart from the redemption of his image bearers who make up the church, “the community of the Kingdom.”³⁸ The chapter will detail the dangers of non-Christocentric models as well as the advantages of a Christocentric, kingdom-focused model for spiritual warfare, missions, evangelism, eschatological hope, and Christian living and community.

Chapter 6 summarizes and concludes the dissertation. Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching is not one potential style choice for biblical preachers but, instead represents the way all biblically faithful expository preaching should be done. As Tim Keller says concerning redemptive-historical preaching,

It is *theologically* (hermeneutically) required because all Scripture is about Jesus (Luke 24:44-47). It is *pastorally* required because it is a faith-sight of Jesus that transforms (Col 1:28), not compliance with principles. It is *missiologically* required because it is Jesus who ‘completes the story’ of every culture (1 Cor 1:20).³⁹

³⁷Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*; Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*; Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*.

³⁸George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 109.

³⁹Timothy J. Keller, “Preaching the Gospel in a Post-Modern World” (classroom lecture notes, Doctor of Ministry Program, Reformed Theological Seminary, January 2002, photocopy), 21.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR A CHRISTOCENTRIC MODEL OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

The task of Christian preaching inevitably involves the Bible and theological assertions. The preacher who does not affirm biblical inerrancy and infallibility still recognizes the need for the Bible to shape his or her sermonic propositions.¹ But the theologically conservative evangelical preacher who is committed to the inerrancy of Scripture is bound in his preaching to the Word of God written. He should recognize his responsibility to preach “the whole counsel of God” and to be found “rightly handling the word of truth” as he prepares each week to teach the gathered assembly who God is and how they should relate to Him (Acts 20:27, 2 Tim 2:15). Therefore, the question is not, “Will preachers be biblical and theological in their preaching?” It is instead, “Will preachers be *faithfully* biblical and theological in their preaching?” This chapter will present the biblical-theological foundations for a Christocentric, kingdom-focused model of expository preaching and contend that such an approach is essential for biblically faithful preaching in every age.

Presuppositions and Definition of Key Terms

There are many important issues related to a biblical-theological methodology that are beyond the scope of this work. This section acknowledges these assumptions and

¹Peter Adam, *Speaking God's Words: A Practical Theology of Expository Preaching* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 109-11. Adam observes that every preacher “has some kind of theology.” He contends that every biblically and theologically faithful preacher must believe that the Bible is God-given, theological, self-interpreting, and cohesive.

presuppositions so that the reader can better evaluate this study in light of the larger framework from which the conclusions emerge.²

I write from the perspective of a conservative evangelical Christian in the Southern Baptist tradition.³ This dissertation presupposes that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God, divinely inspired and unique among all literature. Graeme Goldsworthy has cleverly phrased an evangelical commitment to the Scripture in the following way: “the Bible is the word of the *one* God” and “is the *one* word of God” that conveys absolute truth.⁴ This commitment to the Scripture as the inerrant Word of God necessitates a belief in the unity and coherence of the entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments.⁵

This work also accepts that the church possesses a closed canon of Scripture that contains the twenty-seven books of the New Testament and the thirty-nine books of

²Presuppositions are assumptions that we embrace in order for any other facts to be true. By definition, any final authority is self-attesting and cannot be validated by some higher authority. For an excellent discussion, see Carl F. H. Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990).

³See the doctrinal statement of the Southern Baptist Convention, *The Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville: Lifeway, 2004). In regard to the Scripture, the document declares, “It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter” (7). See also L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999).

⁴Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 13-14. For a defense of biblical inerrancy, see the following: Louis Gaussen, *God-Breathed: The Divine Inspiration of the Bible* (Unicoi, TN: The Trinity Foundation, 2001); Gordon H. Clark, *God’s Hammer: The Bible and its Critics* (Hobbs, NM: The Trinity Foundation, 1982); Norman L. Geisler, ed., *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980); John Warwick Montgomery, ed., *God’s Inerrant Word* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1973); R. C. Sproul, *Explaining Inerrancy* (Orlando: Ligonier Ministries, 1996); Basil Manley Jr., *The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995); Robert P. Lightner, *A Biblical Case for Total Inerrancy: How Jesus Viewed the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1978); and E. J. Young, *Thy Word Is Truth* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1957).

⁵R. B. Kuiper writes, “If Scripture denies itself, to interpret Scripture with Scripture can only result in confusion worse confounded. But for him who is convinced that the Bible is ‘God-breathed’ in all its parts and that for this very reason the parts together constitute a perfectly harmonious whole, there is no better method of preaching than this. Because he is convinced that every part of the Bible is the Word of God, he would analyze. Because he is convinced that the whole Bible is the Word of God, he would synthesize. The combination of correct Scriptural analysis and sound Scriptural synthesis insures Scriptural preaching *par excellence*” (“Scriptural Preaching,” in *The Infallible Word: A Symposium by the Members of the Faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary*, ed. N. B. Stonehouse and Paul Woolley [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1967], 261-62).

the Old Testament, as recognized by almost all Protestants.⁶ This dissertation will not enter into the debate about the order of the canonical books; it will accept and refer to the books of the Bible in the order generally accepted among Protestants.⁷

Finally, when this work refers to *biblical theology* as a distinct theological discipline, I am referring to modern evangelical models of the biblical theology movement.⁸ Edmund Clowney has convincingly argued that, although theological liberals have often written about biblical theology, they cannot effectively *do* biblical theology:

Biblical theology as a discipline has been cultivated by liberals, but the field of Bible study to which it has led the way requires the orthodox conviction that the Bible is God's supernatural revelation and has the unity of his Word. Unless the Scriptures actually possess the unity which biblical theology must find to justify its existence, the whole enterprise is folly.⁹

Evangelical biblical theology recognizes that the Bible is given in the process of history and represents the unified, unfolding revelation of God.¹⁰ Carson's definition is instructive:

⁶See these works: F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988); Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development and Significance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); David Dunbar, "The Biblical Canon," in *Hermeuetics, Authority and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 295-360; O. Palmer Robertson, *Final Word* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1993); and Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 49-76.

⁷Scobie argues that "the structure of the Christian Bible thus witnesses to the centrality of the Christ event in Biblical Theology" (*The Ways of Our God*, 70-71). See also John H. Sailhamer: "The more closely we examine the final shape of the Hebrew Bible (Tanak), the clearer it becomes that its shape and structure are not accidental. There are clear signs of intelligent life behind its formation. . . . [It] is strongly messianic" ("The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible," *JETS* 44 [2001]: 22).

⁸Graeme Goldsworthy, "Is Biblical Theology Viable?" in *Interpreting God's Plan: Biblical Theology and the Pastor*, ed. R. J. Gibson (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1988), 29-39. Goldsworthy defends the phrase *biblical theology movement*. He goes on to list John Bright, Geerhardus Vos, Edmund Clowney, and Willem VanGemeren as key figures in the modern evangelical biblical theology movement. According to Goldsworthy, each of these has produced an important but inadequate model of biblical theology.

⁹Edmund Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1979), 18. See also D. A. Carson, who writes, "In short, the history of biblical theology is extraordinarily diverse. Everyone does that which is right in his or her own eyes, and calls it biblical theology." T. Desmond Alexander et al., eds. *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), s.v. "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology."

¹⁰For an excellent popular application of this kind of biblical-theological approach, see Edmund Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1988).

But ideally, biblical theology, as its name implies, even as it works inductively from the diverse texts of the Bible, seeks to uncover and articulate the unity of *all* the biblical texts taken together, resorting primarily to the categories of those texts themselves. In this sense it is canonical biblical theology, ‘whole Bible’ biblical theology; i.e., its content is a theology of the whole Bible, not a theology that merely has its roots in the Bible, or merely takes the Bible as the place to begin.¹¹

Hermeneutics

Regrettably, preaching books tend to ignore hermeneutics or offer such a brief discussion that the reader is left with insufficient guidance concerning interpretation for sermon delivery.¹² At least one contemporary book on hermeneutics has acknowledged that hermeneutics is inseparable from proclamation. Grant Osborne writes, “It is my contention that the final goal of hermeneutics is not systematic theology but the sermon. The actual purpose of Scripture is not explanation but exposition, not description but proclamation.”¹³

It is impossible to reduce homiletics to the art of communicating in the church. The preacher does not begin with a sermon manuscript or outline; he begins with the Bible and ends with sermon notes. The process of discerning what the Bible says affects every aspect of what eventually becomes what the preacher says, the sermon preached.¹⁴

Before the apostle Paul exhorted Timothy to “Preach the Word!” (2 Tim 4:2), he admonished the pastor of the Ephesian church to “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.” (2 Tim 2:15). The handled Word becomes the preached Word. Richard B.

¹¹Carson, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, s.v. “Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology.”

¹²Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 127. This dissertation will define hermeneutics simply as the science and art of biblical interpretation.

¹³Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 12.

¹⁴Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1970), 4-5. Greidanus suggests that the term “hermeneutist” best describes the task of the preacher because it expresses the fact that “(1) he interprets the Word, (2) he translates the Word, (3) he proclaims the Word, and (4) that these activities cannot be separated.”

Gaffin, lecturing on Reformed hermeneutics, says,

The theme of hermeneutics has a particular focus in the direction of preaching. . . . I will focus on the hermeneutical side, but I always do that with an eye toward preaching. . . . Exegesis, the work in the study, ought to always be in the interests of the pulpit.¹⁵

The preacher must not be like a television anchorperson delivering lines that someone else has written, having no personal investment in the material. Instead, the preacher should be delivering a sermon from God's Word that has first gripped his heart and shaken his mind, a sermon born from hours of wrestling with the text and delivered with the scars of hermeneutical and homiletical preparation apparent.¹⁶

One of the significant issues in hermeneutics, and therefore homiletics, is answering the question of what we are looking for when we interpret the Bible. Should preachers search for the single original intended meaning of the human author in the immediate and antecedent context alone, or should he also be looking for the fuller meaning of the divine author in the context of the entire Bible?¹⁷ The answer to that interpretive question will have a profound effect on the content and nature of sermons. The introduction to this dissertation has already argued that no text is rightly interpreted apart from understanding its meaning in the context of the entire Bible. Further, this work will contend that every text must be understood and interpreted in light of its relationship

¹⁵Richard B. Gaffin Jr., "Reformed Hermeneutics" (lecture given at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, session 1, 1998), audiocassette.

¹⁶Michael Fabarez observes, "Your weekdays, imagined by the naive to consist of pastoral chitchat, hours of pleasure reading, and afternoon rounds of golf, are in fact days of intensive study that culminate in a spiritual battle called a sermon. As Bruce Thielemann writes, 'The pulpit calls those anointed to it as the sea calls its sailors; and like the sea, it batters and bruises, and does not rest. . . . To preach, to really preach, is to die naked a little at a time and to know that each time you do it that you must do it again.' The life of preaching requires dedication to the ongoing rigors of weekly preparation and delivery" (*Preaching that Changes Lives* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002], 84-85).

¹⁷Vern S. Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," *WTJ* 48 (1986): 278. Poythress explains what it at stake when the interpreter ignores divine intention: "If the grammatical-historical exegesis pretends to pay attention to the human author *alone*, it distorts the nature of the human author's intention. Whether or not they were perfectly self-conscious about it, the human authors intend that their words should be received as words of the Spirit."

to Jesus Christ, the center of Scripture, and eschatological fulfillment in the kingdom of Christ.¹⁸

Where is the interpreter to learn proper hermeneutics? What is the authoritative source that teaches how to rightly handle the Scripture? Can we and should we follow the exegetical practices of the New Testament? Richard N. Longenecker answers those questions in the following manner:

It is my contention that, unless we are ‘restorationists’ in our attitude toward hermeneutics, Christians today are committed to the apostolic faith and doctrine of the New Testament, but not necessarily to the apostolic exegetical practices as detailed for us in the New Testament.¹⁹

Longenecker is suggesting that we must be committed to the conclusions of the apostles, simultaneously believing that they came to those conclusions invalidly (though their conclusions were protected by divine revelation). Were the apostles wrong in the way they handled Old Testament texts? If they were not wrong, then how could we be wrong in following their example? Douglas Wilson responds to Longenecker:

How is this approach of Longenecker distinguished from saying that we will let Scripture teach us anything but how to handle Scripture? That is what this amounts to. We will let God tell us He is Triune. We will let God tell us Jesus is God. We will let God tell us Jesus died on the cross for our sins. We will not let God tell us how to interpret the book of Psalms.²⁰

It seems reckless and arrogant to suggest that apostolic hermeneutics and

¹⁸This phraseology is superior to simply stating that every text must be understood in relation to redemptive history because, as Graeme Goldsworthy notes, “redemption is a process that leads to a goal” (*Gospel and Kingdom: A Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament* [Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1981], 41). That goal is the kingdom of God in Christ.

¹⁹Richard N. Longenecker, “Negative Answer to the Question—Who is the Prophet Talking About? Some Reflections on the New Testament’s Use of the Old,” in *The Right Doctrine From the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 385.

²⁰Douglas Wilson, “Reading the Old Testament with New Testament Eyes: The Necessity of Typology” (Christ Church Ministerial Conference, *Type and Antitype: Seeing Christ in All of Scripture*, September 27-29, 2004), CD. Longenecker lucidly explains apostolic interpretation and proclamation, even though his conclusion does not follow. See Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

exegesis should be judged by contemporary theories rather than the other way around.²¹

One hundred years ago, E. C. Dargan contended, “Thus in all essential respects we find the apostolic preaching the regulative basis for Christian preaching in all times.”²² S.

Lewis Johnson reaches a contrary conclusion as well:

In conclusion I raise the question again: ‘Can we reproduce the exegesis of the New Testament?’ Unhesitatingly the reply is yes, although we are not allowed to claim for our results the infallibility of the Lord and His apostles. They are reliable teachers of biblical doctrine and they are reliable teachers of hermeneutics and exegesis. We not only *can* reproduce their exegetical methodology, we *must* if we are to be taught their understanding of the Holy Scriptures. Their principles, probably taught them by our Lord in His post-resurrection ministry, are not abstruse and difficult. They are simple, plain, and logical. The things they find in the Old Testament are really there, although the Old Testament authors may not have seen them fully.²³

The view, most fiercely defended by Walter C. Kaiser, that proper hermeneutics involves searching for the single original intended meaning of the human author in the biblical texts immediate and antecedent contexts alone cannot adequately account for the biblical testimony.²⁴ According to Kaiser, the interpreter can never distinguish between the human author’s intention and the divine author’s intention because they are always equated; furthermore, if a different sense were ever found, then it

²¹Peter Enns, “Apostolic Hermeneutics and an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture: Moving Beyond a Modernist Impasse,” *WTJ* 65 (2003): 265. Enns writes, “An articulation of how the Apostles handled the OT and its implications for a Christian understanding of Scripture has also been hindered by certain assumptions of what constitutes ‘proper hermeneutics.’ . . . By expecting the Apostles to conform to modern assumptions we run the danger of missing the theological and kerygmatic richness of the Apostles’ use of the OT. . . . I take as foundational that the church’s understanding of how to handle its own Scripture must interact on a fundamental level with the hermeneutical trajectories already in evidence in Scripture. By reclaiming the hermeneutical trajectory set by the Apostles, the church may be able to move beyond the impasse imposed by modernist assumptions.”

²²Edwin Charles Dargan, *From the Apostolic Fathers to the Close of the Reformation*, vol. 1 of *A History of Preaching* (Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2003), 25.

²³S. Lewis Johnson Jr., *The Old Testament in the New: An Argument for Biblical Inspiration* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 93-94.

²⁴See Raju D. Kunjummen’s excellent critique of the Kaiser approach: “The Single Intent of Scripture—Critical Examination of a Theological Construct,” *Grace Theological Journal* 7, no. 1 (1986): 81-100. Kaiser’s defends his position in “The Single Intent of Scripture,” *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 55-69.

would no longer be an objective sense or a Scriptural sense.²⁵ But such a distinction is found throughout Scripture. Consider the example of Caiaphas in John 11:49-52:

But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.”

Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

Caiaphas, the high priest, intended to refer only to a volatile situation between the Romans and the Jews; Jesus had to be put to death before his popularity upset national security. But it is clear that John records a divine intention behind these prophetic words that exceeded the intent of the original “author.”²⁶ John asserts that what Caiaphas said was not “on his own initiative” but was an unwitting prophesy about the relationship between the substitutionary death of Christ and the universal gathering of the redeemed children of God.²⁷ This example reveals that there can be a divine intention in

²⁵Kunjummen, “The Single Intent of Scripture,” 83. Also see Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 51. Critiquing Kaiser, Reymond writes, “Aside from the vexing fact, however, that we just do not know for sure the chronological relationship that exists between some portions of Scripture (was Obadiah written before Joel, Psalm ‘x’ before Psalm ‘y,’ Mark before Matthew, Colossians before Ephesians, 2 Peter before Jude?) and hence could fail to use an antecedent bit of revelation, it is just a fact that there are passages where there is no way the exegete can discern what the author or speaker intended without the benefit of subsequent revelational insight. As one example, apart from the apostles’ later authoritative insights found in Acts 2:24-31 and 13:34-37, there is no way that the modern exegete could discern, on the grounds allowed him by Kaiser, that David was not speaking of his own resurrection when he wrote Psalm 16 but was rather speaking *specifically and exclusively* of Messiah’s resurrection. . . . [W]e should not hesitate to employ later expressions of the divine Author’s mind spoken through inspired men to clarify earlier expressions of his mind to inspired men.”

²⁶D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 422. Carson explains, “When Caiaphas spoke, God was also speaking, even if they were not saying the same things. . . . While Caiaphas is thinking at a purely political level, John invites his readers to think in terms of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29, 34).” See also Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 409. Ridderbos notes the fact that wicked Caiaphas was ironically functioning as a prophet in his role as high priest. He writes, “It is much rather the intent of the Evangelist to say that Caiaphas, as the highest officeholder of the (historic) year, had to give prophetic expression not to his own purpose but to God’s purpose in the death of Jesus in the words he chose.”

²⁷Kaiser attempts to deny that there is a distinct divine intention in the words of Caiaphas by appealing to a meaning-significance distinction. He contends that John found a significance in the words of

words that surpasses the author's intent. Raju D. Kunjummen explains the implications of this text for hermeneutics: "it calls into question the *a priori* assumption of constant confluence between human and divine meaning intentions," and "it opens the possibility that God may through a later author explain more of what he had in mind in an earlier statement."²⁸

First Peter 1:10-12 is another pivotal text in this discussion:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

In this passage, Peter speaks of "the prophets" as representative of the Old Testament prophetic writers.²⁹ Two things are clear in the text: first, it was "the Spirit of Christ" (1 Pet 1:11) who spoke through the Old Testament prophets; and second, they understood that they were writing for a future people to whom the Messiah, about whom they wrote, would come. Though they knew about the Messiah and "made careful searches and inquiries" to know more, their understanding was limited.³⁰ These

Caiaphas and corrected a "provincial statement with its ethnocentricities and turned it into a comprehensive statement of the universal implications of Jesus' death," ("The Single Intent of Scripture," 60). To the contrary, the apostle John provides the reader with the true meaning of the prophetic words of Caiaphas, the meaning intended by the divine author. This is more than a meaning-significance distinction. Even Robert L. Thomas, who is generally opposed to any notion of double meaning, acknowledges this text as an isolated instance "when a text has a double meaning." He writes, "The context of John 11 makes the double entendre quite conspicuous" (*Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002], 147-48). Kaiser moves beyond Hirsch on this point; David S. Dockery notes that Hirsch "does not always limit the intention of the author to single meaning" (*Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in Light of the Early Church* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992], 173).

²⁸Kunjummen, "The Single Intent of Scripture," 90.

²⁹Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 72-73. Schreiner defends the position that the Old Testament prophets are the subject of the discussion in 1 Pet 1:10-12 rather than New Testament prophets.

³⁰Ibid. Schreiner persuasively argues that the prophets searched and inquired about the time and circumstances of the sufferings and subsequent glories of the Messiah rather than "wondering precisely which person would fill that role." See also Leonhard Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter*, ed. Ferdinand Hahn, trans. John E. Alsup (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 98. Walter C. Kaiser limits the prophetic

limitations have been removed for us in light of “these things which have now been announced” through the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:12).³¹ The message of the Old Testament prophets was always intended to have a fuller meaning and be of greater benefit to later generations via progressive revelation.³² Edmund Clowney observes, “The least disciple of Christ is in a better position to understand Old Testament revelation than the greatest prophet before Christ came.”³³

This text not only permits the interpreter to exegete Old Testament texts in light of later New Testament revelation, it *demand*s that the interpreter do so. This is because there is not always a confluence between the intention of the human and divine authors. Kaiser’s analogy of antecedent Scripture methodologically ignores the divine authorship of the Bible. While one must guard against anachronistic interpretations, the uniqueness and supernatural unity of biblical revelation demands that all of the parts be read in light of the whole for a full (or even adequate) determination of meaning.

Robert H. Stein asserts,

No book of the Bible claims God as its immediate author! Christians, of course, believe that behind the books of the Bible stands the living God, who has

question exclusively to the matter of time. He writes, “In fact, 1 Peter 1:10-12 specifically affirms that the only item on which those who had the Scriptures could plead ignorance was the matter of ‘time’ (i.e., *when* the Messiah would come). But that there was a Messiah, that he would suffer, that he would be glorified as King over all, that the royal glory came after suffering, and that the prophets delivered their messages not only for Israel but also for the church is flatly declared” (*Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987], 126). Also see his linguistic argument (*The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* [Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1985], 18-21).

³¹As to where the prophets “searched and inquired carefully” (1 Pet 1:10) regarding the promised Messiah, the answer is most likely the Scriptures. Wayne Grudem points out that the words translated “searching” and “inquiring” are all used elsewhere in the New Testament or the LXX for searching through the Scripture (*1 Peter*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 68). Grudem writes, “An excellent suggestion is therefore that they searched through earlier Scripture, and probably their own prophecies as well, to find out about the ‘salvation’ and the ‘grace’ they were predicting.”

³²Kunjummen, “The Single Intent of Scripture,” 102.

³³Edmund Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 59-60.

inspired his servants in the writing of these works. But the Scriptures were written by men, not God.³⁴

Stein's remarks seem to minimize the uniqueness of divine revelation. Certainly the Bible claims for divine inspiration more than Ron Julian, J. A. Crabtree, and David Crabtree suggest: "In other words, God authored the lives of each of the biblical writers, who in turn authored books that were the direct result of the shape of their lives."³⁵ The Bible teaches that its books were written by men *and* that God is the author. As Louis Gaussen declares,

Meanwhile, it is of consequence for us to say, and it is of consequence that it be understood, that this miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit had not the sacred writers themselves for its object—for these were only his instruments, and were soon to pass away; but that its objects were the holy books themselves, which were destined to reveal from age to age, to the church, the counsels of God, and which were never to pass away. . . . What they say, they tell us, is *theopneustic*: Their book is from God. . . . [It] is always the inspiration of the book that is presented to us as an object of faith, never the inward state of him that writes it."³⁶

It is also necessary to exegete Old Testament texts in light of later revelation because the prophetic message was always forward-looking, which is to say that it has always been eschatological.³⁷ The Scripture possesses a broader canonical context by which the preacher is to understand the meaning and significance of any given text.

³⁴Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 28.

³⁵Ron Julian, J. A. Crabtree, and David Crabtree, *The Language of God: A Commonsense Approach to Understanding and Applying the Bible* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2001), 60.

³⁶Gaussen, *God-Breathed*, 39, 112.

³⁷Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter*, 95. Goppelt explains, regarding 1 Pet 1:10-12, "In unusually packed sentences the relationship of Jesus' appearance to OT prophecy, a relationship that has been proclaimed to the Church, is delineated and thus the Church's situation is characterized as 'fulfillment,' i.e., it is described as eschatological in nature." See also Joel B. Green, *1 Peter*, *The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 31. Green notes, in reference to 1 Pet 1:10-12, "This does not mean that the words of the prophets were devoid of revelatory value before Christ; after all, God made known to them that their words were forward-looking (v. 12). It does mean, though, that their words lacked the clarity provided then when set alongside the career of Christ."

David Dockery has observed that the interpreter must see “the biblical text, rather than the author’s mind, as the place where meaning is concentrated.”³⁸ Thus, consulting later Scripture is imperative in order to interpret earlier Scripture. Consider again the words of Kunjummen:

If Messianic prophecies are primarily intended for people living after the coming of Christ (as 1 Peter 1:12 indicates), then the prophecies must be interpreted in the light of the Cross. Thus, 1 Peter 1:10-12 legitimizes *analogia fidei* as a proper principle of interpretation. This would mean also that Christians of the first century and later are better able to discern the full *implications* (i.e., details which were planned, purposed and executed by God) which belong to the *meaning* of the message of the prophets.³⁹

The divorce of hermeneutics from preaching in the books being produced by homileticians on the one hand and biblical scholars on the other weakens both the pulpit and the seminary classroom.⁴⁰ Poor or inadequate hermeneutics midwife poor and inadequate sermons, no matter how engaging their delivery, how entertaining their style, or how spectacular their reception. The end result is “theological and Biblical malnutrition” and “spiritual famine” among God’s people.⁴¹

This section has demonstrated that the testimony of Scripture demands faithful interpreters understand both the intended meaning of the original author and the divine

³⁸David S. Dockery, *Christian Scripture: An Evangelical Perspective on Inspiration, Authority and Interpretation* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 161.

³⁹Kunjummen, “The Single Intent of Scripture” 102.

⁴⁰Kaiser was certainly correct in 1981 when he wrote, “I have been aware for some time now of a gap that has existed in academic preparation for the ministry. It is the gap that exists between the study of the biblical text (most frequently in the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) and the actual delivery of messages to God’s people. . . . But where are the textbooks or articles that have attempted to seriously treat a legitimate unit of the Scriptures (e.g., paragraph or group of paragraphs) *in its present canonical shape* and to instruct the aspiring or present proclaimer of God’s Word how to move from the text to the sermon without losing sight of either the Biblical shape of his source or the crying needs of modern men who await a meaningful word for their lives?” (*Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 18-19). The problem certainly still persists today. See also Charles H. H. Scobie, “Biblical Theology and Preaching,” in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 465. Scobie writes, “In short, homiletics needs to focus more on hermeneutics, and hermeneutics needs to focus more on homiletics. More lines of communication need to be opened up and dialogue encouraged.”

⁴¹ Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 8.

intention of the ultimate author. As Kunjummen reasons, “Divine accommodation in the use of human language is not tantamount to divine self-reduction of authorial intent to the understanding of the biblical author.”⁴² Moreover, “the analogy of Scripture” is a principle that Scripture itself commends to interpreters, not some foreign notion imposed on the text.⁴³ The analogy of Scripture simply reminds the interpreter that the Word of God is infallibly autointerpreting. “All Scripture is breathed out by God,” and the God who gives his Word is also the interpreter of his Word (1 Tim 3:16). The scriptural data forces us to conclude that later canonical context provides interpreters with fuller understanding of the meaning of earlier Scriptural passages.⁴⁴ As Greg Bahnsen states, “The theology of God’s word informs the exegesis of every text.”⁴⁵ The viewpoint of this dissertation is in agreement with Graeme Goldsworthy’s observation that biblical theology “shows that the essence of hermeneutics lies in the fact that every part of the Bible leads us to Christ.”⁴⁶

These hermeneutical considerations affect the expository preacher every time he steps in the pulpit. The transition from hermeneutics to proclamation is one that ought to be made with a sense of awe and reverence. What comes out of the preacher’s mouth

⁴²Kunjummen, “The Single Intent of Scripture,” 108.

⁴³Goldsworthy argues that evangelical biblical theology is simply “giving free reign to the great Protestant principle that was enunciated at the Reformation: Scripture interprets itself [the analogy of Scripture],” (*Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 128).

⁴⁴Dan G. McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 171. McCartney and Clayton explain the distinction between what a text meant and what it means in light of Christocentric eschatological fulfillment. “Further, one cannot become an eighth-century B.C. Jew and read Isaiah from that perspective. A modern Christian or a Jew may pretend to be an eighth-century Jew, but modernity makes this futile, even with study and a sane imagination. This is true, not only because of the big cultural and social gap, but especially here because of the redemptive-historical gap. After the coming of Christ, part of the meaning of Isaiah 9, for example, must include either an acceptance or rejection of the proposition that the redeemer of Isaiah 9 is Jesus Christ. So a modern interpretation is necessarily different from any ancient one.”

⁴⁵Greg Bahnsen, “The Analogy of Faith: A Course in Hermeneutics and Exegesis” (Covenant Media Foundation, TSH, GB1453, n.d.), audiocassette.

⁴⁶Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 128.

must be faithful to the holy God to whom he will give an account and to the canon of Scripture he has given (2 Tim 4:1-2, Titus 1:9, Heb 13:17). Concerning the importance of a global interpretive framework for preachers, Hendrik Krabbendam warns,

Unless an interpreter has a proper and all-encompassing view of Scripture, he is bound not to see what is in the text and bound to see what is not in the text. This is tantamount to being victimized by the traditions of man, which would encumber him with tunnel vision, blinders, unreliable contact lenses, or whatever figure of speech seems preferable, so that he is forced to bend, distort, add to, or subtract from Scripture to a greater or lesser degree. The implications for preaching hardly need to be emphasized!⁴⁷

No passage of Scripture has been rightly interpreted or preached unless its meaning has been understood in light of the immediate historical context of the original author, the epochal context, and the Christocentric, kingdom-focused canonical context.⁴⁸ Chappell exhorts, “This must be the goal of expository preaching: the particulars of a passage need to be related to the overall purpose of Scripture.”⁴⁹ When this is properly done, Jesus, the one who is at the center of God’s kingdom plan and purposes for all eternity, comes into focus throughout the entire Scripture.⁵⁰ Alec Motyer summarizes this point by recalling an old jingle from his childhood:

⁴⁷Hendrik Krabbendam, “Hermeneutics and Preaching,” in *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Samuel T. Logan (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1986), 220. In this article Krabbendam attempts to uphold Hirsch’s meaning/significance distinction. He maintains that every text has a single meaning determined by the will of the original author but he also recognizes that a text has what he refers to as “a manifold significance” which functionally leads to understanding the text in the context of the entire canon. His manifold significance is hardly distinguishable from divine intention. Peter Enns points out, “However much we value the distinction between what the author meant and how those words can be applied to others, the Bible has a dimension that the meaning/significance dichotomy is not set up to handle: the divine author. God, by whose will Scripture exists, is not an author who sees only the part but the whole, and so his intention is not to be equated merely with that of the human author” (“Apostolic Hermeneutics,” 274).

⁴⁸Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 290-310. See also Peter Adam, “Preaching and Biblical Theology,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 107. Adam writes, “to place a text in context we must identify its literary context in the book, its theological context in the writings of the author, and the historical context of the book. Then to place a text in the context of the whole biblical revelation will involve understanding its context in OT or NT theology, its context in God’s progressive revelation within each period of salvation history, and its context in biblical theology.”

⁴⁹Bryan Chappell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 73.

⁵⁰This is not to suggest that Christ is the focal point of every text of Scripture with equal

The Old Testament is Jesus predicted; the Gospels are Jesus revealed; Acts is Jesus preached; the Epistles, Jesus explained; and the Revelation, Jesus expected. He is the climax as well as the substance and centre of the whole. In him all God's promises are yea and amen (2 Cor. 1:20).⁵¹

Two Key Biblical Texts

Christocentric expository preaching is more than pinning John 3:16 to the tail of the sermon. It is also more than a weekly theological treatise that speaks eloquently of the glories of Jesus Christ but lacks exegetical support rooted in a particular text of Scripture.⁵² Both of these approaches are inadequate. Sermons that simply suffix Jesus lull their hearers into lethargy. Such redundant sermons also undermine the centrality of Jesus Christ in the mind of the listener; he or she cannot help but conclude that the preacher cabooseed Jesus on at the end because he could not get him in the sermon any other way. Likewise, sermons that are fine-sounding lectures on the glories of Christ but are not rooted in a particular text suffer from a lack of credibility and authority. Even though everything the preacher says in a sermon may be true, if the sermon is not latched to the text itself, it lacks divine authority.

The biblical text must not be ignored or abused in preaching. We are to preach

clarity. Some passages loudly declare the message of the centrality of Jesus, and others are faint echoes; but the point is that the meaning of any passage can only be rightly interpreted in light of him.

⁵¹Alec Motyer, *Look to the Rock: An Old Testament Background to Our Understanding of Christ* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity, 1996), 22.

⁵²Jay Adams warns of this weekly-theological-treatise error, which he observed as a professor of practical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary. According to Adams, many students were producing fine-sounding essays but not expository sermons. He recounts, "When I went to teach practical theology, with an emphasis on preaching, I expected to find that students would spend the lion's share of their efforts to learn to preach by doing exegesis. To my surprise, and chagrin, that was not the case. Students were regularly engaged in preaching the big picture rather than settling down on a passage of Scripture or two in careful exposition and application. I discovered that the theology inherent in their sermons for the most part was precise and correct, but that their sermons lacked biblical support. Exposition was largely absent. Unlike Christ on the road to Emmaus, they failed to 'open' the Scriptures for their listeners" ("Westminster Theology and Homiletics," in *The Pattern of Sound Doctrine: Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, Essays in Honor of Robert B. Strimple*, ed. David VanDrunen [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004], 262-63). An overemphasis on biblical theology and seeing the big picture of Scripture is certainly not a problem in the evangelical Baptist circles of the author of this dissertation. To the contrary, my tradition is often mired in atomistic, moralistic preaching.

Christ from the entire Bible because proper exegesis demands it. The Scripture is not an inspired book of moralisms or a book of virtues; it is, from cover to cover, a book about the glory of God in Jesus Christ through the redemption of his people who will dwell in the kingdom of Christ forever.⁵³ D. A. Carson summarizes: “At its best, expository preaching is preaching which, however dependent it may be for its content on the text or texts at hand, draws attention to the inner-canonical connections that inexorably move to Jesus Christ.”⁵⁴

This section will briefly examine two key texts that point to the necessity of Christocentric, kingdom-focused interpretation and, consequently, proclamation. The inherent danger of focusing on key texts must be acknowledged. Such an approach may falsely communicate that the author believes that finding Jesus in the Scripture is like skipping a rock on water: if you keep flipping the pages of your Bible, you will eventually land on another spot where you can find him. To the contrary, this study is not suggesting that a few verses here and there point to Jesus but rather that all of the Scriptures testify of the kingdom of Christ. Charles Haddon Spurgeon puts it this way:

The Holy Ghost will only bless in conformity with His own set purpose. Our Lord explains what that purpose is: ‘He shall glorify Me.’ He has come forth for this grand end, and He will not put up with anything short of it. If then, we do not preach Christ, what is the Holy Ghost to do with our preaching? If we do not make the Lord Jesus glorious; if we do not lift Him high in the esteem of men, if we do not labour to make Him King of kings, and Lord of lords; we shall not have the Holy Spirit with us. Vain will be rhetoric, music, architecture, energy, and social status: if our own design be not to magnify the Lord Jesus, we shall work alone and in vain.⁵⁵

⁵³Bryan Chapell, “The Future of Expository Preaching,” *Preaching*, September-October 2004, 42. Chapell writes, “Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and End, the Author and Finisher of our faith. He is the culminating message of Scripture, but the word about this Eternal Word is also woven throughout the biblical text. Either by *prediction, preparation, reflection* or *result*, the redemptive message of God’s provision radiates throughout the Bible, and no portion of it can be properly expounded without disclosing its relationship to His redemptive nature and work. Disclosing this relationship does *not* require imaginative or allegorical mention of some specific in Christ’s life, but rather insists on exegetical and contextual explanation of how the text furthers the covenant people’s understanding of His person and work.”

⁵⁴D. A. Carson, “The Primacy of Expository Preaching,” audiocassette, n.d., quoted in Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 116.

⁵⁵Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Greatest Fight in the World* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador

Genesis 3:15

In the primeval garden, Adam and Eve rebelled by trusting in the word of the serpent rather than the Word of God. God immediately pronounced judgment on his fallen image bearers and the ultimate, eschatological judgment on the serpent (Gen 3:14-19). In the midst of this judgment is the *protoevangelium*, the first gospel. The tragic events that disrupted the harmony of the entire created order, including the shame and alienation of man and woman in the presence of God, would not be the final word—God’s grace would be (Gen 3:15). Yahweh announced a promised future seed who would be born of woman, engage in mortal combat with the serpent, and ultimately crush his head (Gen 3:15, Heb 2:14).⁵⁶ The history of Christian interpretation, until the rise of modern criticism, has overwhelmingly agreed that the “seed born of woman” is a reference to the last Adam, the greater Son of David, Jesus Christ, who will establish his eternal kingdom and restore harmony to creation in a new heavens and earth (Gal 4:4, 1 Cor. 15:45, Matt 22:42-45, Luke 1:32).⁵⁷

Contemporary scholars William D. Reayburn and Euan McG. Fry suggest that there is nothing more being taught in Genesis 3:15 than the perpetual conflict between humanity and the snake population, in which humanity will finally prevail.⁵⁸ A

Publications, 1999), 77-78.

⁵⁶James B. Jordan correctly contends that this message is repeated in typological form throughout the Scripture: “There are in Biblical theology certain great universals. They derive from the fact that man is the image, the very symbol of God. Thus, throughout the Bible marches *The Seed*. He is the one born of *The Woman* who will crush the head of *The Serpent*” (*Judges: A Practical and Theological Commentary* [Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999], ix).

⁵⁷Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, 1-17*, The New International Critical Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 197. He writes, “This verse is one of the most famous cruxes of Scripture. Interpreters fall into two categories: those who see in the decree a messianic import and those who see nothing of the kind. The more conservative and traditional writers (e.g., Schaeffer, Leupold, Vos, Kidner, Aaldres, and Stigers) opt for the first approach, but the bulk of authors in the critical camp (e.g., Skinner, von Rad, Speiser, Vawter, and Westermann) fail to see any promise of a Messiah in this verse and agree that far too much has been read into it. At best, according to this school, the story is an etiological myth that explains why there is hostility between mankind and the serpent world.”

⁵⁸William D. Reayburn and Euan McG. Fry, *A Handbook on Genesis* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1997), 91. See also Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 80-81. Wenham concludes that Genesis 3:15 simply refers to “a long struggle between

straightforward reading of the biblical narrative must reject this conclusion. Later revelation clarifies that this is no ordinary snake but the very embodiment of evil, Satan himself (Rev 20:2, 1 John 3:8). Snakes as such were a part of the good creation of God. This serpent is emphatically not good (Gen 1:25). The serpent is not simply an animal, nor is he a symbolic force of evil in the world; rather, he is a personal being who will produce spiritual offspring (his seed) who will follow in his rebellious footsteps.⁵⁹ As Derek Kidner notes, “the first glimmer of the gospel . . . makes its debut as a sentence passed on the enemy.”⁶⁰ The serpent of Genesis 3 plays a central adversarial role in the cosmological drama of redemption as the representative head of a rebellious, parasitic kingdom.⁶¹

Likewise, the biblical narrative leads the reader to conclude that the seed of woman is not a generic reference to humanity as such but a specific reference to an human individual: the singular seed.⁶² Regarding the *protoevangelium*, Demarest points

good and evil, with mankind eventually triumphing.” He adds, “While a messianic interpretation may be justified in light of subsequent revelation, a *sensus plenior*, it would perhaps be wrong to suggest that this was the narrator’s own understanding. Probably he just looked for mankind eventually to defeat the serpents’s seed, the powers of evil.” One senses in his comments contemporary scholarly reluctance to interpret the meaning of the Bible in its canonical whole. Yet the promise itself is eschatological and points the interpreter toward a future personal combat between the serpent and the messianic seed born of woman.

⁵⁹ Motyer, *Look to the Rock*, 34. Motyer argues, “We can certainly go further than saying that ‘the serpent symbolizes’. For within the narrative-complex of Genesis 1-3, snakes are a part of the good creation of God (1:24). The serpent of 3:1ff., therefore, in a way that Genesis does not explain, is not a part of that creation, for it is not an animal pure and simple; it reveals itself as far from what the Creator would call ‘good’ and, indeed, this serpent is not ‘it’ but ‘he’, so that the woman enters into conversation as with another person. The revelation of ‘the serpent’ and this attitude towards him is sustained throughout Genesis 3.” Regarding the serpent and his seed Jesus would say, “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).

⁶⁰Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1967), 70-71.

⁶¹R. R. Reno, *Genesis*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010), 79.

⁶²The conclusions drawn here suggest that the seed of the serpent should be understood in a collective sense, referring to all of fallen humanity and that the seed of woman should be understood in a singular sense, referring to Jesus Christ and by extension those who by faith are united with Christ. For a grammatical defense of this position see, Jack Collins, “A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15): Is the Woman’s

out, “This gracious announcement in the third chapter of the Bible constitutes the basis of all God’s merciful dealings with his people.”⁶³ Galatians 3:16 removes any ambiguity regarding the identity of the promised seed: “Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, ‘And to offsprings,’ referring to many, but referring to one, ‘And to your offspring,’ who is Christ.”⁶⁴ The promise to Abraham was a continuance of the “seed promise” in Genesis 3:15 and finds its culmination in the cosmic authority of Jesus Christ—and, by extension, all who are united to him by faith.⁶⁵ John Currid summarizes in his commentary on Genesis:

Jesus is the seed who is descended from Eve and went to do battle against Satan. The remainder of Scripture is an unfolding of this prophecy of Genesis 3:15. Redemption is promised in this one verse, and the Bible traces the development of that redemptive theme.⁶⁶

Seed Singular or Plural?” *Tyndale Bulletin* 48, no.1 (1997): 139-48. Of course, this interpretation recognizes that the line of the seed born of woman contains many individuals (often unlikely individuals) throughout history who lead to the fulfillment of the promised seed in Jesus Christ. For an excellent explanation of the continual conflict between the seed of the serpent and the seed born of woman in regard to preaching, see Sidney Greidanus, “Preaching Christ from the Narrative of the Fall,” *Bib Sac* 161 (2004): 259-73.

⁶³Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1997), 81.

⁶⁴R. Alan Cole, *Galatians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 9 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989), 147. Cole argues, “Paul is saying, in typically Jewish fashion, that there is an appropriateness in the use of the singular form here, in that the true fulfillment came only in connection with one person, Christ.” See also Moises Silva, “Galatians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 807. Silva rejects the assumption that what is being said here would have been controversial. He contends, “We should consider the possibility that Paul’s readers, and even his Judaizing opponents (all of whom would have acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah), would have readily acknowledged this identification between Abraham’s seed and the Christ. . . . At any rate, there is much to be said for the idea that is 3:16b Paul is not attempting to prove anything; rather, he is merely bringing to the surface something that his readers already know and accept.”

⁶⁵Kenneth A. Matthews writes, “The serpent was instrumental in the undoing of the woman, and in turn the woman will ultimately bring down the serpent through her offspring. . . . Our passage provides for this mature reflection that points to Christ as the vindicator of the woman” (*Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A [Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996], 245, 247).

⁶⁶John D. Currid, *Genesis*, Evangelical Press Study Commentary (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 2003), 1:131. Peter J. Leithart reminds his readers of the analogous typological allusions to Gen 3:15 that are found in the Old Testament when he writes, “It is remarkable, for example, to note the incidence of ‘death by head wound’ in the Old Testament. Sisera, Abimelech, Goliath, Absalom—many of the enemies of God have their heads crushed. When a scene or event is repeated in this way, it is deliberate and theologically grounded. All these are types of the serpent, whose head the Seed of the woman will crush (Genesis 3:15)” (*A House for My Name: A Survey of the Old Testament* [Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2000],

Interestingly, Kaiser agrees that Genesis 3:15 is a messianic text and argues that “it gave our first parents a glimpse, even if only an obscure one, of the person and mission of the one who was going to be the central figure of the unfolding drama of redemption in the world.”⁶⁷ He affirms the use of the label *protoevangelium* for Genesis 3:15 and quotes Charles Briggs in *Messianic Prophecy* that the text is “the germ of promise which unfolds in the history of redemption.”⁶⁸ Kaiser also contends that the “‘seed/offspring’ mentioned in this verse became the root from which the tree of the OT promise of a Messiah grew.”⁶⁹ It is difficult to understand how he can draw such conclusions about Genesis 3:15 by employing his analogy of antecedent Scripture and rejecting the responsibility to pursue divine intentionality in interpretation based on canonical context.⁷⁰ In the introduction his volume *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, Kaiser acknowledges that all texts have “connections with a continuing future,” but only allows the past to have an informing role in interpretation.⁷¹

If an interpreter rules out any chronologically subsequent texts as having an informing role in biblical interpretation, then how can the interpreter draw any conclusion about Genesis 3:15 except the one drawn by modern biblical criticism? Such an approach would simply conclude that there is ongoing hostility between serpents and human beings, and human beings will ultimately prevail. Kaiser is applying the analogy of *subsequent* Scripture to draw his conclusions. As Kunjummen asserts,

The reader of Scripture who might have an uncertain concept of the serpent in Genesis 3, after reading through the entirety of Scripture including the book of

34).

⁶⁷Walter C. Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 37.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 38, 41.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 37-38.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 31.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 25.

Revelation, will have a revised (and more exact) conception of the whole so that his sense of the identity of the serpent is more complete and exact.⁷²

Kunjummen's comments are also accurate with respect to the identity and mission of the seed born of woman. Reading the Bible in light of the canonical whole is the way God intended for us to read and interpret the canon of Scripture that he has provided. Kaiser recognizes Genesis 3:15 as the *protoevangelium* and the seed of woman as the central figure in redemptive history *precisely because* his reading of the Bible as a whole has informed, revised, and completed his understanding of the meaning of Genesis 3:15. Genesis 1-3 has a cosmic frame of reference and is eschatologically oriented, providing patterns that "recur throughout redemptive history and reappear in the *eschaton* with the revelation of Jesus Christ on the final day," as J. V. Fesko has noted.⁷³ From the beginning of the created order to the consummated end, the scriptural witness points the reader, with progressive clarity, toward understanding the meaning of all things, including biblical interpretation, in light of Jesus Christ and his kingdom.

Luke 24:25-27; 44-46

No consideration of Christian interpretation and preaching can be reckoned complete without reference to Jesus' own exegesis and teaching when he opened the Scripture on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24). David Dockery asserts, "The method that Jesus used to interpret the Old Testament was entirely Christological."⁷⁴ It would be

⁷²Kunjummen, "The Single Intent of Scripture," 94.

⁷³For a defense of an Christological and eschatological interpretation of Genesis 1-3, see J. V. Fesko, *Last Things First: Unlocking Genesis 1-3 with the Christ of Eschatology* (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2007), 13-38.

⁷⁴Dockery, *Christian Scripture*, 27. Dockery concludes that "He interpreted the Old Testament in a manner similar to contemporary Jewish exegetes, but His method and message were novel. The new method was a Christological reading, which means that Jesus read the Old Testament in light of Himself." Graeme Goldsworthy is correct when he warns, "Much of the current interest in the New Testament's use of the Old Testament is directed to the first-century Judaic influences on Jesus and the early Christians. This may indeed help us to understand some of the exegetical methods employed in the use of Scripture, but, in my opinion, *there is a danger in overlooking the distinctiveness of Jesus as the shaper of Christian thought and understanding* [emphasis added]" (*Preaching the Whole Bible*, 46).

eccentric to claim to be a disciple of Christ, to be under His Lordship, and to be submitted to the authority of the Word of Christ, and at the same time to argue that Jesus had a faulty or fanciful view of revelation, interpretation, and proclamation that should not be followed by his disciples. In fact, his disciples immediately followed his example and obeyed his command to preach the gospel of the kingdom of Christ in the way he modeled for them (Matt 28:18-20, Luke 24:46-49, Acts).⁷⁵ Jesus never gave any indication that his followers were not to interpret the Scripture in the way he had. Edmund Clowney reminds preachers that interpreting the Scripture in light of Christ is not some mystical activity or a matter of personal ingenuity but is instead simply seeing what is actually there:

To discover Christ in the Scriptures no desperate allegories are necessary, although the mind of faith is. The hearts of the disciples on the road to Emmaus burned within them as Christ opened the Scriptures. They were not in the least amazed at his cleverness, but only at their dullness in not having perceived long ago the sufferings and glory of Christ so clearly set forth.⁷⁶

Two hopeless disciples were walking down the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus and unknowingly encountered the risen Christ. They had heard rumblings about an empty tomb, but, of all of the explanations that entered their minds, resurrection was not one of them (Luke 24:13-24). They were convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was dead and that he was therefore not the redeemer of Israel (Luke 24:21). Their hope had died along with Jesus. Jesus' response to their dejection and despair was not sympathy for their plight but rather stiff rebuke: "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" (Luke 24:25).⁷⁷

⁷⁵In the first four chapters of the book of Acts the apostles preach Christ from the following OT passages: Joel 2:28-32; Pss 16:8-11, 2:1, 89:3, 110:1, 118:22, 132:11; 2 Sam 7:12ff.; Dan 9:24ff.; and Deut 18:15.

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

⁷⁷The interjection "O" in Luke 24:25 alerts the reader to the fact that the rebuke Jesus offers these disciples here is urgent and full of emotion; see Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, vol. 2, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1915.

Why was Jesus' response so harsh? He did not respond harshly because the disciples were not able to unscramble a secret Bible code but because all the Scripture so plainly pointed to him. Jesus' rebuke makes it clear that anyone familiar with the Scripture should understand that it was necessary for the Messiah to "suffer these things and to enter into His glory" (Luke 24:26). Nowhere did Jesus suggest that he is the only one who can or should interpret Scripture this way. Clowney reminds his readers,

The phrase 'beginning at Moses and all the prophets' and the use of the verb *diermenueo* [Luke 24:27] indicate reasoned interpretation. Jesus did not present a course in 'eisegesis.' He interpreted what the Scriptures *do* say and opened His disciples' minds to understand it.⁷⁸

Jesus was not simply suggesting to these disciples that a few isolated proof texts in the Old Testament point to him; rather, he was teaching that he was the hermeneutical key for understanding *all* Scriptural revelation. In fact, Jesus was rebuking them for a selective focus on certain verses in the Old Testament to the exclusion of others in the narrative. Jay Adams states it this way: "They saw the promises of the crown and read over the prophecies of the cross."⁷⁹ In this personal seminar on biblical interpretation by the risen Christ, Jesus taught his disciples that he is the hermeneutical matrix woven into the fabric of Scripture. William Hendriksen explains:

But the Old Testament picture of the Messiah is not confined to a number of specific passages. . . . [T]here are, as it were, four lines, which running through the Old Testament from beginning to end, converge at Bethlehem and Calvary: the historical, typological, psychological, and prophetic. It is reasonable to believe that our Lord, in interpreting in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself, showed how the entire Old Testament, in various ways, pointed to himself.⁸⁰

⁷⁸Edmund Clowney, "Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures," in *Preachers and Preaching*, ed. Samuel T. Logan Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1986), 164. The contemporary term *hermeneutics* comes from the Greek word διαρμηνευω, which Jesus used in Luke 24:27.

⁷⁹Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Commentary: The Gospel of Luke* (Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, 1998), 208.

⁸⁰William Hendriksen, *Luke: New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 1065. While maintaining that Jesus is referring to the entire Old Testament as pointing to him, Hendriksen lists the following verses as Christocentric interpretive highlights: Gen 3:15, 9:26, 12:3, 22:18, 49:10; Exod 12:13; Num 24:17; Deut 18:15, 18; 2 Sam 7:12, 13; Pss 2:2, 22:1, 22:18, 45:11, 68:18, 69:20-21, 72:8-9, 110:1, 118:22, 132:11; Isa 2:4, 7:14, 8:8, 10, 9:1-2, 9:7, 11:10, 25:8, 28:16, 35:5-6, 42:1, 49:6, 52:14; 53ff, 55:4, 59:16; Jer 23:5; Ezek 17:22; Dan 2:24, 2:35, 2:44, 7:13-14, 9:25; Mic 5:2; Hag 2:6-9; Zech 3:8;

It is striking, as Walter Moberly points out, that to convince his disciples that he was alive and that the Messianic promise of redemption and kingdom remained, “the risen Jesus offers no new visions from heaven or mysteries from beyond the grave but instead focuses of patient exposition of Israel’s Scripture.”⁸¹ In light of Jesus’ teaching, it is clear that Scripture must have a vital place in the life of the believing community and that it must be a priority to properly interpret and proclaim the Scripture to the church and to the world.⁸² The answer to the question “Should the entire Bible be interpreted in light of Jesus Christ?” has momentous consequences. If the answer is affirmative, then no text has been properly interpreted or preached that fails to mention Christ and to understand its meaning in light of him. Explaining the implications of Luke 24, Vern Poythress concludes, “The alternative to a Christocentric understanding of the Old Testament is not understanding it rightly—not understanding it as Christ desired.”⁸³

Later, Jesus appeared again to his disciples in the Upper Room, ate fish with them, and continued the hermeneutical lesson he had begun with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus:

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the

6:12ff, 9:9, 11:12, 12:10, 13:7; and Mal 3:1.

⁸¹Walter Moberly, *The Bible, Theology, and Faith: A Study of Abraham and Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 51, quoted in Richard B. Hays, “Reading Scripture in Light of the Resurrection,” in *The Art of Reading Scripture*, ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 229. Hayes goes on to point out, “Furthermore, Luke’s formulation suggests that testimony to Jesus is to be found ‘in all the Scriptures’ (ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς, *en pasais tais graphais*), not just a few isolated proof texts. The whole story of Israel builds to its narrative climax in Jesus, the Messiah who had to suffer before entering into his glory. That is what Jesus tries to teach them on the road.” See also, Leon Morris, *Luke*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 370: “The picture we get is of the Old Testament as pointing to Jesus in all its parts.”

⁸²Christopher J. H. Wright has concluded that “the proper way for disciples of the crucified and risen Jesus to read the Scriptures is from a perspective that is both *messianic* and *missional*” (“Mission as a Matrix for Hermeneutics and Biblical Theology,” in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew et al. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004], 107). That mission is what the Bible is all about.

⁸³Vern S. Poythress, *God-Centered Biblical Interpretation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1999), 60.

Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead. (Luke 24:44-46)

“The Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms” is a comprehensive description of the entire Old Testament.⁸⁴ Jesus “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,” again pointing to the fact that his teaching concerns the entire body of Old Testament writings and not merely isolated messianic proof texts or prophecies. In Luke 24:44, Jesus points out that he is reminding them of what he had already taught them before his crucifixion and resurrection, that all of the Scriptures are about him and his fulfillment of the kingdom promise through his suffering and resurrection (Acts 1:3).⁸⁵

Discussing Luke 24, Kaiser states, “Let it be affirmed right away that the central theme of both the Old and New Testaments is Christ.”⁸⁶ The declaration is certainly true, but it is as far as Kaiser is willing to go in his explanation of what Jesus is teaching his disciples in Luke 24. Jesus was not simply asserting that he is the theme of both Old and New Testaments; he was contending that the redemptive-historical progression that had led to his suffering and resurrection, the “already but not yet” tension of the kingdom, must govern our hermeneutical approach to the entire corpus of Scripture. Jesus’ teaching in Luke 24 is at odds with Kaiser’s analogy of antecedent Scripture. Jesus is arguing that the Old Testament is now rightly interpreted only in light

⁸⁴McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand*, 41-42. They write that “Law, Prophets, and Psalms” was a way of referring to the entirety of Scripture. Jews still refer to the Hebrew Bible (the OT) as *Tenakh*, and acronym from the first letters of *Torah* (law), *Nevi'im* (prophets), and *Khethuvim* (writings). See also Poythress in *God-Centered Biblical Interpretation*, 60. He contends that the designation of the third group as “writings” replaced what was originally simply referred to as “Psalms” since the Psalter was the group’s most prominent member. He follows Roger T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 111-17. Leon Morris writes, “The solemn description of Scripture into *the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms* (the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible) indicates that there is no part of Scripture that does not bear witness to Jesus” (*Luke*, 373).

⁸⁵Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1936. He writes, “The events of his life are thus no surprise; they are in continuity with what God revealed throughout Scripture. It is fair to say that Jesus sees himself and his career outlined in the sacred texts of old. For Luke, Jesus is proclaimed through prophecy and pattern.”

⁸⁶Walter C. Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 41.

of these considerations, that, he—the eternal λόγος incarnate—suffered, died, was resurrected, and is returning to consummate his kingdom. Gerald Bray concludes,

To presume to be able to read the author’s mind from an examination of the text is a literary delusion of the first magnitude. . . . The idea that the documents of the Old Testament were primarily concerned with the immediate situation in which they were composed has a superficial validity, in the sense that the original hearers must have made something of them; but to suppose that this exhausts their significance is ludicrous. What makes the Old Testament worth studying is the fact that it has demonstrated the power not only to survive but to dominate the lives of countless generations of men far removed from the original historical context. Under its hegemony a whole civilization has come into being, and missionary work is still winning converts to its teaching. . . . Was Jesus right to claim that the Old Testament spoke of him? Were the Apostles and their successors justified in their use of the Jewish Scriptures? Here the Christian must answer, Yes.⁸⁷

This Christocentric interpretive approach does not imply that the fuller meaning that can be discerned in light of Jesus and his kingdom has no correspondence to or violates the intended meaning of the original author.⁸⁸ To the contrary, the fuller meaning is organically connected to the original meaning and represents the divine author’s intention in the history of redemption and revelation. A focus on the organic unity of Scripture should not minimize the biblical diversity and discontinuity between the differing epochs of biblical revelation. The fact of divine authorship of the Scripture allows the interpreter and preacher to appreciate the divisions in the history of redemption while always remembering the underlying Christocentric unity. This awareness of unity-in-diversity keeps the preacher from flattening out the rich contours of biblical revelation while also keeping him from fragmenting the unified witness of divine revelation.

It is questionable whether it is even possible to read the entire Biblical witness

⁸⁷Gerald Bray, *Creeds, Councils and Christ: Did the Early Christians Misrepresent Jesus?* (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 1997), 52-54.

⁸⁸This arbitrary interpretive method would not represent a Christological or typological reading of the text but an allegorical one. David L. Baker describes allegorical interpretation as “arbitrary, often taking words out of context in order to find Christ in the Old Testament, and it implies that God inspired the Old Testament in a mysterious way and thus deliberately obscured the meaning” (*Two Testaments, One Bible: A Study of the Theological Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991], 123).

and then to inform a text only with chronologically precedent theology. Even unconsciously, later revelation will shape one's conclusions about the text. To actually expect this operation to be performed would be akin to showing someone a completed painting, then asking him or her to evaluate particular sections of it without reference to the whole. The mind would automatically recall the completed painting. So it is with Scripture. Every verse is meant to be interpreted in relation to the canonical whole, which centers on Christ and eschatological fulfillment in him. As Arturo G. Azurdia III says,

The inscripturated word centers its attention on Jesus Christ. He is the seed of the woman who will crush the serpent's head. He is the ark to rescue the people of God. He is the holy Angel of Yahweh. He is the seed of Abraham in whom all the families of the earth will be blessed. He is the Passover lamb. He is the prophet greater than Moses. He is the pillar of fire in the wilderness. He is the rock struck by Moses. He is the heir to the Davidic throne. He is the thrice holy Lord of Isaiah 6. He is the greater shepherd of Ezekiel 34. He is Mary's baby, Herod's enemy, and Simeon's joy. He is the twelve-year-old boy in the temple and the beloved son to be baptized. He is the healer of the blind, the provider of the hungry, and the friend of the outcast. He is the new temple, the source of living water, the manna that gives life, the light of the world, the resurrection and the life, and the Father's true vine. He is the spotless lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and the resurrected lion from the tribe of Judah. He is the ascended Lord, the ruler of the Church, and the returning Judge of all men. The sacred scriptures are the instrument by which the Spirit of the living God glorifies Jesus Christ.⁸⁹

Genesis 3:15 and Luke 24:25-27; 44-46 stand on different sides of the cross of Jesus Christ, but both communicate a message of the glory of God in Christ through the redemption of his people—or, stated more simply, the message of the kingdom of God in Christ. Over one hundred and fifty years ago, Benjamin Keach described Genesis 3:15 as a text the theme of which runs through the entire Scripture and declares the glory of God in the triumph of the kingdom of Christ:

So the breaking of his head is to be performed by the Messiah, the God-man, and signifies the destruction of the power and kingdom of the devil, and Man's redemption, from its tyranny and vassalage. Our Saviour is figured here as a magnificent hero, who with his feet tramples upon the serpent or dragon and breaks his head. . . . By the seed of the serpent the whole power and troop of Devils and

⁸⁹ Arturo G. Azurdia III, *Spirit Empowered Preaching: Involving The Holy Spirit in Your Ministry* (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 1998), 62.

wicked men, who study the overthrow of Christ's kingdom, is metaphorically represented. . . . Christ will destroy the power of the Devil.⁹⁰

In the Acts of the Apostles, Luke recorded that, in the forty days between Jesus' resurrection and ascension, he appeared to his disciples teaching "about the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).⁹¹ Jesus' conversation with the two discouraged disciples on the road to Emmaus was a lesson about his kingdom. He was also providing a Christocentric, kingdom-focused hermeneutical lesson when, a short time later, he appeared to the larger group of disciples and "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45). The resurrected Christ was providing his disciples with an exposition of the first gospel promise in Genesis 3:15, of all its glorious unfolding in the Scripture, and, ultimately, of the fulfillment of the promises in him, the one in whose presence the kingdom of God was at hand (Matt 3:2, 4:17, 10:7; Mark 1:15).

His message to them was that he is the promised seed of woman, the last Adam, the greater Son of David, the anointed messianic king, who will crush the head of the serpent and redeem his people (Rev 12:9).⁹² He is the one who brought the glories of the age to come into this present evil age and who will one day return to consummate his eternal kingdom in a new heavens and new earth.⁹³ After the ascension of Christ, the

⁹⁰Benjamin Keach, *Preaching from the Types and Metaphors of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1972), 60, 193. See also Gerard Van Groningen, *From Creation to Consummation* (Sioux Center, IA: Dordt Press, 1996), 1:131. Van Groningen points the reader to the great cosmic struggle between the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of Christ that is evident in Gen 3:15: "And the protoevangelium heralded the certain victory of the seed of woman and the assured continuity of Yahweh God's cosmic kingdom within which the parasite kingdom of Satan would exist and be active. The protoevangelium also implied what was to be the major factor in the assured course of history-the tension, the battle, and outcome of that divinely determined history."

⁹¹George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 368. Ladd notes, "Luke records that in the days after Jesus' resurrection, he continued to teach them about the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). We are undoubtedly to understand this to mean that he was instructing them in the relationship between his proclamation of the Kingdom of God and his death and resurrection."

⁹²Demarest, "*The Cross and Salvation*," 25. He writes, "It is obvious even to the casual reader that the central message of the Bible concerns the spiritual recovery or salvation of lost men and women. From the *Protoevangelium* of Gen 3:15 to Rev 22:21, Scripture relates the grand story of how God has acted in grace to save his wayward image-bearers."

⁹³Gerard Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1990), 115. Van Groningen clearly articulates the inevitable eschatological pull of the Christocentric

apostles preached every text in light of this Christocentric, kingdom-focused, biblical-theological vision, and this same vision must shape every faithful preacher's sermons today (Acts 1:3, 2:36, 8:12, 14:22, 17:7, 19:8, 20:25, 28:23, 31; 1 Cor 2:2; 2 Cor 4:6; Col 1:13; Heb 12:28; Rev 1:6, 9).⁹⁴

Canonical *Sensus Plenior*

The Scripture is the Word of God (Luke 11:28, Heb 4:12). This simple declaration implies the Bible is not only a collection of sixty-six distinct books but also is, in a very real sense, *one* book, the Word of God. God superintended the human authors so that they wrote just what he intended them to say.⁹⁵ Therefore, any pursuit of the intended meaning of the author must consider not only the human author in his historical setting but also God, the divine author, in the canonical setting that he has provided. Phillip Barton Payne notes,

It is the written text, the *graphe*, which the Scriptures claim to be God-breathed (1 Tim 3:16). Throughout the teaching of Jesus there is recognition of the divine origin and authority of the written Scriptures, but he never cites as authority the human author's intention. Ultimately all argument about meaning or the author's intention must be rooted in the text if it is to be objective.⁹⁶

Scriptures when he writes, "To think of eschatology is to think of the messianic task. Biblical messianism and eschatology are inseparable. The seed of the woman will determine the full dimensions of the restored fellowship between the sovereign Lord and his viceregents. It will determine the future of mankind's status, position, and function in the cosmos, and because of that, a future for the cosmos as well."

⁹⁴David Peterson, *Christ and His People in the Book of Isaiah* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity, 2003), 12. Peterson writes, "As disciples of Christ, following his lead, we should be constantly looking for ways in which the Old Testament testifies to him. The New Testament shows how the earliest Christians explored the Christological significance of a great range of Old Testament texts. We are encouraged by their example to interpret the Old Testament in light of its fulfillment, in a way that leads people to Jesus as Savior and Lord."

⁹⁵This is not to suggest that the human authors of Scripture were mere machines or amanuenses in the process. The Holy Spirit did not destroy their personality or individuality as they wrote to particular people in particular places and situations, but rather worked through them, such that "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet 1:21). What they wrote is aptly described as "God-breathed" (2 Tim 3:16).

⁹⁶Phillip Barton Payne, "The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with Human Author's Intention," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 79. In the footnote, Payne lists forty-three references in the gospels where Jesus refers to the written Scriptures by declaring "It is written," "the Scriptures," "God's Word," or

And Peter F. Jensen explains, regarding the canonical unity of the Bible,

This arises, of course, from the belief that the God who never lies speaks self-consistently and without contradiction, and that he is in a direct sense the author of the Scripture. Unity has been, then, a key interpretative principle. Bible-reading presupposes one divine mind behind the text, and the basic strategy is to compare one part with another.⁹⁷

The inherent divine, organic unity of the Bible demands that faithful interpreters of the Scriptures recognize the theological coherence of the entire canon.⁹⁸

This recognition will lead to an acknowledgement that later revelation will often help the interpreter to understand the fuller meaning of an earlier text. Such a view has traditionally been called *sensus plenior*.⁹⁹ For the purpose of this dissertation we will use the phrase *canonical sensus plenior*, which focuses on the role of Christocentric canonical development and context in recognizing fuller meaning. Bruce Waltke has a

“God commanded.” See also Darrell L. Bock: “The reason this writer rejects a ‘total’ identification between the divine intent and the human author’s intent is that in certain psalms, as well as in other Old Testament passages, theological revelation had not yet developed to the point where the full thrust of God’s intention was capable of being understood by the human author” (“Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New,” *Bib Sac* 142 [1985]: 307).

⁹⁷Peter F. Jensen, *The Revelation of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 183. Leland Ryken explains the unity of the Bible this way: “I would ask you to picture the pages of a Bible with cross-references listed in the margin. I would note first that the Bible is the only book I know where this format regularly appears. Even after we have eliminated the somewhat arbitrary listing of passages that express similar ideas or simply use identical words, we are left with an anthology of diverse writings that are unified by an interlocking and unified system of theological ideas, images, and motifs. Together the diverse elements make up a single composite story and worldview known as salvation history” (*The Word of God in English: Criteria for Excellence in Bible Translation* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002], 149).

⁹⁸Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 12. Bartholomew and Goheen remind us that “the Bible narrates the story of God’s journey on that long road of redemption. It is a unified and progressively unfolding drama of God’s action in history for the salvation of the whole world. The Bible is not a mere jumble of history, poetry, lessons in morality and theology, comforting promises, guiding principles and commands; instead, it is fundamentally coherent. Every part of the Bible—each event, book, character, command, prophecy, and poem—must be understood in the context of *one* story line. Many of us have read the Bible as if it were merely a mosaic of little bits—theological bits, moral bits, historical-critical bits, sermon bits, devotional bits. But when we read the Bible in such a fragmented way, we ignore its divine author’s intention to shape our lives through its story.”

⁹⁹This dissertation defines *sensus plenior* as a fuller meaning intended by God, ascertained by understanding the meaning of the text in light of the Scriptures Christocentric canonical context. Such a fuller meaning would not have been evident to the original human author but represents the real meaning of the text. Some definitions of *sensus plenior* would be more aptly described as a “mystical sense” because instead of a fuller sense they sever the text from its historical meaning.

similar view, which he refers to as a canonical process approach. He describes it as

the recognition that the text's intention became deeper and clearer as the parameters of the canon were expanded. Just as redemption itself has a progressive history, so also older texts in the canon underwent a correlative progressive perception of meaning as they became part of a growing canonical literature.¹⁰⁰

Along these lines, David S. Dockery writes,

We must affirm the real possibility that the entire biblical text in its canonical context contains a theological meaning that is not unlike what has traditionally been called *sensus plenior*. The term indicates a fuller meaning in the Scripture than what was possibly intended or known by the original human author. The more significant the text, the more this is the case. Because of the canonical shape and divine nature of the biblical text, a passage may have a surplus of meaning or a full depth of meaning, which by its very nature can never be exhausted. It is with humility that we approach the text, recognizing that the meaning of a text may actually exceed the conscious intention of the original authors or the understanding of the original readers.¹⁰¹

Canonical *sensus plenior* demands that, while affirming the human authorship of the text and stressing the importance of seeking the original intended meaning of the human author, we must also stress that, ultimately, the biblical text itself is the locus of meaning. The interpreter must acknowledge that every text resides in a God-given canonical context that must be taken into account for any interpretation to be adequate. This is the case because there is a theological shape to the Bible as a whole.¹⁰² William VanGemen provides a helpful analogy of the relationship between a given text and its canonical context:

¹⁰⁰Bruce A. Waltke, "A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms," in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg*, ed. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 7. Waltke expresses his indebtedness to Brevard S. Childs' canonical approach, as do I; but, like me, Waltke distances himself from Childs because of his inadequate view of biblical inspiration. For an excellent analysis from an evangelical perspective of the strengths and weaknesses of Childs's approach, see, Carl F. H. Henry, "Canonical Theology: An Evangelical Appraisal," *The Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 8 (Autumn 1990): 76-108. Henry writes, "The weakest link in Childs' canonical proposal lies in its nebulous views of divine revelation and inspiration" (108).

¹⁰¹Dockery, *Christian Scripture*, 160.

¹⁰²This is certainly not a novel approach to the interpretation of Scripture. Consider the following in *The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*: "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly" (*The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, Carlisle, PA: Grace Baptist Church, n.d.), 11.

Interpretation not only involves the analysis of the text but also includes a synthesis, or integration of the text within its literary setting, the canonical situation (i.e., the Word of God as addressed to God's people in a particular historical context and received as canon), and redemptive-historical developments. The interpretation of a text is like a snapshot, whereas the hermeneutic of redemptive-history may be likened to a movie. The latter relates the individual pictures to each other and continues to alter the perceived relationships so as to permit the Bible to tell its own story of God's redemptive involvement in the history of Israel and the church.¹⁰³

It is precisely a consideration of the canonical context that will drive the interpreter to understand every text in light of Jesus Christ. Jesus himself commends the application of this sort of interpretive canonical *sensus plenior* when he declares to the Jewish crowds who desired to kill him, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me" (John 5:18, 39). The men to whom Jesus was speaking were diligent students who painstakingly explored Scripture; but, as D. A. Carson contends, "Jesus insists that there is nothing intrinsically life-giving about studying the Scriptures, if one fails to discern their true content and purpose."¹⁰⁴ His words called them to reexamine the Scripture in light of the revelation of God that has been manifested in his appearing (John 1:14, 18). He holds himself up as the key to understanding the Scripture (John 5:46). As Carson says,

These are the Scriptures, Jesus says, that testify about me. . . . What is at stake is a comprehensive hermeneutical key. By predictive prophecy, by type, by revelatory event and by anticipatory statute, what we call the Old Testament is understood to point to Christ, his ministry, his teaching, his death and resurrection. . . . Like John the Baptist (vv. 33-35), the Scriptures, rightly understood, point away from themselves to Jesus. If therefore some of the Jews refuse to come to Jesus for life, that refusal constitutes evidence that they are not reading their Scriptures as they are meant to be read.¹⁰⁵

In his influential *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, Kaiser devotes a chapter to contextual analysis.¹⁰⁶ In this section, Kaiser praises Childs for calling the interpreter to

¹⁰³Willem VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1988), 38.

¹⁰⁴Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 263.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 263-64.

¹⁰⁶Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 69-85.

focus on the biblical canon in final form.¹⁰⁷ But Kaiser also criticizes Childs and others for arguing that the whole canon should be used as the broadest context for every passage in biblical interpretation:

But in our chapter in theological analysis we will argue that the Church at large (since the time of the Reformers especially) is in error when she uses the analogy of faith (*analogia fidei*) as an exegetical device for extricating meaning from or importing meaning to texts that appeared earlier than the passage where the teaching is set forth most clearly or perhaps even for the first time. It is a mark of eisegesis, not exegesis, to borrow freight that appears chronologically later in the text and to transport it back and unload it on an earlier passage simply because both or all of the passages involved share the same canon . . . There is one place where canonical concern must be introduced, however. *After* we have finished our exegetical work . . . canonical context must only appear as part of our summation and not as part of our exegesis.¹⁰⁸

Kaiser is not justified in suggesting that using the analogy of faith in interpretation inexorably leads to eisegesis. His assertion amounts to a rejection of apostolic procedure. Exegesis itself requires canonical consideration; it is not simply a part of post-exegetical application. The fuller sense discerned from canonical *sensus plenior* is the fruit of exegesis and represents the correct interpretation of an original author's text.¹⁰⁹

For the interpreter and the preacher, Kaiser's analogy of antecedent Scripture demands the impossible, namely, that the reader should interpret a chronologically prior text as if he were ignorant of the rest of the narrative. Kaiser asks, "what is it that the whole or unity of Scripture teaches that is not also in the individual books or in the

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 80, 81.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 82, 83. For Kaiser, canonical synthesis seems to provide the interpreter with only the proper application of the passage or passages and not the meaning. But can exegesis stop short of theological analysis and integration? Why divide canonical contextual analysis from exegesis? This seems to be an odd position since Kaiser considers others forms of contextual analysis a part of the exegetical process.

¹⁰⁹It is important to note that the recognition of a fuller sense in a given text, discerned in light of canonical context, does not represent an arbitrary or dehistoricized invention of the interpreter. The appropriate use of canonical *sensus plenior* rules out anachronistic or allegorical interpretations in favor of recognition of intrinsic canonical connections and eschatological realization. The fuller meaning of a text ascertained in light of the canonical whole of redemptive revelation must not ignore the place and significance of the text in its particular location in redemptive history.

grammar and syntax of individual passages?”¹¹⁰ The answer to Kaiser’s question is clear: it is the divine author’s ultimate intention in the totality of his canonical revelation.

The Theological Center of Scripture

Among contemporary scholars, there is great reluctance to identify a theological center in Scripture.¹¹¹ Viewed charitably, one might say that this results from the fear of forcing one’s own philosophical grid onto the text. More likely, one might conclude with Graeme Goldsworthy that this is “largely born of the empiricist approach, which even some evangelicals have come to accept.”¹¹² But, as Carl F. H. Henry states, “The very fact of disclosure by the one living God assures the comprehensive unity of divine revelation.”¹¹³ This comprehensive biblical unity is a unity of divine thought and message and is not constituted simply by canonicity. The diversity of Scripture is ultimately unified through divine authorship.¹¹⁴

Graeme Goldsworthy has argued that finding a central unifying theological center of the biblical canon is possible and “that the kingdom of God is the controlling theme” of biblical theology.¹¹⁵ He contends,

¹¹⁰Ibid., 109.

¹¹¹Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 22-25. See also Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 51. Both Kaiser and Goldsworthy argue for a theological center but point out contemporary scholarly reluctance to do so. Also James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 295. Barr pointedly writes, “The idea of a theological ‘centre’ is an easy target for mockery, and in much Christian biblical theology it is regarded with skepticism.”

¹¹²Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 51.

¹¹³Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority* (Waco, TX : Word, 1976), 2:69.

¹¹⁴Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 51. Goldsworthy writes, “As I stated earlier, the unity of the Bible is a matter of theological conviction and faith because the testimony of Jesus and the nature of the Gospel. The unity of the Bible is not based on the fact that it is an anthology of religious writings, but in the fact that it is the one word of God about salvation through Christ.”

¹¹⁵Ibid., 51. See also “Is Biblical Theology Viable?” 44 and idem, “Kingdom of God,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 620.

It is the focus of both creation and redemption: God's plan of redemption is to bring in a new creation. The entire biblical story, despite its great diversity of forms and foci, is consistent in its emphasis on the reign of God over his people in the environment he creates for them. The kingdom depicted in Eden is lost to humankind at the beginning of the biblical account. The history of redemption begins immediately after the kingdom is lost, and tells of the way the kingdom of God will finally be established as a new people of God in fellowship with him in a new Eden, a new Jerusalem, a new heaven and a new earth.¹¹⁶

Willem VanGemeran has also concluded that one can deduce a central theme in the canon. For VanGemeran, this is simply Jesus Christ:

The center of the Bible is the incarnate and glorified Christ, by whom all things will be renewed. All the acts of God, all the revelation of his promises and covenants, all the progression of his kingdom, and all the benefits of salvation are in Christ.

All the acts and blessings of God in any age are thus based on the death of the Christ in anticipation of the new age. . . . This message is considered to be Christological in the sense that the whole of the Bible (both Old and New Testament) focuses on Jesus the Messiah, who will restore all things to the Godhead.¹¹⁷

The approaches of Goldsworthy and VanGemeran are correct as far as they go. The theme of the kingdom of God is a good starting point for thinking about the theological center of Scripture. Nevertheless, it is inadequate, not because of what it says but because of what it does not say. The phrase itself lacks eschatological orientation grounded in the concept of the kingdom of Christ.¹¹⁸ What unifies the entire biblical canon is not a static notion of the kingdom as such but an eschatological realization that the kingdom of God was inaugurated in Christ and will be consummated in him.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶Goldsworthy, "Kingdom of God," 620. He defines the kingdom of God as "God's people in God's place under God's rule" (*Gospel and Kingdom: A Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament*, 55).

¹¹⁷VanGemeran, *The Progress of Redemption*, 27, 32

¹¹⁸George Eldon Ladd, *Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 97. Ladd's definition of the kingdom demands an Christological focus that he never fully developed. He writes, "Thus the kingdom is seen to be a single concept, the rule of God, which manifests itself in a progressive way and in more than one realm. It is *God's saving will in action* [emphasis original]."

¹¹⁹Robert I. Vasholz points to the progressive nature of kingdom theology when he writes, "It is the position of this work that the Old Testament features of the kingdom find definitive and authoritative explanation in the New Testament. It was the same Spirit who authored the Old Testament that authored the New. The Old Testament laid the foundation for the on-going of God's kingdom that found radically new, far-reaching expressions and implications for its universal mission. It does injury to any theological

Goldsworthy notes that the kingdom is never abstract and never static.¹²⁰ Employing the term *kingdom of Christ* clarifies on both of these fronts.

Likewise, saying that Jesus Christ is the central theme of the Bible is fully accurate only when it is understood in the context of what Jesus has done and will do.¹²¹ As D. A. Carson has observed, “One might say that the center of NT theology is Jesus Christ, but although at one level that is saying everything at another level it is saying almost nothing.”¹²² From the beginning to the end, the Scripture speaks about the kingdom, but one can fully understand the kingdom only in light of Christ. Genesis 3:15 introduces kingdom conflict from the beginning, immediately countering with the promise of the seed of woman. In the end (Rev 11:15), loud voices declare, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.”

Thus, this dissertation proposes a combination of the designations suggested by Goldsworthy and VanGemen: the kingdom of God in Christ—or, more simply—the

approach to scripture not to hold that the New Testament is the final *interpretive* word on the meaning of the Old Testament and that it is not improper to read New Testament commentary/meaning into Old Testament scripture just as the Apostles did,” (*Pillars of the Kingdom: Five Features of the Kingdom of God Progressively Revealed in the Old Testament* [Lanham, MD: University Press, 1997], ix).

¹²⁰Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 51-52.

¹²¹The critique here of VanGemen’s use of the simple designation “Jesus Christ” for the central, unifying, theological center of Scripture is similar to the critique Goldsworthy offers against simply suggesting the designation “God” for the central, unifying, theological center. Goldsworthy writes, “To propose God is the controlling theme is bland because “God” is a three-letter word without specific content. God is revealed through his saving work and words” (*Preaching the Whole Bible*, 51). In fairness to both of these scholars and authors it must be stated that when Goldsworthy explains his understanding of the “kingdom of God” as the controlling theological theme of Scripture, a focus on Jesus Christ is not neglected, and when VanGemen explains what he means by “Jesus Christ” being the central theological center of Scripture, progressive eschatological kingdom purposes are not neglected. It also should be noted that to confess Jesus as the “Christ” implies the presence of the kingdom because the mission of the Messiah was to bring the kingdom to men. My concern is that neither designation as a *title* or as a *heading* for the central unifying theological center of Scripture is as clarifying as the designation kingdom of Christ.

¹²²D. A. Carson, “New Testament Theology,” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 810.

kingdom of Christ.¹²³ The term retains the kingdom focus that Goldsworthy notes “is all-encompassing in the sense that, while there is a reality outside of the kingdom, all reality is understood in relationship to the kingdom”; but it does not fail to note the progression of redemptive history toward the kingship of Christ, heir to the throne of David, the one in whom “all the promises of God find their yes” (2 Sam 7:12-13, 2 Cor 1:20).¹²⁴ The kingdom of Christ is not a novel designation (John 18:36-37, Col 1:13, Eph 5:5, 2 Pet 1:11, Rev 11:15). The Old Testament points to the reign of the messianic king, and the message of the eschatological kingdom of Christ is woven into the New Testament.¹²⁵

George Eldon Ladd references this Christological understanding of the kingdom when he writes,

The Kingdom of God is at the same time the Kingdom of Christ (Eph. 5:5); for the Kingdom of God, the redemptive reign of God, is manifested among men through the person of Christ, and it is Christ who must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet (1 Cor. 15:25).¹²⁶

All other proposed centers, such as kingdom, covenant, promise, lordship, salvation, and righteousness converge in the kingdom of Christ. To put it another way, every road in the Bible leads to the kingdom of Christ. Some roads are narrow; the path is hard to see; and it is difficult even to stay on the road. Others are expressways with the

¹²³For a contemporary theologian who consistently uses this phrasing, see Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004). For an author of an earlier generation who employs this terminology, see Abraham Booth, *An Essay on the Kingdom of Christ* (Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 1987). This work was originally published in 1788.

¹²⁴Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 52.

¹²⁵James P. Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Hanford, CA: den Dulk Christian Foundation, 1887), 271. Boyce writes, “Thus did the Old Testament testify of Jesus the Christ, the Saviour of men. As the seed of the woman, he has utterly destroyed the power of the serpent, the great enemy of man. In him the day has come which Abraham foresaw and was glad. In him the Lion of Judah, the seed of David, appears as the King of kings, the Lord of lords, whose reign is universal, not over those living on earth only at any one time, but over all the living and the dead of this world, and indeed of the whole universe. His untold sufferings have secured the happiness of his people and their devotion to God. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.”

¹²⁶George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 115.

kingdom of Christ always in the skyline. But every road ends there. Therefore, every sermon must be preached with the kingdom of Christ in sight. Bryan Chapell writes,

The written word, the inscripturated *Logos*, is not just the message *about* Christ; it is also the ministry *of* Christ. He is present and active in the truth of His Word. The reason that he should be seen on every page is that He inhabits every line. He is the incarnate Word who comes to us in the inspired Word. To preach some portion of the Word without mention of Him would be like speaking of one of my limbs as though it had nothing to do with my body. The written Word that we explain is the living Word that we proclaim. They are conceptually able to be separated, but they function as one. Christ comes to us and is present to us in the preaching that is true to His Word. . . . The goal of expository preaching that has a future is to preach Him-regularly, pervasively, truly-from all the Scriptures. He is there.¹²⁷

A proper biblical-theological foundation is vital for any preacher who desires to preach to contemporary hearers in a manner that is consistent with the biblical message. Defined etymologically, theology is a word (λόγος) about God (θεός). The Bible is the written Word of God. Jesus is the definitive Word of God. All preaching, for better or worse, is theological because it is a word about God. Faithful preaching in every era centers on the definitive Word of God, Jesus, as revealed in the authoritative written Word of God, the Scripture. The diverse genres and epochs of the biblical witness cohere around the story of the kingdom of Christ. The preacher is constantly standing before the people and forging a link between theology and the everyday life of his hearers. In the next chapter, our discussion moves from biblical-theological foundations to developing a Christocentric, kingdom-focused model of expository preaching. The τέλος is not biblical-theological formulation but proclamation.

¹²⁷Bryan Chapell, "Future Hopes for Expository Preaching," *Preaching*, November-December 2004, 42.

CHAPTER 3

DEVELOPING A CHRISTOCENTRIC, KINGDOM-FOCUSED MODEL OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

Walter Kaiser has referred to the Old Testament as the master problem of theology because of the hermeneutical challenges and subsequent trickle-down implications for faith and practice. He also notes that the contemporary church suffers a dearth of Old Testament preaching.¹ Too frequently, contemporary preachers ignore the Old Testament, occasionally dip into it for moral or ethical teaching, or simply use it as a launching pad for teaching on some biblical theme or church promotion.² There seems to be a general reluctance about preaching from the Old Testament consistently and expositively.³ Alec Motyer humorously speculates concerning Jesus' likely response to inquiries as to why he kept preaching and teaching from the OT:

¹Walter C. Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 29-38. He writes, "Instead of receiving the Old Testament with gratitude as a gift from God, all too many in Christ's church view it as an albatross around the necks of contemporary Christians. They struggle with questions like these: What is the significance of the Old Testament for us today? Why should believers even bother with the Old Testament now that we have the New Testament? Aren't there a lot of problems in using a book like the Old Testament, especially when so much of it is no longer in force and normative for the church? Questions such as these ultimately raise the issue of the Old Testament as a major problem, if not the master problem of theology" (29).

²Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 16-25. Greidanus lists four reasons for lack of preaching from the Old Testament: the use of lectionaries, critical Old Testament scholarship, rejection of the Old Testament, and difficulties in preaching from the Old Testament (historical-cultural difficulties, theological difficulties, ethical difficulties, and practical difficulties).

³John F. MacArthur Jr., "Frequently Asked Questions about Expository Preaching," in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, ed. John MacArthur Jr. (Dallas: Word, 1992), 341. MacArthur attempts to provide theological support for preaching primarily the New Testament in his ministry when he writes, "Paul said he was a minister of the new covenant. Since he was responsible to preach the new covenant, I think it is compelling for us to herald the new covenant, too. What we find then is that we must primarily preach Christ and herald the new covenant, which is the New Testament literature, the mystery now unfolded that was hidden in the past." While MacArthur is certainly one of the finest expositors of this generation his reasoning here fails to consider that properly preached sermons from the Old Testament take

It is most likely that he would have said, ‘The Old what?’ And if we had pressed on with our question he would in the end have replied, ‘Oh, I see, you mean the Scriptures, the Word of God. Why call it by such an odd name?’ In this sense there is no such thing as ‘the Old Testament.’ Therefore, in asking me to speak about *preaching from the Old Testament* you have given me a non-subject. If you ask, ‘How does one preach from the Old Testament?’ the answer is, ‘How does one preach from the New Testament?’ There is no special mystique or approach to preaching that has to descend on preachers when the Lord leads them to minister from the Old rather than from the New.⁴

While Motyer overstates his case, he is correct when he alludes to every preacher’s responsibility to preach the entire Bible properly, Old or New Testament. We must acknowledge the problem, or perhaps better stated, the *challenge* of preaching the entire Bible. Although preaching from the New Testament may be more frequent in contemporary pulpits, greater frequency does not equate to greater faithfulness. Many of the problems that mark contemporary Old Testament preaching are also found in preaching of the New Testament. But contemporary preachers maintain a false security because they are more familiar with the contents of the New Testament. As Goldsworthy says, “We recognize the existence of elements of discontinuity between us and the Old Testament, but we do not so readily recognize those that exist between us and the New Testament.”⁵

Sermons preached from New Testament texts that fail to exposit the text in light of Christ and redemptive history are not preaching Christ even if they frequently mention him. Thus, preachers deliver moralistic, atomistic, therapeutic sermons from the New Testament, even from the Gospel narratives, that are not Christocentric at all. Simply mentioning Christ or preaching about Christ is not preaching Christ. Bryan Chapell warns,

into account the unity of Scripture and the full drama of redemption and its realization in Jesus of Nazareth, who is the Christ, the mediator of the new covenant.

⁴Alec Motyer, “Preaching from the Old Testament,” in *Preaching the Living Word: Addresses from the Evangelical Ministry Assembly*, ed. David Jackman (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 1999), 99.

⁵Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), xiv.

However well intended and biblically rooted may be a sermon's instruction, if the message does not incorporate the motivation and enablement inherent in a proper apprehension of the work of Christ, the preacher proclaims mere Pharisaism. Preaching that is faithful to the whole of Scripture not only establishes God's requirements, but also highlights the redemptive truths that make holiness possible.⁶

It is one thing, however, to point out the biblical and theological foundations for a Christocentric model of expository preaching and another, to provide a plan that will enable the preacher to go from study to pulpit with a biblically faithful sermon, one that displays a correct understanding of Christ and his kingdom. But such a model is a necessity. As John Piper writes, "All the Scriptures are about Jesus Christ, even when there is no explicit prediction. That is, there is a fullness of implication in all Scriptures that points to Christ and is satisfied only when he has come and done his work."⁷ Therefore, expository preaching reaches its full expression only when every text is proclaimed in light of Christ and eschatological fulfillment in him.⁸ In Colossians 1:18, Paul declares that Jesus is Lord of the church so that "in everything he might be preeminent." The pulpit should be the chief place where his preeminence is evident. This chapter will offer an approach to exposition that is Christocentric and kingdom-focused, explicitly giving Jesus preeminence in preaching.⁹

⁶Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 12.

⁷John Piper, "How Christ Fulfilled and Ended the Old Testament Regime," *Desiring God Ministries* [on-line]; accessed 27 August 2011; available from <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/taste-see-articles/how-christ-fulfilled-and-ended-the-old-testament-regime>; Internet. For an examination of John Piper's expository preaching for Christ-centeredness, see Tony Merida, "The Christocentric Emphasis in John Piper's Preaching" (Ph.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006).

⁸For an excellent argument that a commitment to inerrancy demands the use of Christ-centered biblical theology for preaching, see Thomas R. Schreiner, "Preaching and Biblical Theology," *SBJT* 10, no. 2 (2006): 20-29.

⁹Bryan Chapell, "The Future of Expository Preaching," *Presbyterion* 30, vol. 2 (Fall 2004): 80. Chapell exhorts, "The goal of expository preaching that has a future is to preach him—regularly, pervasively, truly—from all the Scriptures, He is there."

The Apostolic Model

Where should one seek a model of faithful, biblical preaching? Should we only look to post-canonical heroes of the pulpit such as Chrysostom, Calvin, Whitfield, Wesley, Spurgeon, and Lloyd-Jones? Should not modern preachers look upon the ancient, divinely inspired apostolic sermons recorded in Scripture for instruction? This chapter will argue that apostolic sermons serve as valuable models and teach enduring principles to all who are called to the task of Christian preaching.¹⁰ All preaching, in every age, must be evaluated in light of these apostolic sermons and not the apostolic sermons by contemporary preaching. Roger Wagner is correct on this point:

The sermons of the apostles, of which there are so many fine examples in Acts (they make up one-fifth of the book), are not, therefore, incidental additions to the account, chosen arbitrarily for the purposes of narrative ‘color’. These sermons are cited to emphasize the central role preaching played in the witness of the apostles to Christ. . . . As students of preaching we note that these sermons are instructive not only for *what* is said, but for *how* that content is arranged, and the method by which it is presented. A careful examination of these sermons, therefore, is vital for the training of today’s preachers in the ‘art’ of biblical preaching.¹¹

The unique historical, theological, and transitional nature of the book of Acts and of apostolic preaching is evident, but this does not reduce the value of these sermons as models. In fact, the direct revelatory activity of the Spirit in these sermons makes them invaluable: they represent the form, content, and style of sermon presentation that the Spirit intended—on those occasions at the very least. Again, Wagner: “The sermons in Acts, therefore, are vital for study by today’s preachers, because they represent how God

¹⁰John A. Broadus, *Lectures on the History of Preaching* (Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2004), 56. Though Broadus does not spend much time discussing apostolic preaching he writes, “I have time for but a few words as to the preaching of the Apostles. I regret this, because we may find in their discourses a greater number of practical lessons as to preaching, than in other parts of Scripture. But it is also *easier* to find those lessons here than elsewhere, and one who is interested in the matter will have comparatively little need of help.” For an excellent contemporary defense of the apostles as a model for contemporary preachers, see Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007).

¹¹Roger Wagner, *Tongues Aflame: Learning to Preach from the Apostles* (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2004), 18. Nor should the apostolic sermons in the book of Hebrews be neglected by contemporary preachers for instruction in the task of proclamation. R. T. France has persuasively argued that the writer of Hebrews offers seven extended, Christ-centered, biblical expository sermons in the letter (“The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 47 [1996]: 245-76).

himself delivered his gospel in the situations recorded in Acts.”¹² Though contemporary preachers are not apostles receiving direct revelation from the Spirit of God, we are called to preach with no less authority and passion than the apostles because we too preach the authoritative, inerrant, Spirit-given Word of Christ (2 Pet 1:21; Col 3:16).¹³ Today’s preachers stand with the apostles in proclaiming the Word of God by the power of the Spirit of Christ uniquely to our generation.¹⁴ Thus, we must recognize that there is a sense in which we can and must preach like the apostles.

John the Baptist’s voice thunders in the biblical narrative, shattering the prophetic silence of centuries. He came, “preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (Matt 3:1-2). Charles H. H. Scobie asserts, “John’s ministry was essentially a preaching one. . . . The primacy of preaching was thus one of the most marked features of John’s ministry.”¹⁵ John the Baptist was a herald of the king, the coming one (Matt 11:3, Mark 1:7, Luke 3:16). But John did not present his messianic message *ex nihilo*. As Donald S. K. Palmer writes, “The New Testament message of the kingdom of God cannot be understood in isolation from its Old Testament background.”¹⁶ The Old Testament reveals the general kingship of God. He is king of the

¹²Wagner, *Tongues Aflame*, 29.

¹³Steve Bond, in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England, rev. ed. (Nashville: Holman, 2003), s.v. “Apostle.” Bond defines the twelve apostles as those “whom Jesus chose to train for the task of carrying His message to the world. Following His resurrection, Jesus commissioned them for this task. These men had been with Jesus from the beginning of His ministry and were witnesses to His resurrection. Paul was an apostle in this sense because he had seen the risen Christ.” The prophets and the twelve apostles had a foundational role in the church. Their role was a temporary one since the foundation of the church has already been laid with “Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (Eph 2:20).

¹⁴H. D. McDonald, “Apostolic Preaching,” *Christianity Today*, February 8, 1980, 163-64.

¹⁵Charles H. H. Scobie, *John the Baptist* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), 209-10.

¹⁶Donald S. K. Palmer, *The Kingdom of God* (Hertfordshire, UK: Evangelical Press, 1986), 17. While it is true that the phrase “kingdom of God” does not occur in the Old Testament it is equally true that the theological concept is there. See also Robert I. Vasholz, *Pillars of the Kingdom: Five Features of the Kingdom of God Progressively Revealed in the Old Testament* (Lanham, MD: University Press, 1997).

universe (2 Kgs 19:15, 1 Chron 29:11-12, Ps 33:13) who established his kingdom in Eden with man as his vice-regent over the entire created order (Ps 8:4-8). After Adam's fall into sin, choosing Satan's kingdom over God's (Gen 3:6-7), God's rule manifests in his redemptive activity, reclaiming the cosmos (Is 65:17, 66:22) through his Messiah, the eschatological man, who makes war with Satan (Gen 3:15) and brings salvation by his rule (Is 11:5-10, 59:15-19; Heb 2:9).¹⁷

George Eldon Ladd reminds his readers that most in John's day had misrepresented the Old Testament promise of a messianic king; they understood the messiah primarily as the one who would "strike a blow against Rome," which meant, for them, striking a blow for the kingdom of God.¹⁸ It was in this context that John the Baptist claimed the words of Isaiah for his life and ministry, announcing that the kingdom of God had arrived in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, "the Lamb of God," who was the agent of eschatological salvation and judgment (Isa 40:3; Matt 3:3, 11-12; Mark 1:23; Luke 3:4-6, 16-17; John 1:29, 36).¹⁹

John the Baptist's preaching of the arrival of the kingdom of God attracted attention and crowds (Matt 14:5; Mark 1:5, 11:32). Mark informs us that Jesus also "came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1:14-15). The decisive time for God's action of invading this present evil age with the glory of the age

¹⁷Dan G. McCartney, "Ecce Homo: The Coming of the Kingdom as the Restoration of Human Viceregency," *WTJ* 56 (1994): 1-21. McCartney offers an insightful and compelling essay arguing that the kingdom arrived with Jesus in the sense that "Jesus received the kingdom as a *human*" and the arrival of his reign marked "the *reinstatement of the originally intended divine order for earth, with man properly situated as God's viceregent*" (2). See also Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 203-04.

¹⁸George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1974), 32.

¹⁹John the Baptist provided no eschatological timetable for the promised Messianic salvation and judgment and probably thought of them as taking place simultaneously.

to come was at hand—in the person of the seed born of woman, God’s own son, the anointed, incarnate, messianic king (Matt 12:28, Heb 6:5).

While John the Baptist was imprisoned, he was apparently perplexed because Jesus did not bring in the kingdom as he expected (Isa 11, Dan 7). He therefore sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus, “Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?” (Matt 11:3). Jesus responded by telling John’s disciples that his healings, miracles, exorcisms, and preaching revealed that he was inaugurating the βασιλειαν as the Spirit-anointed Messiah by fulfilling the expectations of the prophet Isaiah (Isa 29:18-19, 35:5-6, 61:1; Matt 11:5-6). These signs testified to the power and presence of the kingdom.²⁰ They were windows through which the promise of God’s kingly rule and eschatological consummation could be seen. The kingdom of God was not yet consummated, but it was at hand in Jesus of Nazareth just as John had preached. And, according to Jesus, membership in his kingdom was of supreme importance (Matt 11:11).²¹

The same words that had been on the lips of John the Baptist were then on the lips of Jesus as he “began to preach and say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 4:17). Jesus was the preacher *par excellence*, and his message, the message of his kingdom, was urgent. Luke records the Galilean crowds pleading with Jesus to stay and continue his ministry of healing and exorcism, to which he responds, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose” (Luke 4:43). Jesus makes clear that preaching is a preeminent necessity because it was the ministry to which he was ordained; and, further, his message was the presence of the kingdom in his own person.²² Palmer notes,

²⁰Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 74. Ladd writes that these miraculous signs “were pledges of the life of the eschatological Kingdom that will finally mean immortality for the body. The Kingdom of God is concerned not only with people’s souls but with the salvation of the whole person.”

²¹Palmer, *The Kingdom of God*, 68-69. Palmer argues that the terms “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven” (exclusively used in Matthew’s gospel) are “synonymous in character.”

²²Cleon L. Rodgers Jr. and Cleon L. Rodgers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the*

Jesus embodied the kingdom in its presence and power—he was the *autobasilea*. His word was the word of the kingdom and as he spoke, he did so with the authority of one who knew that the authority of God was present in his own person. The *word* (i.e. the preaching of the gospel) was even more important than the *signs*.²³

It is through the preaching ministry of Jesus that the inaugurated eschatological tension of the kingdom begins to come into focus. The teaching of Jesus presupposes an overlap of the ages in his ministry in which the eschatological kingdom is already present in this age but still awaits consummation in the age to come.²⁴ George Eldon Ladd has called this “the presence of the future.”²⁵ Ladd defines the kingdom as “the rule of God, which manifests itself in a progressive way and in more than one realm.” Further, he contends that “It is *God’s saving will in action*” and concludes that the kingdom cannot be understood apart from the centrality of Christ, who came into the world with the power to bind and plunder the kingdom of Satan (Matt 12:22-29; Luke 11:14-22).²⁶ Jesus’ preaching revealed an inaugurated eschatology that centered on him. Jesus’ preaching of the kingdom was in continuity with the kingdom emphasis of the Old Testament; but what made his preaching unique was his contention that the kingdom was

Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 118. Rodgers and Rodgers note that in Luke 4:43, *dei/* “gives a logical necessity” and that *avpesta, lhn* means “to send as an official representative.” Jesus was the official representative of the kingdom who had entered the present age by divine imperative.

²³Palmer, *The Kingdom of God*, 71-72.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 43-44. Palmer notes, “Behind Jesus’ teaching therefore, there lies a ‘dualistic structure’ – the present: *now*; the future: *not yet*. However, there also exists a recognized ‘dualistic terminology’. The prophets had seen a dualistic structure in the ‘present order’ and ‘new order’. It was during the intertestamental period, however, that the distinctly technical terminology arose: ‘this age’ and ‘the age to come’. This is reflected in the following statements used by Jesus in his teachings: ‘He shall receive a hundred times as much now in the *present age* . . . and in the *age to come*, eternal life’ (Mark 10:30); ‘the *sons of this age*’ (Luke 16:8 NASV); ‘*the consummation of the age*’ (Matt. 24:3; 28:20).” Therefore we have seen that there is a twofold emphasis in Jesus’ teachings: the *now* and the *not yet* of the kingdom. The age of fulfillment is not just *near*; it is actually *present*. Nevertheless there still remains an apocalyptic consummation.”

²⁵George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

²⁶George Eldon Ladd, *Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 98. Earlier in the volume Ladd summarizes, “The kingdom of God is the sovereign rule of God, manifested in the person and work of Christ, creating a people over whom he reigns, and issuing in a realm or realms in which the power of his reign is realized” (80). Matt 12:22-29 and Luke 11:14-22 are vital texts which link the in-breaking of the kingdom in the person of Jesus with the original promise that God would raise up a seed born of woman who would crush the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15).

being presently fulfilled in him. Herman Ridderbos described Jesus' preaching as "an eschatological blast on the trumpet."²⁷ Russell D. Moore writes,

The *eschaton* then is to be understood as part of the overall goal of the history of the Cosmos—the universal acclaim of Jesus as sovereign over the created order (Phil. 2:9-11) and the glorification of Jesus through the salvation of the cosmos (Rom. 8:29). This is the key insight of inaugurated eschatology—namely, that fact that its central biblical referent is not a golden age within history of the timing of prophetic events, but instead is the One whom God has exalted as “both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36). The “already” and the “not yet” aspects of the Kingdom find their content in the identity and mission of Jesus as Messiah. This correctly locates that hinge of history as resting on the incarnation, life, sacrificial death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus as the harbinger of the “last days” (Heb. 1:2), the “firstborn” of the eschatological resurrection of the righteous (Col. 1:18), and the Kingdom of God in person.²⁸

During Jesus' earthly ministry, he sent his disciples out to follow in his and John the Baptist's footsteps as preachers of the kingdom of God in Christ (Matt 10:1-14, 14:1-14; Mark 6:7-16, 30-34; Luke 9:1-11). When Jesus was about to leave Galilee for the last time, he commissioned seventy disciples to preach the kingdom of God throughout the villages (Luke 10:1-24). When this ragtag band of men returned from their mission, they were filled with joy and said to Jesus, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name!” (Luke 10:17). They comprehended that the powerful eschatological kingdom authority they had experienced was the authority of Jesus, not their own authority. In the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth, the kingdom of God had come near; Satan was already defeated; and his final destruction awaited the end of the age (Luke 10:9, 17:21).

As we have seen thus far, no discussion of the “already / not yet” tension of biblical eschatology that reveals itself with Jesus is complete without a contemplation of the primary role of preaching in the advancement of the kingdom. This focus on the

²⁷Herman N. Ridderbos, *When Time Had Fully Come: Studies in New Testament Theology* (Scarsdale, NY: Westminster, 1957), 14.

²⁸Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 56.

primacy of preaching did not wane after the death and resurrection of the Jesus. It intensified. As discussed in chapter 2, the risen Christ immediately instructed his disciples in Christocentric, kingdom-focused biblical interpretation, which is to say, “speaking about the kingdom of God” (Luke 24:13-49, Acts 1:3).²⁹ During the forty days before his ascension, Jesus taught the disciples that they were to think about the kingdom of God, first and foremost, in terms of a person: himself. The kingdom was only meant to be understood in light of Christ: in him, “the kingdom of God is in your midst” (Luke 17:21).³⁰ As Willem VanGemeran puts it, “Jesus is the kingdom of God!”³¹

Jesus’ discussion about the kingdom of God led the disciples to ask, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). Jesus did not rebuke them. They were longing for the messianic king who would reign over a resurrected Israel marked by the outpouring of the Spirit, to whom all the nations would come (Ezek 37; Is 60; Ps 2, 110; Joel 2). Jesus responds by redirecting their thinking from the restoration of a temporal Jewish theocracy to the task of global evangelization through the power of the Spirit; they were to be his witnesses (those who testify through proclamation—preachers) “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).³² Russell D. Moore writes,

²⁹Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 368. Ladd writes, “Luke records that in the days after Jesus’ resurrection, he continued to teach about the Kingdom of God (1:3). We are undoubtedly to understand this to mean that he was instructing them in the relationship between his proclamation of the Kingdom of God and his death and resurrection.” See also, F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 100.

³⁰Or perhaps Luke 17:21 should be translated “the kingdom of God is within your reach” as G. R. Beasley-Murray suggests (*Jesus and the Kingdom of God* [Exeter: Paternoster, 1983], 102).

³¹Willem VanGemeran, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 397.

³²Colin Brown, ed. *The New International Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), s.v. “witness.” Brown explains that Luke begins to use “witness” to refer to proclaiming Christ. He writes, “This corresponds exactly with the meaning of *martyrion* in Acts 4:33 (‘with great power the apostles gave their testimony’) and takes up that conception of *martys*, witness, which is found for the first time in Lk. 24:48 (i.e. on the border-line between the Gospel and Acts). It is repeated almost immediately in Acts 1:8 in the commission of the risen Lord. For it is the apostles, the disciples, who have been commissioned by Jesus with the proclamation of the message of the kingdom, who are witnesses. . . . From

He was not changing the subject. He is the “Immanuel,” the temple presence of God with the people (Matt. 1:23; John 1:14; 2:19-21). Israel is indeed raised from the dead, but there is only one empty tomb. All who will be raised from death must be raised ‘in Him’ (Rom. 6:3-10). The nations are indeed drawn to Israel, but they are not drawn to a geographic temple but to an Israelite man who, when lifted up, draws all people to Himself (Matt. 2:1-11; John 12:20, 32). Israel is indeed anointed with the messianic Spirit, but only one Israelite receives the Spirit and pours the promise out then upon all who are “in Him.”³³

This brief summary of proclamation concerning the kingdom from Old Testament promise to New Testament fulfillment reveals that what we find in apostolic preaching is the application of what Jesus taught his apostles.³⁴ Richard Longenecker observes, “What these preachers were conscious of, however, was interpreting the Scriptures from a Christocentric perspective, in conformity with the exegetical teaching and example of Jesus, and along christological lines.”³⁵ Their Christocentric, kingdom-focused model of expository preaching was not novel or arbitrary; it was modeled for them and taught to them by the master.

Concerning the Christocentric apostolic proclamation, Gerald Bray notes,

Whereas the Jews continued to explore and extend the law as a means of achieving righteousness, as well as separation from the rest of the world, Christians found themselves forced, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to break down the old barriers and preach God’s free gift of forgiveness in Jesus Christ to all people everywhere. Without Christ, so radical a change of direction would hardly have been

this two things become clear: first, that their way, the way of a witness, is a way of rejection, suffering, and possibly also death (‘Stephen, the faithful witness’, Acts 22:20); second, that it is distinguished not by the later understanding of martyrdom, i.e. of one who bears witness to the point of death, but by the full proclamation of the message of Christ.”

³³Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 119. Moore contends that this Christocentric way of interpreting the fulfillment of Old Testament promises avoids the error of replacement theology on one hand and the error of eschatological dualism on the other. The promises are fulfilled in Israel as represented by the Israelite Jesus and they are applicable to the church “in him.” See also Michael D. Williams, *Far as the Curse is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005), 251-52. Williams writes, “Thus the church does not replace Israel, nor is it simply identical to Israel. Some new historical and redemptive development has forever transformed and redefined the people of God. That development is the incarnation and work of Christ the Messiah. Since Jesus becomes the new covenant representative, himself the true Israel, the people of God are constituted as such in relationship to him.”

³⁴Willem VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 369. VanGemeren writes, “First, the sermons and speeches show that the preaching of the apostles is *in continuity* with the teaching of Jesus.”

³⁵Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 86-87.

conceivable. He not only sent his followers off in a new direction, but changed their whole way of reading the Scriptures. This was apparent immediately, and it is highly significant that it was the nature of their expository preaching which first alerted the Jews to the radical message of both Jesus and his disciples.³⁶

He continues,

From this basic principle we can understand the motivation behind the Christological exposition of the Old Testament which we find in the Gospels and Epistles. It is surely mistaken to link this too closely with rabbinical exegesis or to develop theories as to which texts were interpreted in this way and why they were chosen in preference to others.³⁷

The last verse in the book of Acts explains how the gospel had marched from Jerusalem to Rome through the powerful apostolic preaching of the kingdom of Christ; it states that Paul was “preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered” (Acts 28:31). T. D. Bernard writes, “Evidently on purpose are the two expressions combined in this final summary, in order to show that the preaching of the kingdom and the preaching of Christ are one.”³⁸ The apostles preached the meaning of all Old Testament promises as being fully understood only when they were mediated through Christ and his kingdom.³⁹

When the apostles were faithful to the preaching task Christ had given them, the result was the continuation of the ministry of Christ through them. Luke began Acts by reminding his readers that “the first book [the gospel of Luke] dealt with all that Jesus

³⁶Gerald Bray, *Creeds, Councils and Christ: Did the Early Christians Misrepresent Jesus?* (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 1997), 50.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸T. D. Bernard, *The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1900), 112, quoted in Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 542-43.

³⁹David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 36, 44. Dockery writes, “For the earliest believers, this meant that the living presence of Jesus, through his Spirit, was to be considered a determining factor in all their biblical exegesis and also that the Old Testament was to be interpreted christologically. . . . Jesus became the direct and primary source for the church’s understanding of the Old Testament. The new paradigm developed because the prior paradigm lacked the Christological focus.” See also Michael Horton, “Knowing What You are Looking for in the Bible,” *Modern Reformation*, July/August 1999, 11. Horton contends that the first Christian sermons as recorded in Acts were preached from Old Testament texts and they were “all about Christ, from beginning to end.”

began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1). Thus, the Acts of the Apostles could be described as all that Jesus *continued* to do and teach through his preachers.⁴⁰ Wagner asserts that “the preaching of the apostles in Acts is nothing less than the preaching of the risen Christ himself.”⁴¹ He had personally taught them how and what to preach, and now the Spirit of the risen Christ was preaching through them (2 Cor 5:20, Eph 4:20-21, 1 Thess 2:13).⁴² As Goldsworthy states, “Jesus exercises his kingly power through the scepter of his preached gospel.”⁴³

But the task of preaching the kingdom of Christ did not end with the apostles. Douglas Wilson explains, “The death of the apostles and the closure of the canon of Scripture really occurred at the *dawn* of preaching—not the dusk.”⁴⁴ Every indication in the Scripture is that the apostolic method is not only descriptive but also prescriptive for all preachers, “on who the end of the ages has come,” and must continue until “the end of the age” (Matt 13:49, 28:20; 1 Cor 10:11; 2 Tim 2:1-2, 4:1-2; Heb 1:2).⁴⁵ As John Stott

⁴⁰F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 30.

⁴¹Wagner, *Tongues Aflame*, 22.

⁴²Arturo G. Azurdia III warns preachers that their sermons will lack the power of the Spirit if they do not preach the text in light of Jesus Christ: “I have become convinced that preachers can rightly anticipate the Holy Spirit’s power only when they are resolutely wedded to the Holy Spirit’s purpose. What is His purpose? To glorify Jesus Christ through the instrumentality of the Old and the New Testament scriptures, both of which point to Him.” Arturo G. Azurdia III, *Spirit Empowered Preaching: Involving the Holy Spirit in Your Ministry* (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 1998), 61.

⁴³Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 55.

⁴⁴Douglas Wilson, *Mother Kirk: Essays and Forays in Practical Ecclesiology* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2001), 70. Wilson writes, “Jesus, of course, commissioned His apostles to speak in His name. . . . But He did not do this so that when the last apostle died, His voice would no longer be heard. Rather, the apostles were to ordain faithful men who would continue to preach the Word (1 Tim 2:1-2). This is the point of Paul’s tremendous teaching on this in the book of Romans. The gospel will be preached in true spiritual authority until the end of the world. The authority of true preaching did not diminish after the apostolic era. The ability to write Scripture diminished – indeed, it ceased when the last apostle died. But the death of the apostles and the closure of the canon of Scripture really occurred at the *dawn* of preaching—not the dusk.”

⁴⁵Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), 51. Henry writes, “The apostolic view of the kingdom should be definitive for contemporary evangelicalism. There does not seem to be much apostolic apprehension over kingdom preaching.”

notes, “The Acts of the Apostles have long ago finished. But the acts of the followers of Jesus will continue until the end of the world, and their words will spread to the ends of the earth.”⁴⁶ In the words of Jesus, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt 24:14).⁴⁷

A Contemporary Model

The contemporary world is smitten with technology and technological advances.⁴⁸ Many preachers and churches have likewise trusted in the power of modern technology to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. This confidence in technological power can result in a lack of confidence in preaching; sermons may be minimized to make way for media presentations, which are thought to be more relevant to listeners in our modern world.⁴⁹ But, at its heart, preaching has not changed from the time of the Apostles. It involves the man of God with the Word of God preaching to the people of

⁴⁶John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 405. See also Timothy Ward, *Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 159. Ward writes, “To claim that one’s own human speech about Christ crucified really is *God* speaking, and that the Holy Spirit comes in power through one’s apparently weak speech, seems to run dangerously close to blasphemy. Yet that is clearly the pattern for the extension of the gospel after Pentecost that Christ and the apostles established. Fraught with dangers and temptations though it is, it is simply given to us as our pattern of ministry.”

⁴⁷D. A. Carson states, “So far as the kingdom has been inaugurated in advance of its consummation, so far also is Jesus’ church an outpost in history of the final eschatological community” (*Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin and J. D. Douglas, [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Regency Reference Library, 1984], 370).

⁴⁸See, Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986). Postman offers a penetrating critique of the detrimental effects the age of television has had on rational discourse. See also Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995). Dawn joins Postman in a critique of the influence of visual media on our culture and specifically how it relates to the dumbing down of worship in the church.

⁴⁹Wayne McDill, “Low-Tech Preaching in a High-Tech Age,” WayneMcDill.net [on-line]; accessed 27 August 2011; available from <http://www.waynemcdill.net/?article=15>; Internet. See also Gregory Edward Reynolds, *The Word is Worth a Thousand Pictures: Preaching in the Electronic Age* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000).

God, all in order “that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified” (2 Thess 3:1).⁵⁰ Edmund Clowney notes,

Preaching the Lord as present in the Gospel narratives has more power than do the best films that seek to portray the ministry of the Lord. The *Jesus* film distributed internationally by Campus Crusade has presented the gospel to vast crowds, including thousands in pre-literate societies. Yet it is deeply flawed in its conclusion at this very point: the presence of Jesus. An actor pleads with the viewer to come to *him* and to trust in *him*. The effort to give reality beyond the preached word fails as fiction. The actor is not Jesus.⁵¹

Nothing can or ever will take the place of faithful biblical preaching. Preaching has been ordained by God for the advance of the gospel of the kingdom until the end of the age. Michael Horton elaborates:

In fact, the spreading of the Word is treated as synonymous with the spreading of the kingdom of God. By the Word we are legally adopted, and by the Spirit we receive the inner witness that we are the children of God (Ro 8:12-17). Through the Word *of* Christ the Spirit creates faith *in* Christ, and where this is present, there is the church. The difference between Peter’s Pentecost sermon and that of an ordinary minister today is that the former is part of the canon that norms our preaching. However, when preaching today is faithful to that canon, it conveys exactly the same content and therefore is the same Word as that spoken by the prophets and apostles.⁵²

One should not lose sight of the role of preaching in the purposes of God. In Ephesians 3, Paul declares that God has given him (who calls himself “the least of all saints”) a mission of preaching the mystery and unsearchable riches of Christ to the Gentiles (Eph 3:3, 8). Further, he asserts the cosmic significance of the preaching ministry in the church of Jesus Christ.

Paul contends that God called him to preach the riches of Christ “so that

⁵⁰Azurdia, *Spirit Empowered Preaching*, 63. He argues, “If we are to expect the Spirit’s enablement, we must be resolutely wedded to His purpose; to glorify Jesus Christ through the instrumentality of the scriptures. When this message is our message we can look for His vitality. God’s purposes will advance. Hearts will burn. Minds will be opened. People will come to know and love Jesus Christ.”

⁵¹Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 49.

⁵²Michael S. Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 754.

through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (Eph 3:10).⁵³ God created the cosmos by the word of his power, and the church was created by the power of his preached word “according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph 3:9, 11).⁵⁴ Faithful preaching extends beyond the pew and is a declaration to demonic hosts that their authority is broken and their “final defeat is imminent” because of the presence of the kingdom of Christ.⁵⁵ Preaching plays a unique, indispensable, and eschatological role in God’s cosmic plan for “the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on earth” (Eph 1:10, NASB). Therefore, preaching that declares the manifold wisdom of God to the rulers and authorities is preaching that sums all things up in Christ and his kingdom. Archibald Alexander provides an ominous warning to preachers who fail to preach Christ in all of the Scripture: “Ministers might spend their lives explaining the Scriptures, and yet never truly preach the *Word*.”⁵⁶

⁵³For an argument that the purpose clause in Eph 3:10 gives the reason why Paul preached the gospel of Jesus Christ, see Frank Thielman, (*Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010], 215-17).

⁵⁴Timothy G. Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians: Participating in the Triumph of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 117. Gombis notes, “But the mere existence of the church set within enemy territory is not all that is in view here. Paul is also stressing the *manner* in which the church comes into being. When God creates the church through ‘Paul the prisoner,’ the one who is the least of all the saints, he subverts expectations and confounds the powers. Seen in terms of the present age, he could not be in a weaker, more shameful or more vulnerable position. Yet, astonishingly, it is by his preaching of the gospel that God unleashes his creative power and calls the church into existence.”

⁵⁵Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 247. See also Michael O. Fape, *Powers in Encounter with Power: Spiritual Warfare in Pagan Cultures* (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2003), 64, and Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*, trans. John H. Yoder (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1962), 51. Fape convincingly contends that the “rulers and the authorities” (Eph 3:10) that Paul speaks of are invisible angelic forces of darkness that constantly seek to oppose God’s purposes in the world.

⁵⁶Archibald Alexander, former professor of didactic and polemical theology at old Princeton Seminary, argued that Christ is the unifying center of all Scripture. Therefore, “When any part of Scripture is expounded we should never forget, that we are doing nothing to purpose, unless directly or indirectly [we are] making known to men, the method of salvation thro’ Christ. Ministers might spend their lives explaining the Scriptures, and yet never truly preach the *Word*, because they do not make their discourses bear on this cardinal point” (“Pastoral Duties: Preaching the Word,” The Archibald Alexander Manuscript Collection [Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, 1791-1880], 24:27), quoted in James M. Garretson, *Princeton and Preaching: Archibald Alexander and the Christian Ministry* [Carlisle,

In light of the biblical testimony, the proposed model of expository preaching in this dissertation will seek to reflect the Christocentric, kingdom-focused sermons we find in apostolic preaching. The concluding portion of this chapter will examine the key elements in sermon preparation that ensure Christocentric, eschatologically focused messages. Only when one identifies these principles and puts them into practice will one preach in accordance with the way Christ commanded the apostles—and, by extension, us.⁵⁷

Scripture Saturation

One of the most undervalued skills for effective preaching is Scripture saturation. With the dominance of a media culture, the perceived need for being thoroughly saturated with texts in general and the biblical storyline in particular has diminished.⁵⁸ Even the technologically advanced computer based Bible study tools available today can become a curse rather than a blessing to the preacher if convenience prevents meditation on the actual text of Scripture. T. David Gordon warns preachers, “There is a profound difference between reading information and reading texts. . . . Reading a text is a laboriously slow process.”⁵⁹ Many preachers simply do not know the big picture and overarching storyline of Scripture well enough to draw out the

PA: Banner of Truth, 2005], 152).

⁵⁷Jay E. Adams, *Preaching with Purpose: The Urgent Task of Homiletics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 146-52.

⁵⁸T. David Gordon, *Why Johnny Can't Preach: The Media Have Shaped the Messengers* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009). This is an important book because it directly and passionately states the problem of much contemporary preaching in *conservative* evangelical pulpits. Much of the banal, self-oriented, cliché-ridden, how-to preaching found in conservative pulpits is not simply a choice of style but the default hermeneutic for a generation who cannot read texts closely or write well ordered compositions. Therefore, the preacher is inhibited in his ability to think through and communicate the significance of the biblical text. Thus talk of the biblical storyline, organic unity, unifying theme, or interpretation and application mediated through Christ is an unknown tongue to many. It is easier to profess the inerrancy of the Bible but read every passage as though it is all about you, jumping immediately from every text to your life.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 43.

connections and literary patterns found in the biblical narrative. Nothing can take the place of being saturated with Scripture and being familiar with the flow of redemptive history. Only when one's mind is drenched with the whole counsel of God's Word will one be able to grasp the biblical worldview, which presents itself most often in symbol, pattern, and allusion. James Jordan warns about an atomistic approach to understanding Scripture and life:

It is more common, however for men to take part of the truth and abuse it in order to negate the rest of the truth. Men take a small part of the truth, and then pretend that this fragment is the whole truth. That way they can 'suppress' the true world picture, the true basic interpretation of reality.⁶⁰

There is great danger in preaching the Bible as a series of isolated doctrines or stories without seeing where it all fits in the unified narrative of redemptive history. All of the stories told in the Scripture are really episodes in the larger story of the kingdom of God in Christ. To be rightly interpreted, each part must be understood in light of the whole. The preacher can do this only if he has a grasp of redemptive history and biblical literature. As Peter Leithart explains,

The Bible tells one story. It is a long and complicated story about events that took place over several thousand years, but even so it is one story. Like most good stories, the most exciting and important points come toward the end. In this case, the most important part comes when Jesus is born, lives, dies on the cross, rises again, and ascends to heaven. But to know why Jesus comes and what He is doing when he dies and rises again, we need to know the story that goes before. A man kisses a sleeping woman in a wood and she awakes. That's a nice ending to a story, but if we don't know the woman is Sleeping Beauty and the man is Prince Philip, then we don't know the story very well. A beginning is nothing without an ending, but an ending without a beginning isn't worth much either.⁶¹

⁶⁰James Jordan, *Through New Eyes: Developing a Biblical View of the World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 3.

⁶¹Peter J. Leithart, *A House for My Name: A Survey of the Old Testament* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 2000), 43. See also Peter J. Leithart, "Death and Resurrection of David: Typology and Structure of 1-2 Kings" (Christ Church Ministerial Conference, *Type and Antitype: Seeing Christ in All of Scripture*, 27-29 September 2004), CD. In this lecture Leithart points out that "interpretation always involves bringing things to a text from outside and not merely bringing things out from the text that are there. Good interpretation involves knowing what to bring in from the outside." In reference to Scripture this means that the only possible way to rightly interpret any text is to be so saturated with the whole of Scripture that the interpreter sees what God has designed from outside of a text to inform its meaning. In other words, the proper application of the analogy of Scripture demands Scripture saturation. On this matter, also see Gary E. Schnittjer, "The Narrative Multiverse Within the Universe of the Bible: The Question of 'Borderlines'"

Apostolic preaching reveals men who were saturated with Scripture and viewed Jesus and his kingdom as the hermeneutical key for understanding every text. For example, in Acts 7, Stephen is brought before the high priest on trumped up charges of blasphemy. His response is not an attempt to gain acquittal but rather a biblical-theological sermon on Old Testament history—specifically, how the Christ informs it.⁶² John Stott writes, “Stephen’s mind had evidently soaked up the Old Testament, for his speech is like a patchwork of allusions to it.”⁶³ Stephen reminds his hearers that, throughout Israel’s history, God kept sending deliverers, but the Jews kept rejecting them, just as they had done with the ultimate deliverer: “Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered” (Acts 7:52). James D. G. Dunn writes, “The betrayal and murder of God’s Righteous One (Jesus—see 3:14) is simply the climax of Israel’s history of rejection.”⁶⁴

The comprehensive use of the Old Testament by Stephen and the other preachers in Acts to preach the gospel of the kingdom is all the more remarkable when one considers that they did not carry scrolls around with them. They did this from memory. Wagner reminds,

They did not carry their Bibles with them, much less notes of significant points and passages they wished to refer to in the course of their sermons. The Word they used was in their minds. In Stephen’s sermon he was able to range broadly over Old

and ‘Intertextuality,’” *WTJ* 64 (2002): 231-52. Schnittjer makes a compelling case that biblical texts contain echoes from other contexts, and thus, the immediate context of the narrative cannot be rightly considered the borders of the interpretive context. Scripture saturation allows the preacher to see the intertextual echoes that are essential for faithful interpretation.

⁶²Stephen refers to the following Old Testament texts by quote, allusion, or paraphrase in Acts 7: Gen 12:1; 15:13-14; 48:4; 46:27; Exod 1:8; 2:14; Exod 3:6, 15; Exod 3:5, 7-8, 10; Deut 18:15; Exod 32:1, 23; Amos 5:25-27; and Isa 66:1-2.

⁶³Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 130.

⁶⁴James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1996), 98.

Testament history, because he had a fluent grasp of the content of the Scriptures. He had treasured up the Word of the Lord in his heart.⁶⁵

This is precisely where many preachers fail. It is convenient to be microscopic and have a minimalistic approach to interpretation and proclamation when one is not familiar with the literary styles, genres, themes, patterns, and typological structures of Scripture.⁶⁶ Preachers must be committed to understanding the Scriptures by reading forward and backward in their Bibles. The preacher should take note of every quotation of the Old Testament in the New Testament but must also be aware when reading the Old Testament of New Testament citations and allusions. We must not forsake divinely inspired commentary on the Old Testament. These New Testament passages provide fixed references and commit us to particular interpretations.⁶⁷

It was Scripture saturation that led the Apostles, after the resurrection and ascension, to preach Jesus and his kingdom as the key to all of Scripture and to view the Old Testament as their foundational missionary text. Michael Horton writes,

We come to every passage knowing a lot of other passages, and this naturally predisposes our reading of each text. Jesus Christ, then, is the interpretive key to Scripture, the grand prejudice that we bring with us to every passage simply because

⁶⁵Wagner, *Tongues Aflame*, 193-194.

⁶⁶John Currid, "Recognition and the Use of Typology in Preaching," *Reformed Theological Review* 54, no. 3 (1994): 116. Currid defines typology as "a preordained representative relationship which certain persons, events, and institutions bear to corresponding persons, events and institutions occurring at a later time in history." See also Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 111-13. Goldsworthy affirms Currid's definition of typology but rightly expands: "I want to suggest that behind the technical uses that fit Currid's criteria there is a principle that is far-reaching in its application. We may refer to this as macro-typology because it indicates that we are not dealing merely with scattered examples but with a broad pattern. If Paul could legitimately make the typological connection he does, is this not evidence of his understanding of the overall structure of revelation that I have been at pains in this chapter to understand? If I am right, the typological correspondence is not simply between persons, events, and institutions, but between whole epochs of revelation. . . . We have here the structural basis for the preacher's application of Old Testament texts, from anywhere in the Old Testament, to the contemporary Christian. I repeat, however, the antitype is not first and foremost the Christian, but Christ."

⁶⁷For a helpful tool that provides a comprehensive list of Old Testament quotations in the New Testament and also lists the quotations in the canonical order of the Old Testament in an appendix, see Robert G. Bratcher, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1987). An index of quotations listed in Old Testament order and New Testament order, as well as, an index of allusions and verbal parallels in Old Testament order can be found in Barbara Aland et al., eds., *The Greek New Testament*, 4th ed. (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1993).

all of Scripture testifies to him as this plot's central character. It is a faithful prejudice because it is cultivated in us by the Scripture itself. And it is as true of the Old Testament as the New. . . . It is his plot that opens Genesis and closes Revelation, climaxing in his own incarnation, atonement, resurrection, and return in glory.⁶⁸

The Centrality of the Person and Work of Christ

Any fair reading of apostolic messages reveals that they, following the example and teaching of Jesus, interpreted the meaning, significance, and application of the entire Bible in light of Jesus' person and work.⁶⁹ Their preaching was the preeminent display of this hermeneutical commitment. When the apostle Paul declared, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified," he was not suggesting that the cross of Christ was the only thought that ever entered his mind, nor was he saying that he simply tacked on some commentary about Jesus' death to every dialogue (1 Cor 2:2).⁷⁰ He was contending that the power and wisdom of God on display in the cross of Christ served as the only proper frame of reference for every single thought. As D. A. Carson puts it, "He cannot long talk about Christian joy, or Christian ethics, or Christian fellowship, or the Christian doctrine of God, or anything else, without finally tying it to the cross. Paul is gospel-centered; he is cross-centered."⁷¹

What Paul is commending is not a nuanced suggestion about one possible style of Christian preaching. Rather, he is commending a mindset and lifestyle that should

⁶⁸Michael Horton, *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 85-86.

⁶⁹George Eldon Ladd, *The Last Things* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 17. Ladd concludes that Jesus and the apostles "reinterpreted the Old Testament prophecies in light of Jesus' person and mission."

⁷⁰It is important to note that though Paul did not specifically mention the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in 1 Cor 2:2, he certainly implied its truthfulness. If Jesus of Nazareth had not been raised from the dead his crucifixion would have been simply another tragic event in human history. The apostles look back at the crucifixion from the vantage point of the reality of the risen Christ. Therefore the event which caused them despair is transformed into the ground of their message of good news.

⁷¹D. A. Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry: Leadership Lessons from 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 38.

drive every aspect of the preacher's life and pulpit ministry. Paul notes that he did not preach "with lofty speech or wisdom" or "in plausible words of wisdom"; instead, he came to them "in weakness and in fear and much trembling" (1 Cor 2:1-4). He seeks to distance his preaching ministry not from oratorical skill but from the rhetorical pomp of the day, when listening to speeches was a form of entertainment.⁷² David E. Garland observes, "Paul's reminiscence that he resolved to know nothing among them except Jesus Christ, and him crucified, does not promote anti-intellectualism but explains his modus operandi."⁷³ Paul was a gifted rhetorician and logician whom listening crowds identified with Hermes, the Greek god of communication, "because he was the chief speaker" (Acts 14:12).⁷⁴ Paul avoided that form of rhetorical eloquence that would minimize the content and centrality of the gospel because Christ crucified was considered a message of folly in the world (1 Cor 1:18). When Paul's opponents said that "his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account," it is probable that they were responding to the content of his direct, cross-centered message more than to the skill of his preaching

⁷²Steven W. Smith, *Dying to Preach: Embracing the Cross in the Pulpit* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 43. Smith explains, "It is hard to imagine today, but in ancient Corinth, listening to speeches was a popular form of entertainment. The effective orator, therefore, was well respected in the culture. In fact, a sophistic communicator could find himself a very wealthy man. He was often a hired gun, who would sell his skills to the highest payer to defend a client, put forth a general idea, or persuade the populace."

⁷³David E. Garland, *I Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 84.

⁷⁴In Acts 20:9, Eutychus is recorded as having fallen asleep during Paul's preaching. The point of the account is resurrection and not that Paul was a boring preacher. The fact listeners were still there "until midnight" provides an argument for Paul's eloquence and not a case against it (Acts 20:7). See Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 607. He writes, "Whether the atmosphere in the room was too warm or Eutychus was simply worn out from a long day's work (which may have been the case if he was a slave), in any case he fell asleep while Paul preached on well into the night, and unfortunately he was sitting in a window when he did so, and so he fell to the ground level 'two' floors below. Though there has been considerable debate, v. 9b does say he was picked up dead; the text does not say it appeared as if he was dead (contrast 14:19). In short, in what follows we have a miracle tale about the raising of the dead, following the usual form of such a tale with confirmation of the cure and the reaction of the observers at the very end of the narrative."

(2 Cor 10:10).⁷⁵ F. F. Bruce reflects this understanding when he paraphrases Paul's opponents: "his personal appearance is not at all impressive and no one pays attention to what he says" (2 Cor 10:10).⁷⁶ The cruciform wisdom of power through weakness proclaimed by Paul was a repudiation of the wisdom of the age and was utterly despised.

Paul was a student of the Scriptures long before he encountered Jesus on the Damascus road (Acts 9:3). He grew up in Jerusalem and was trained in the Scriptures by Gamaliel, a leading rabbi, achieving a reputation as an excellent student (Acts 22:3, Gal 1:14). Paul probably had vast amounts of the Old Testament committed to memory. His study of the Scripture had led him to follow in the footsteps of his father as a Pharisee, one who even oversaw the incarceration and execution of Christians (Acts 23:6, 26:9-11; Phil 3:5). What changed in Paul's understanding of Scripture to cause him to move from being a persecutor of Christians to one who declared, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21)?

He adopted a new hermeneutic—a Christocentric hermeneutic. This new hermeneutic came as a result of the saving grace of God in his encounter with Christ on the way to Damascus. His faith in Jesus of Nazareth as the resurrected Messiah meant that, if he had continued to interpret Old Testament without reference to Jesus, he would have been in rebellion.⁷⁷ As Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen write, "The newborn Christian and former Pharisee must rethink all he *thought* he knew. And this is

⁷⁵Steven W. Smith, *Dying to Preach*, 43. Smith argues, "Paul was wise, his speech was superior, and he was indeed a brilliant intellect who took advantage of the classic rhetorical devices in his writings and sermons."

⁷⁶F. F. Bruce, *The Letters of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 149.

⁷⁷See especially Paul's Christocentric Old Testament interpretation in Rom 4; Gal 3; 1 Cor 10:1-13; and 2 Cor 3:7-18. See Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 51. Ridderbos writes, "Paul proclaims Christ as the fulfillment of the promise of God to Abraham, as the seed in which all the families of the earth shall be blessed (Gal. 3:8, 16, 29), the eschatological bringer of salvation whose all-embracing significance must be understood in the light of prophecy (Rom. 15:9-12), the fulfillment of God's redemptive counsel concerning the whole world and its future . . . This is the fundamental redemptive-historical and all-embracing character of Paul's preaching of Christ."

Paul's starting point: *the kingdom of God, 'the age to come,' has arrived [in Christ].*"⁷⁸

Dockery reminds his readers,

He was, however, well schooled in the rabbinic tradition of the Old Testament interpretation; yet he had been confronted by the exalted Lord himself, and that encounter brought about a change in his view of the Old Testament. Now he viewed the Scriptures from a pattern of redemptive history grounded in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.⁷⁹

Roger Wagner asserts, "All the sermons in Acts have one essential point—Jesus Christ is risen from the dead."⁸⁰ The person and work of Jesus Christ, which received divine validation in his resurrection and was the "first fruits" of the resurrection of believers, served as the historical center of apostolic preaching (1 Cor 15:20).⁸¹

Edward Donnelly writes,

We have seen that Peter's sermons, after a brief introduction, always begin with Jesus: they also end in exactly the same way (2:36; 3:26; 4:12; 10:43). Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of all that the apostle has to say. . . . But Christ is not only referred to at the beginning and the end of Peter's preaching, he pervades it. This can be shown statistically. In the four sermons under consideration we find specific references to Christ in approximately: thirteen out of twenty-six verses; ten out of fifteen; three out of five; seven out of ten. Out of a total of fifty-six verses, about thirty-three—well over half the words recorded—are about Christ. There can be no mistaking this. He is Peter's great theme. . . . But even more impressive than the number of references to Jesus is the depth and richness of Peter's treatment.⁸²

⁷⁸Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 188.

⁷⁹Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now*, 41.

⁸⁰Wagner, *Tongues Aflame*, 97.

⁸¹Richard B. Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul's Soteriology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987), 34-35. Explaining Paul's use of "firstfruits," Gaffin explains, "The word is not simply an indication of temporal priority. Rather it brings into view Christ's resurrection as the 'firstfruits' of the resurrection-harvest, the initial portion of the whole. His resurrection is the representative beginning of the resurrection of believers. In other words, the term seems deliberately chosen to make evident the organic connection between the two resurrections. In this context, Paul's 'thesis' over and against his opponents is that the resurrection of Jesus has the bodily resurrection of 'those who sleep' as its necessary consequence. His resurrection is not simply a guarantee; it is a pledge in the sense that it is the actual beginning of the general event. In fact, on the basis of this verse it can be said that Paul views the two resurrections not so much as two events but as two episodes of the same event."

⁸²Edward Donnelly, *Peter: Eyewitness of His Majesty* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1998), 61.

The centrality of Christ and his kingdom is no less important in contemporary preaching than it was in apostolic preaching.⁸³ The apostolic model teaches us that no text may be fully understood apart from Christ and eschatological fulfillment in him. In 1 Corinthians 15:14, the apostle Paul declares, “And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain.”

It is equally true that any proclamation that excludes the death and resurrection of Jesus will be in vain. As Vern S. Poythress says, “Christ’s life, death, and resurrection bear directly on every human act of interpretation.”⁸⁴ Paul’s vast knowledge of the Old Testament apart from Jesus Christ led him to persecute Christians; but, through the lens of Christ and his kingdom, he preached the same texts as containing the gospel for which he was willing to die (Acts 20:24; 21:13). Richard B. Gaffin notes,

The almost exclusive concern of his writing and preaching is expounding, “exegeting” the history of redemption as it had reached its climax in the death and resurrection of Christ. In Paul’s perspective, Christ’s place in the history of revelation is conditioned by and exponential of a specific redemptive-historical context.⁸⁵

Every Christian preacher intuitively knows that he must keep Christ in view as he preaches Old Testament Scripture. Imagine a pastor preaching about the Old Testament sacrificial system without understanding the meaning of the sacrificial system in light of Jesus Christ, the one who “had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins” (Heb 10:12). Some suggest that Christ should be mentioned, but only as part of the application of the text and not the meaning of the text.⁸⁶ But such an approach denies that

⁸³Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption*, 23. Gaffin notes, “From the perspective of the history of redemption believers today are in the same situation as was Paul. Together with him they look back upon the climatic events of Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension, while together with him they ‘wait for his Son from heaven’ (1 Thess. 1:10), the one event in that history which is still outstanding. The same tension between ‘already’ and ‘not yet’ which marked Paul’s experience characterizes the life of the believer today.”

⁸⁴Vern S. Poythress, “Christ the Only Savior of Interpretation,” *WTJ* 50 (1988): 307.

⁸⁵Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption*, 23.

⁸⁶Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 140. Kaiser is applying the hermeneutical literary theory of E.D.

God is the ultimate author of Scripture and that Scripture therefore possesses “the intrinsic genre of Scripture as a whole,” as Raju D. Kunjummen says.⁸⁷ Thus, the meaning of any text is complete only when the interpreter considers where the text fits with respect to the consummation of revelation, Jesus Christ (Heb 1:1-2). Apostolic preachers did not consider the meaning of a text to be exhausted by the intended meaning of the original author.⁸⁸ Thus, every preacher should ask the ultimate contextual question, a question that was at the heart of apostolic preaching: “What is the meaning of this text in relation to the person and work of Jesus Christ?”

Hirsch, as explained in his book *Validity in Interpretation*, to the biblical text in arguing for his analogy of antecedent Scripture position. For a sympathetic view of the impact of Hirsch’s hermeneutical theory on expository preaching, see Scott A. Blue, “The Hermeneutic of E.D. Hirsch, Jr. and Its Impact on Expository Preaching: Friend or Foe?” *JETS* 44, no. 2 (2001): 262-63. While sympathetic, unlike Kaiser, Blue realizes that expository preachers should understand “that the nature of the Bible, with God as its ultimate author, dictates that sometimes a *sensus plenior* will be evident.”

⁸⁷Raju D. Kunjummen, “The Single Intent of Scripture—Critical Examination of a Theological Construct,” *Grace Theological Journal* 7, no. 1 (1986): 94. Kunjummen observes, “Thus, divine implications of meaning will exceed that of the human author on matters which are unfolded in greater detail in the progress of revelation. As Kaiser has stated so aptly, ‘No meaning of a text is complete until the interpreter has heard the *total single* intention of the author.’ Kaiser had in mind the human author ‘who stood in the presence of God,’ but the statement has no less validity when one has in mind God himself, the author of the whole.” See also Vern S. Poythress, “Divine Meaning of Scripture,” *WTJ* 48 (1986): 278. Poythress argues, “If grammatical-historical exegesis pretends to pay attention to the human author *alone*, it distorts the nature of the human author’s intention. Whether or not they were perfectly self-conscious about it, the human authors intend that their words should be received as words of the Spirit.”

⁸⁸The divine author’s intended meaning will be organically related to the original author’s meaning, unlike allegorical interpretation, which is an arbitrary attempt to find a hidden meaning that is distinct from the historical meaning of a text. Whereas, legitimate Christocentric interpretation is consistent with the overall message of the Bible and points out revelatory connections and patterns between persons, institutions, events, themes and epochs in redemptive history. Since the Bible was given progressively in history, God prepared his people earlier for what he would reveal to them later. See also Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1979), 88. Clowney correctly asserts, “In developing the biblical-theological interpretation of a text, the aspects of epochal structure and continuity may be separately considered. The first step is to relate the text to its immediate theological horizon. This is to carry the principle of contextual interpretation to the total setting of the revelation of the period. It is a step which homiletical hermeneutics cannot afford to overlook. The second step is to relate the event of the text, by way of its proper interpretation in its own period, to the whole structure of redemptive history; and in that way to us upon whom the ends of the ages have come. It must be stressed that this second step is valid and fruitful only when it does come second. All manner of arbitrariness and irresponsibility enter in when we seek to make a direct and practical reference to ourselves without considering the passage in its own biblical and theological setting.”

The Centrality of Eschatological Fulfillment in the Kingdom of Christ

As we have demonstrated earlier in this chapter, apostolic preaching was kingdom preaching (Acts 1:3, 28:31). Specifically, it was the preaching of the kingdom of God in Christ. The apostles knew that they were living in the “last days” because Jesus had inaugurated the kingdom (Isa 2:2, Hos 3:5, Jer 23:20, Acts 2:17, 2 Tim 3:1, Heb 1:2, 1 Pet 1:20, 2 Pet 3:3, 1 John 2:18). Their message was that the eschatological kingdom was already at hand in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who brought the glory of the age to come into this present evil age, but they also proclaimed the “not yet” aspect of the kingdom that awaits final consummation (Rev 11:15).⁸⁹ This framework meant that every apostolic sermon was eschatological because, in Jesus, the eschatological man, the end had begun.⁹⁰ As Vos explains, “Everything after Christ’s ascension, including the present life of believers, belongs to *those days*, that is, to the eschatological period.”⁹¹ The apostles lived and preached the tension of living in the overlap of the ages. Peter Jensen reveals the power of this eschatological vision for preaching:

The gospel by which we first come to know God involves knowing about the last things, and an exposition which reserves its treatment of them to the end does not adequately represent the Bible or what the Bible has to say about the other topics, including revelation. In seeing what God is planning we gain perspective on who he is and what he is doing to fulfill his ends. The doctrine of God is not complete until we see the whole of what he is achieving. Beginning with the End as revealed by the purposes and promises of God makes better sense of such topics as revelation and salvation. It provides the indispensable context, too, for thinking about the Christian life.⁹²

Tragically, many contemporary preachers think that eschatological preaching only involves dispensational charts or discussions of rapture, antichrist, tribulation, and

⁸⁹McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand*, 204-05.

⁹⁰Ibid., 205. McCartney and Clayton contend, “Virtually every passage is illuminated by a recognition of this tension between already and not yet.”

⁹¹Geerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. Johannes G. Vos (Nutley, NJ: P&R, 1974), 53.

⁹²Peter Jensen, *The Eternal Plan of God: At the Heart of the Universe* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 10-11.

millennium.⁹³ To the contrary, the apostles preached that the $\square\sigma\chi\alpha\tau\omicron\nu$ had already arrived in Jesus and that, by faith, the believer is “in Christ” and the believer’s life “hidden with Christ in God.” The believer therefore presently and eternally participates in the kingdom (Col 3:3).

The kingdom is not an abstract concept, and biblical eschatology does not consist of speculative theology. As Thomas Schreiner contends, Jesus “considers his own role as paramount in the eschatological kingdom. The most remarkable feature of the kingdom is the role of Jesus Christ himself.”⁹⁴ Apostolic preaching functioned with an awareness that God created the entire cosmos in the very beginning for Christocentric, eschatological purposes (Gen 1:1, Eph 1:10, Col 1:16).⁹⁵ Thus, as J. V. Fesko notes, “The New Testament is replete with phrases and imagery taken from the opening chapters of Genesis.”⁹⁶

In 2 Corinthians 4, the apostle Paul writes about the glory of apostolic ministry

⁹³Richard B. Gaffin, “The Usefulness of the Cross,” *WTJ* 41 (1979): 229. Gaffin writes, “According to the traditional understanding, eschatology is a topic of dogmatic (systematic) theology, limited to those ‘last things’ associated with and dating from the second coming of Christ, including the intermediate state following death. In the newer consensus, eschatology is expanded to include the state of affairs that has already begun with the work of Christ in what the New Testament calls ‘the fullness of time(s)’ (Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:10), ‘these last days’ (Heb 1:2), ‘at the end of the ages’ (Heb 9:26). Involved also in this more recent understanding of eschatology are basic and decisive considerations already realized in the present identity and experience of the Christian, and so too in the present life and mission of the church.”

⁹⁴Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 51.

⁹⁵J. V. Fesko, *Last Things First: Unlocking Genesis 1-3 with the Christ of Eschatology* (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2007), 38. Fesko argues, “The patterns in Genesis 1-3 recur throughout redemptive history and reappear in the *eschaton* with the revelation of Christ on the final day. Genesis 1-3 must be read, therefore, eschatologically and christologically in order to understand its ultimate significance.” See also Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption* (London: Lutterwork Press, 1952), 6; Thomas F Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being in Three Persons* (New York: T&T Clark, 1996), 203-04.

⁹⁶Fesko, *Last Things First*, 31.

in the face of many trials and hardships in the present age.⁹⁷ In the course of his discussion, he refers to the work of God as the sovereign creator who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” creating physical light through verbal fiat (2 Cor 4:6). This creative activity was “for Christ.” Paul clarifies this expression by explaining that the same God who created physical light by the word of his power is the one who “has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (Col 1:16, 2 Cor 4:6).⁹⁸ Paul describes those who possess this knowledge as those who live in this present evil age empowered and encouraged because they have already experienced eschatological resurrection in the inner man and yet await eschatological resurrection of the outer man (2 Cor 4:7-18).⁹⁹ As Schreiner summarizes Paul’s proclamation of hope, “The eschatological glorification of believers is the hope that animates them in their everyday lives as they live in the interval between the already and the not yet.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷A.T. Robertson, *The Glory of the Ministry: Paul’s Exultation in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 7-9. Robertson considered 2 Cor 2:12-6:10 to be Paul’s apologetic for preaching. He considered the heart of Paul’s apologetic to be the glory of the ministry in the face of any difficulty.

⁹⁸Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 335. Harris writes, “The God of redemption is none other than the God of creation. ‘It is the same God who said . . . who has shone. . . .’ But not only is the agent the same; the result of the action is the same—the creation and diffusion of light and consequently the dispersing and dispelling of darkness.” This passage makes clear that it is never enough to be theocentric to the neglect of being Christocentric. In fact, the only acceptable pathway to bring glory to God is through the exaltation of Jesus Christ. We must read the Bible as a book about God in Christ. Thus, the famous first question of the *Shorter Catechism*, “What is the chief end of man?” provides the true but incomplete answer, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy him forever.” A complete answer would be “Man’s chief end is to glorify God through Jesus Christ, by enjoying him forever.”

⁹⁹Richard B. Gaffin Jr., *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul’s Soteriology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987), 61-62. See also Richard B. Gaffin Jr., *By Faith, Not by Sight: Paul and the Order of Salvation* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2006), 54.

¹⁰⁰Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 377. See also N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, vol. 3 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 369. Explaining 2 Cor 4:16-18, Wright contends, “This is a full statement, not simply of the same Christian hope that Paul has articulated elsewhere, but also of the reason why the Corinthians should not be ashamed of Paul’s sufferings, but should rejoice, both for him and themselves, that the life of the age to come is already secure and assured, and is already breaking in, however paradoxically, into the present time of struggle and sorrow.”

It would certainly be too much to say that theology is eschatology, but it would be too little to say anything less than that all theology is eschatological. A beginning implies an end. As Gerard Van Groningen states, “There is an intimate and inseparable relationship between creation and consummation, the beginning and the end.”¹⁰¹ After all, redemption in Christ was not a reactive response by God to an unforeseen fall into sin. Paul asserted that God “chose us in Him before the foundation of the world” and that “he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will” (Eph 1:4-5), which was with a view to “unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” (Eph 1:10). It is clear from Paul’s argument that God’s creative activity in the very beginning was for Christological, eschatological purposes.¹⁰² Thus, we, as his image bearers and preachers, have the responsibility to understand everything in light of his revealed Christological, eschatological purposes.¹⁰³

Peter Enns has persuasively argued that apostolic hermeneutics and preaching were both Christocentric and eschatological.¹⁰⁴ In fact, he is so committed to this premise that he has coined the term “christotelic” to describe the apostolic method. He writes,

¹⁰¹Gerard Van Groningen, *From Creation to Consummation* (Sioux Center, IA: Dordt Press, 1996), 1:12.

¹⁰²Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 111-12. O’Brien writes, “In connection with Christ’s eschatological relationship to a multitude of entities (including personal beings), the text suggests that God’s summing up of these entities in Christ is his act of bringing all things together in (and under) Christ, i.e. his unifying of them in some way in Christ. . . . Christ is the one *in whom* God chooses to sum up the cosmos, the one in whom he restores harmony to the universe.”

¹⁰³Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Biblical-Theological Foundations and Principles* (Nottingham, England: InterVarsity, 2006), 63. Goldsworthy avers, “The Bible makes a very radical idea inescapable: not only is the gospel the interpretative norm for the whole Bible, but there is an important sense in which Jesus Christ is the mediator of the meaning of everything that exists. In other words, *the gospel is the hermeneutical norm for the whole of reality*. All reality was created by Christ, through Christ and for Christ (Col. 1:15-16). God’s plan is to sum up all things in Christ (Eph. 1:9-10). In him are all the treasures of wisdom and understanding (Col. 2:2-3).”

¹⁰⁴Enns believes that the Christocentric and eschatological focus in apostolic hermeneutics and preaching should affect the practice of the contemporary church. While seeking to avoid what he calls a “superficial biblicism with respect to hermeneutics” he writes, “I take it as foundational that the church’s understanding of how to handle its own Scripture must interact on a fundamental level with the hermeneutical trajectory set by the Apostles” (“Apostolic Hermeneutics and an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture: Moving Beyond a Modernist Impasse,” *WTJ* 65 [2003]: 265). While the language of

To see Christ as the driving force behind apostolic hermeneutics is not to flatten out what the OT says on its own. Rather, it is to see that, for the church, the OT does not exist on its own, in isolation from the completion of the OT story in the death and resurrection of Christ. The OT story is going somewhere, which is what the Apostles are at great pains to show. It is the OT as a whole, particularly in its grand themes, that finds its *telos*, its completion, in Christ. This is not to say that the vibrancy of the OT witness now comes to an end, but that-on the basis of apostolic authority-it finds its proper goal, purpose, *telos*, in that event by which God himself determined to punctuate his covenant: Christ.¹⁰⁵

Following the apostles, every modern preacher should prepare sermons with an eye toward eschatological fulfillment in Christ. Redemptive history is headed toward a goal, the consummation of the kingdom of Christ. Therefore, the meaning of every text of the Bible is related not only to Christology but also to eschatology. The prolepsis of soteriological promises in redemptive history expresses the priority of eschatology. As Michael Williams states, “It is not too much to say that in order to understand the biblical story, we must know how it ends.”¹⁰⁶ The faithful preacher must see Christ as the center of the Bible horizontally (typologically) and vertically (eschatologically).¹⁰⁷ Making a

“hermeneutical trajectory” is malleable and difficult to define, Enns’s basic premise here is that we should learn from the apostolic model and this dissertation is in hearty agreement with that conclusion. I disagree with Enns’s contention that “grammatical-historical exegesis simply does not lead to a Christotelic (apostolic) hermeneutic” (283). Grammatical-historical exegesis that recognizes divine authorship demands contextual analysis of the whole Bible, which in turn demands a Christotelic reading that provides coherence. See G. K. Beale, “Did Jesus and the Apostles Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Revisiting the Debate Seventeen Years Later in Light of Peter Enns’s Book, *Inspiration and Incarnation*,” *Themelios* 32, no. 1 (2006): 18-43. *Inspiration and Incarnation* represents an expansion of the Enns’s article quoted here and while Beale affirms Enns’s “Christotelic” hermeneutic terminology, he rightly critiques Enns for suggesting that New Testament writers developed interpretations not related to the original intention of the Old Testament author (20). Beale rightly expresses “Six Issues of Concern About Enns’s View of the New Testament’s Use of the Old Testament” (19).

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 277.

¹⁰⁶Williams, *Far as the Curse is Found*, 271.

¹⁰⁷Geerhardus Vos, “Hebrews, The Epistle of the Diatheke,” in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980), 193. Vos argued for what has been described as an intersecting plane hermeneutic which acknowledges the vertical dimension (transcendental/eschatological) was intruding on the horizontal dimension (linear/historical). Thus, for Vos typology was important but not enough and eschatology was the mother of theology. He wrote, “So long as the consciousness of redemption contents itself with living in the present moment, or ranges over a limited outlook backwards and forwards, the theological impulse may remain dormant and no desire need be felt to bring order and system into the wealth of the divine acts and disclosures as one after the other they enter into the cognition or experience of man. But the matter becomes entirely different when eschatology posits an absolute goal at the end of the redemptive process corresponding to an absolute beginning of the world in creation: for then, no longer a segment but the

sharp distinction between the coming of Christ in the incarnation and the coming of Christ in the $\square\sigma\chi\alpha\tau\omicron\nu$ produces arbitrarily imposed categories on the biblical text. The biblical narrative treats the two comings of Christ as two aspects of one eschatological event.¹⁰⁸ This does not mean that every text should be leveled out and treated ahistorically, but one must understand that there is not one text of Scripture that is not illuminated by the kingdom of Christ.

Since the believer is “in Christ,” the Christian life itself is already eschatological, and the church is the eschatological community of the kingdom awaiting consummation.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, every preacher must not only ask “What is the meaning of this text in relation to the person and work of Jesus Christ?” but also “What is the meaning of this text in relation to eschatological fulfillment in Christ?” The answers to these questions were the heart of apostolic interpretation and proclamation. To only inquire about a text’s meaning in its immediate context is to reduce the biblical narrative to a series of bare propositions that, when applied, produce an individualized, anthropologically oriented theology.¹¹⁰ A failure to preach every text in light of Christ

whole sweep of history is drawn into one great perspective, and the mind is impelled to view every part in relation to the whole. To do this means to construct a primitive theological system. Thus eschatology becomes the mother of theology and that first of all theology in the form of a philosophy of redemptive history.”

¹⁰⁸Gaffin, “The Usefulness of the Cross,” *WTJ* 41 (Spring 1979): 230. Gaffin notes that the Scripture treats the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of believers as two aspects of one eschatological event. Paul writes, “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor 15:20). See also Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christ the Meaning of History* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1966) 64, 65. Berkhof describes the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as “the end of history. . . . [T]he Kingdom has come.”

¹⁰⁹This dissertation concurs with Geerhardus Vos when he maintained that man possessed eschatological hope prior to the fall because he was created for a higher plane than the existence in the garden. Thus, heavenly hope should not be construed as a consequence of sin (*Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* [Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2000], 22). See also Geerhardus Vos, *Grace and Glory* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1994), 113.

¹¹⁰Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 107. Moore argues that understanding the defining theme of canonical revelation as “the triumph of Christ as divine-warrior in the restoration of a fallen cosmos” ensures a vital, concrete view of redemptive history. He notes, “It also puts the emphasis where Scripture does on the *telos* of the program of redemption—not of God’s glory in the abstract, or on

and his kingdom will leave both liberal and conservative preachers embracing the same moralistic methodology, albeit from opposing directions.¹¹¹

This chapter has developed an Christological, kingdom-focused understanding of expository preaching that examines the Christological character of apostolic preaching for the purpose of biblical faithfulness in contemporary preaching. While acknowledging some discontinuity between our task and theirs, the chapter has emphasized the ways we can and should imitate the preaching of the apostles. It identified three keys to reproducing the content of apostolic preaching: Scripture saturation, the person and work of Christ, and eschatological fulfillment in Christ. Embracing these will aid the preacher in developing what Sinclair Ferguson calls a Christ-centered instinct.¹¹² While acknowledging that specific interpretive methods can be helpful, the greater goal is to develop an instinct rather than a formula.¹¹³ In the last fifty years, there have been four leading homileticians calling preachers to Christ-centered expository preaching: Edmund Clowney, Bryan Chapell, Sidney Greidanus, and Graeme Goldsworthy.¹¹⁴ The next chapter analyzes and critiques their models.

justification of the individual sinner, but on the glory of God in the exaltation of Jesus as the triumphant Final Adam and the mediatorial Warrior-King (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:10; Eph. 3:21; Col. 1:18).”

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Sinclair Ferguson, “Preaching Christ from the Old Testament Scriptures,” in *When God’s Voice Is Heard: The Power of Preaching*, ed. Christopher Green and David Jackman (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1995), 78-79.

¹¹³Ibid. Ferguson warns, “The point here is not to comment on whether these five ways are helpful or not so much as the inherent danger in the approach. It is likely to produce preaching that is wooden and insensitive to the rich contours of biblical theology. Its artificiality would lie in our going through the motions of exegeting and expounding the Old Testament and then, remembering the formula, tidying our notes in order to align them with it. The net result over an extended period of time might be akin to that produced by children’s sermons in which the intelligent child soon recognizes that the answer to the minister’s questions will always be one of: 1. God; 2. Jesus; 3. Sin; 4. Bible; 5. Be Good!”

¹¹⁴Dennis E. Johnson, preface to *Heralds of the King: Christ-Centered Sermons in the Tradition of Edmund P. Clowney*, ed. Dennis E. Johnson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 12. The book consists of a volume of Christ-centered sermons offered in tribute for the ministry and influence of Edmund Clowney. Dennis E. Johnson notes in the preface three other leading contemporary evangelical homileticians who have advocated Christ-centered preaching and names Bryan Chapell, Sidney Greidanus, and Graeme Goldsworthy.

CHAPTER 4

AN ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY MODELS OF CHRISTOCENTRIC EXPOSITORY PREACHING

Introduction

The Ethiopian eunuch asked Phillip a question that every reader of the Old Testament must answer: “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet [Isaiah] say this, about himself or about someone else?” (Acts 8:34). Phillip answers that Isaiah was speaking about Jesus (Acts 8:35).¹ Phillip did not limit himself to the Isaiah passage; rather, it served as a starting point to explain how the entire Scripture teaches “the good news about Jesus” (Acts 8:35). Tim Keller has written that there are “only two ways to read the Bible: is it basically about me or basically about Jesus? In other words, is it basically about what I must do, or basically about what he has done?”² The pervasive testimony of the evangelical church has echoed the words of Jesus when He declared that

¹F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 176-77. Bruce notes that Phillip’s response breaks from the answers of much contemporary scholarship. He writes, “Phillip found no difficulty, nor did he hesitate between alternate answers. The prophet himself might not have known, but Phillip knew, because the prophecy had come true in his day, and so, ‘beginning at this scripture, he told him the good news about Jesus.’”

²Tim Keller, “Preaching in a Post-Modern City: A Case Study: I,” E-newsletter of the Redeemer Church Planting Center, June 2004 [on-line]; accessed 27 August 2011; available from <http://www.westerfunk.net/archives/theology/Tim%20Keller%20on%20Preaching%20in%20a%20Post-Modern%20City%20-%203/>; Internet. Keller illustrates his point with the David and Goliath narrative: “This is a fundamentally different meaning than the one that arises from the non-Christocentric reading. There is, in the end, only two ways to read the Bible: is it basically about me or basically about Jesus? In other words, is it basically about what I must do, or basically about what he has done? If I read David and Goliath as basically giving me an example, then the story is really about me. I must summons up the faith and courage to fight the giants in my life. But if I read David and Goliath as basically showing me salvation through Jesus, then the story is really about him. Until I see that Jesus fought the real giants (sin, law, death) for me, I will never have the courage to be able to fight ordinary giants in life (suffering, disappointment, failure, criticism, hardship). For example how can I ever fight the "giant" of failure, unless I have a deep security that God will not abandon me? If I see David as my example, the story will never help me fight the failure/giant. But if I see David/Jesus as my substitute, whose victory is imputed to me, then I can stand before the failure/giant.”

all the Scriptures testify of Him (John 5:39).³ Any attempt to segment the Bible in a way that does not recognize its divinely inspired, cohesive, Christ-centered storyline is tantamount to an “insidious denial of divine authorship” and represents an attempt to interpret the Bible while proceeding on “antisupernaturalist assumptions.”⁴

The persistence of Enlightenment rationalism has resulted in the prevalence of antisupernaturalist assumptions and the de facto denial of divine authorship in contemporary scholarship.⁵ Liberal scholars embraced a historical-critical methodology that led them to reject the notion that the Bible possesses a comprehensive, divinely given theological unity of message and purpose. Conservative scholars, committed to the inerrancy and unity of the Bible in principle, critiqued the hermeneutic of the New Testament writers and substituted a modern understanding of historical-grammatical interpretation.⁶ This move presupposes interpretive autonomy. It makes the interpreter a judge of the biblical writers; and, by limiting the interpretive historical context to that of

³To begin tracing this post-apostolic path of Christocentric interpretation and preaching consider the following broadly representative works: Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho and First Apology*, trans. M. Dods, Ante-Nicene Fathers, American ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971); Irenaeus, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. John Behr (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997); Augustine, *City of God and Christian Doctrine*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 2, American ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988); Martin Luther, *Collected Works*, trans. J. Pelikan, American ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958-1986); John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, trans. John King, American ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996); Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977); Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2000). For an excellent summary of the history of Christocentric biblical interpretation see David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992) and Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Model* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 69-176.

⁴See, Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 4-5 and Millard Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation: Perspectives on Hermeneutical Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 30-31.

⁵William D. Dennison, “Reason, History, and Revelation: Biblical Theology and the Enlightenment,” in *Resurrection and Eschatology: Theology in Service of the Church—Essays in Honor of Richard B. Gaffin*, ed. Lane G. Tipton and Jeffrey C. Waddington (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 340-60.

⁶Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 120-21.

the immediate human author, precludes redemptive-historical readings contextualized by the entire canon.⁷

The shadow of Enlightenment thought resulted in a virtual eclipse of Jesus in both camps. Under its influence, liberals abandoned the fundamentals of the faith, and conservatives contended for the fundamentals of the faith abstracted from Jesus. This eclipse of Jesus in scholarship trickled down to conservative pulpits, which, while proclaiming biblical inerrancy, were content to preach bare ethics and morality abstracted from Jesus and his kingdom. Its fruit was self-righteousness and legalism.

In this environment, in 1961, Edmund Clowney published *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, insisting on a Christocentric, evangelical biblical theology that looked to the whole canon for context.⁸ Since the publication of Clowney's pivotal work, others have produced significant volumes in the same vein: Bryan Chapell's *Christ-Centered Preaching* (1994), Sidney Greidanus's *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (1999), and Graeme Goldsworthy's *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (2000).⁹ This chapter will analyze and critique the model of each author.

⁷Dan G. McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 22-26; 153. The loudest evangelical voice arguing that a text should not be informed with the context of the entire Bible is Walter C. Kaiser. See Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 82. Kaiser writes, "Our second criticism is that the whole canon must not be used as the context for every exegesis. We do agree that 'proof texting,' that isolation and use of verses apart from their immediate or sectional context, is reprehensible and should be discontinued immediately. But in our chapter on theological analysis we will argue that the Church at large (since the time of the Reformers especially) is in error when she uses the analogy of faith (*analogia fidei*) as an exegetical device for extricating meaning from or importing meaning to texts that appeared earlier than the passage where the teaching is set forth most clearly or perhaps even for the first time" (emphasis original).

⁸Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1961), 13. Clowney contended that while many in the biblical theology movement were mired in historical critical methods that were antisupernaturalist that "Biblical theology is a contradiction in terms unless the Bible presents a consistent message." He further asserted, "Its [biblical theology's] essential presuppositions are the principles of revelation and inspiration claimed and assumed by the Bible itself."

⁹Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994); Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*; and Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

Edmund Clowney: Preaching and Biblical Theology

Edmund Clowney died in March of 2005 at eighty-seven years of age. He was ordained to the preaching ministry in 1942; and, from 1952 to 1984, he served as professor of practical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Clowney served as president of Westminster Theological Seminary from 1966 to 1982. He was a theologian, educator, pastor, and churchman who continued to be active in writing, teaching, and preaching after his retirement from seminary. At age eighty-two, he accepted a call to become associate pastor at Christ the King Presbyterian Church in Houston, Texas; and, at eighty-four, he became theologian in residence at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Charlottesville, Virginia.¹⁰ Clowney authored *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, *Called to the Ministry*, *Christian Meditation*, *The Unfolding Mystery*, *The Church*, *The Message of 1 Peter*, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, and *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments*, along with numerous articles and book reviews.¹¹

John Frame said of Clowney, “Nobody had a deeper understanding of how all Scripture witnesses to Christ.”¹² Clowney influenced a generation of preachers to apply evangelical biblical theology to its preaching, treating the whole Bible as a narrative that finds its meaning in Jesus.¹³ As Harvie Conn recalls,

¹⁰Edmund Clowney, *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments*, ed. Rebecca Clowney Jones (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), v.

¹¹Edmund Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*; idem, *Called to the Ministry* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1964); idem, *Christian Meditation* (Vancouver, BC: Regent, 1979); idem, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1988); idem, *The Message of 1 Peter* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988); idem, *The Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995); idem, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003); idem, *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments*.

¹²Clowney, *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments*, back cover.

¹³Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery*, 10. Clowney writes, “Preachers who ignore the history of redemption in their preaching are ignoring the witness of the Holy Spirit to Jesus in all the Scriptures.” See also D. Clair Davis, “Systematics, Spirituality, and the Christian Life,” in *The Pattern of Sound Doctrine: Systematic Theology at the Westminster Seminaries*, ed. David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 282. Davis writes, “Edmund Clowney taught a generation how to preach in a Christ-glorifying way.

No one who studied under Ed Clowney from 1952 to 1984 ever missed that commitment. He brought to every course biblical insights shaped by his studies in the history of special revelation. Whether in homiletics or Christian education, missions or ecclesiology, each class moved from Genesis to Revelation, drawing together the whole of Scripture with new insights that pointed in a fresh way to Christ and His redemptive purposes.¹⁴

In *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, Edmund Clowney desired to bridge the gap that often exists between study and pulpit.¹⁵ Clowney argued the necessity of biblical theology for the faithful preaching of the Word of God. He noted that, while the biblical theology movement was often cultivated by theological liberals, the concept of biblical theology is hollow without an inspired, infallible, unified revelation from God.¹⁶ Clowney describes but never offers a precise definition of biblical theology except for the one put forth by Geerhardus Vos in his *Biblical Theology*: “that branch of exegetical theology which deals with the process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the

Westminster students received a training continually being reinforced by a rigorous and devout focus on Jesus Christ, the one offered to us in the (biblical-theological) gospel.”

¹⁴Harvie Conn, foreword to *Practical Theology and the Ministry of the Church 1952-1984: Essays in Honor of Edmund P. Clowney*, ed. Harvie Conn (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1990), xi. See also Phillip Jensen, “Preaching the Word Today,” in *Preach the Word: Essays on Expository Preaching in Honor of R. Kent Hughes*, ed. Leland Ryken and Todd Wilson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 157. Jensen writes about reading Clowney’s *Preaching and Biblical Theology* while training for ministry in seminary and being surprised that instead of offering hints to preach it championed biblical theology. The book helped him realize “that the theology of the Bible is the most important ingredient in the training of the Christian preacher.”

¹⁵Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 5-6. The volume began as lectures given in 1956 to the Ministerial Institute of the Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. See William Edgar, “Making History: The Difference of Westminster,” *Westminster Today*, Spring 2008, 8. Edgar writes, “His book *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (1961) revolutionized the way preachers presented Christ in their sermons, avoiding both moralism and lifeless doctrinal preaching.”

¹⁶Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 13, 18. Clowney notes his indebtedness to Geerhardus Vos’s *Biblical Theology* throughout the opening section of the volume.

Bible.”¹⁷ Clowney adds that biblical theology “must take seriously both historical progression and theological unity in the Bible.”¹⁸

Clowney argues that the authority underlying faithful biblical-theological preaching is the Word of God written. Marten H. Woudstra notes that Clowney was contending against a notion of “God’s Word as deed rather than as objective communication of content.”¹⁹ Clowney denounced any suggestion that kerygmatic proclamation itself possessed an authority greater than the content of the proclamation in the Scripture:

The amazing chain of reasoning that argues from the scriptural premise that the word of God is efficacious and active to the contradictory conclusion that it is an act rather than a word has no support whatever in the Bible. The theory of preaching based upon it is equally contradictory.²⁰

Clowney concluded that the preacher is bound to the Word of God written because “In our hands we hold the inspired *kerygma* and *didache* of the witnesses who testify of Christ.”²¹ The Scripture represents God’s own infallible commentary of his deeds.

In discussing biblical theology and the character of preaching, Clowney highlights the eschatological situation of the act of preaching, which is to say the recognition of “the time in which we preach.”²² We preach in the last days, the age of

¹⁷Ibid., 15. Clowney describes biblical theology as “that which recognizes both the historical and progressive character of revelation and the unity of the divine counsel which it declares. Its interest is not exclusively theological, because then the history of the revelatory process would be comparatively incidental. Neither is its interest exclusively historical. Those who propose that it be a history of Hebrew religion manifest a basic misunderstanding of revelation, or a disbelief in it. It is not precisely even a history of revelation, for its theological concern carries it beyond any merely historical study of the course of revelation” (17).

¹⁸Ibid., 17.

¹⁹Marten H. Woudstra, review of *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, by Edmund Clowney, *WTJ* 24 (1962): 236.

²⁰Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 45. Contra, see C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), 7-8. Dodd draws a sharp distinction between *kerygma* and *didache* and broadens Bultmann’s concept of *kerygma* to include the idea of historical fulfillment.

²¹Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 61.

²²Ibid., 68.

fulfillment, the time of the coming of the kingdom with power, the already-but-not-yet of the kingdom of Christ. According to the author, “Preaching that has lost urgency and passion reveals a loss of the eschatological perspective of the New Testament.”²³

Clowney also asserts that the preacher must know “the place in which we preach.”²⁴ He calls for recognition of a biblical text’s place in redemptive history and an understanding that “The whole world, then, is the place where the gospel must be preached.”²⁵ According to Clowney, it is biblical theology that aids the preacher in understanding that preaching is both *kerygma* and *didache* and must take place in the church and the world. Clowney reminds his readers that God did not give us the Bible in the form of a textbook but that the revelation unfolds in progressive epochs in the history of redemption.²⁶ The epochs of revelation are connected by an organic unity that runs through redemptive history and centers on Jesus Christ. Therefore, biblically faithful expository preaching has one essential message—Jesus Christ.²⁷ The brand of preaching Clowney puts forth rejects simplistic moralizing but recognizes that there is no antithesis between redemptive-historical preaching and preaching the ethical imperatives of the Scripture.²⁸ Clowney argues that “The redemptive-historical approach necessarily yields ethical application, which is an essential part of preaching the Word.”²⁹

²³Ibid., 67.

²⁴Ibid, 68.

²⁵Ibid., 69.

²⁶Ibid., 75.

²⁷Ibid., 74. Clowney notes that there are many who would affirm the assertion that all preaching must be Christ-centered: “Yet even where this principle has long been acknowledged, the practice of preaching often falls short of this ideal.”

²⁸D. Clair Davis mildly critiques Clowney in regard to preaching the imperatives of the Scripture when he writes, “Clowney’s gospel indicative was superbly flawless, but what were his imperatives? They could at times to be simply, isn’t Jesus just marvelous? Isn’t what he has done for us amazing? Shouldn’t our hearts overflow with joy because of him? Certainly, if that glorious application is missing, we know immediately that everything is missing. Jesus Christ is indeed not only the grand indicative, but our worship of him the grand imperative too.” See Davis, “Systematics, Spirituality, and the Christian Life,” 282. See also John Carrick, *The Imperative of Preaching: A Theology of Sacred Rhetoric*

In closing his volume, Clowney argues that biblical theology is “the key to new richness in sermon content.”³⁰ Clowney asserts that he is not advocating a particular mode of sermon preparation but rather highlighting an essential component of biblical interpretation as such.³¹ The component has two steps: first, to interpret the text in its immediate context and historical period; second, to interpret the text in the biblical-theological context of the entire canon.³² In other words, every biblical passage must be interpreted in its textual horizon, epochal horizon and canonical horizon. Thus, he warns about the danger of attempting to apply biblical texts without understanding the text in its own biblical-theological context.³³

Moreover, the preacher may exploit symbolism from the entire canon to deepen his sermons since biblical symbolism is not an accidental literary feature but rather a unifying structural element: “Symbols abound in Scripture, not incidentally, but because of the structure of the history of redemption which is at once organic and progressive.”³⁴ Further, Clowney explains the relationship of symbolism to typology. He writes, “[symbolism involves] a vertical reference to revealed truth as it is manifested in a

(Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2002), 116. Carrick notes, “To many, Dr. Clowney represents the more moderate wing of redemptive-historical preaching. His great emphasis is upon the christological preaching of the Old Testament. . . . Indeed, he warns against any polarization of the *Christocentric* and the *ethical*.”

²⁹Carrick, *The Imperative of Preaching*, 80. For a contrary view from an evangelical proponent of biblical-theological preaching see William D. Dennison, “Biblical Theology and the Issue of Application in Preaching,” in *Reformed Spirituality: Communing with Our Glorious God*, ed. Joseph A. Pipa Jr. and J. Andrew Wortman (Taylors, SC: Southern Presbyterian Press, 2003), 119-51.

³⁰Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 87.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²*Ibid.*, 88. Clowney emphasizes, “It must be stressed that this second step is valid and fruitful only when it does come second.”

³³*Ibid.*, 89.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 101. For Clowney, to properly interpret biblical symbols one must recognize that the symbol is distinct from that which it represents. Second, there must be a relation between the symbol and what is being symbolized. Third, the reference of the symbols is divinely established in Scripture. Fourth, the symbols may be classified in various groups (100-06).

particular horizon of redemptive history. Typology is then the prospective reference to the same truth as it is manifested in the period of eschatological realization.”³⁵

Through his writing, teaching, and preaching Edmund Clowney influenced a generation of evangelicals to preach the entire Bible in a Christocentric way, and *Preaching and Biblical Theology* is the foundation of his influence.³⁶ Clowney furthered the Vosian tradition of biblical theology but did so in accessible language, in service to the academy and the local church.

Like many groundbreaking books, Clowney’s *Preaching and Biblical Theology* is not comprehensive. It is more a manifesto than a manual. For instance, Clowney does not address the issue of genre diversity. Consequently, the preacher might be convinced of what he should do but frustrated in its execution. In personal correspondence, Willem VanGemeran reflects my evaluation:

Clowney's Christocentric approach has affected me in my approach to the Old Testament by his insistence that the Old be connected to the New in some manner. He did not spell out how, and he confessed that he did not have the expertise in the Old Testament to do so. Nevertheless, his model has remained with me for these nearly forty years.³⁷

³⁵Ibid., 110.

³⁶Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, iiix. The volume is dedicated “In memory of Edmund Prosper Clowney (1917-2005) Pastor, Preacher, Professor, Leader, Mentor, Who showed us what it means to Preach Christ from All the Scriptures, To Marvel at the Savior’s Grace, To Love His Church.” See also Reggie M. Kidd, *With One Voice: Discovering Christ’s Song in Our Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 9. Kidd writes, “I offer this book in loving memory of one of my teachers, Edmund P. Clowney (1917-2005), gentle warrior, gracious statesman, clever wordsmith, and ardent lover of the church. Clowney introduced me to the biblical notion of Jesus Christ as a Singing Savior.” Baptist theologian Wayne Grudem includes Clowney as one of the people to whom he dedicates his systematic theology, in his *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 5.

³⁷Willem VanGemeran, e-mail message to author, May 12, 2008. For a less positive critique, see Graeme Goldsworthy, “Is Biblical Theology Viable?” in *Interpreting God’s Plan: Biblical Theology and the Pastor*, ed. R. J. Gibson (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1997), 32. Goldsworthy writes, “Everybody recognizes that there is development in the biblical message, and listing a series of significant events and people is hardly profound. Periodicity is not the issue. The issue is whether or not the various parts can be said to hang together in some kind of meaningful whole, and, if they do, what kind of unity they form. The same weakness emerges in Clowney’s more recent book *The Unfolding Mystery*.” Goldsworthy’s critique is overstated. Clowney does not simply recognize that the Bible unfolds in progressive epochs but that these epochs hang together based on a single, unified story of redemptive history that centers on Christ and weaves both testaments together.

Bryan Chapell: Christ-Centered Preaching

In 1994, thirty-three years after the publication of Clowney's *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, Bryan Chapell released *Christ-Centered Preaching*. The volume has become a standard homiletics text for many evangelical seminaries. Chapell has been the president of Covenant Theological Seminary since 1994, having spent a decade in pastoral ministry. He is the author of ten books and a plethora of popular and scholarly articles.³⁸ Chapell currently teaches introductory homiletics and preaching practicum at Covenant Theological Seminary.

Chapell sees his own work as following in the tradition of Vos and Clowney: "When *Christ-Centered Preaching* was published . . . I was launching my redemptive preaching canoe on a small stream fed by a few headwaters—the likes of Geerhardus Vos, Edmund Clowney, and John Sanderson."³⁹ Chapell asserts that authority and redemption are the two words "about which the whole of this work could be wrapped."⁴⁰ The author writes in response to what he sees as two enemies of expository preaching. The first is the erosion of biblical authority in favor of subjectivism and relativism; the second is the substitution of duty-oriented, moralistic preaching for Christocentric preaching.⁴¹ The book divides into three primary sections: "Principles for Expository Preaching," "Preparation of Expository Preaching," and "Theology for Christ-Centered

³⁸Bryan Chapell's books include *Christ-Centered Preaching; In the Grip of Grace: When You Can't Hang On* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992); *The Wonder of It All: Rediscovering the Treasures of Your Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999); *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000); *Using Illustrations to Preach with Power* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001); *The Promises of Grace: Living in the Grip of God's Love* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001); *Holiness by Grace: Delighting in the Joy that is Our Strength* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003); *Praying Backwards* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005); *I'll Love You Anyway and Always* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001); and Bryan Chapell and Kathy Chapell, *Each for the Other: Marriage as Its Meant to Be* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).

³⁹Bryan Chapell, "The Future of Expository Preaching," *Presbyterion* 30, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 74.

⁴⁰Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 11. In choosing authority and redemption as the key words to summarize *Christ-Centered Preaching*, Chapell uses two words that could also be used as the key words for Clowney's *Preaching and Biblical Theology*.

⁴¹Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 11-12.

Messages.”⁴² Unlike most other texts that advocate a Christocentric, redemptive-historical approach to preaching, Chapell’s volume contains all of the elements of standard homiletics books: outlining, structure, transitions, illustrations, application, dress, and delivery. The book is strong on theology and technique, a rare combination. As Sidney Greidanus notes, “The author obviously intended this book to be the one book on preaching that seminary students will buy and use throughout their ministry.”⁴³

Chapell seeks to “communicate how important preaching is and what is really important in preaching.”⁴⁴ The author contends that the power of the word is manifested in Christ as the divine λόγος, and the power of the word is applied in faithful preaching.⁴⁵ Chapell desires “to identify the commitments a preacher assumes in developing a well constructed sermon.”⁴⁶ He understands that truth, by itself, is not a sermon. To be classified as a sermon, the preaching of truth must be unified, purposive, and applicable.⁴⁷ Chapell stresses the necessity of determining a text’s “Fallen Condition Focus,” which is “the mutual human condition that contemporary believers share with those to or for whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage.”⁴⁸

⁴²Ibid., 17-98; 99-262; 263-312. The book also concludes with seven appendices (313-59), a selected bibliography (361-67), and a topical index (369-75).

⁴³Sidney Greidanus, review of *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, by Bryan Chapell, *Calvin Theological Journal* 30 (1995): 283. Greidanus also notes, “The topic of the book’s main title, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, though not absent in the earlier chapters, is mainly addressed in two excellent final chapters on a redemptive-historical approach to biblical interpretation and preaching.”

⁴⁴Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 16.

⁴⁵Ibid., 18-23. According to Chapell, expository preaching presents the power of the word, the authority of the word, and the work of the Spirit.

⁴⁶Ibid., 34.

⁴⁷Ibid., 35.

⁴⁸Ibid., 40, 42. Zack Eswine seeks to expand Chapell’s approach to Fallen Condition Focus when he writes, “As is stands, the FCF helpfully urges the preacher to account for Christians in a fallen world. Its focus is what contemporary *believers* share and the grace that *God’s people* require. The FCF is equipped primarily as a tool for church contexts. Without losing this essential paradigm, we want to expand Chapell’s FCF to more explicitly account for the global contexts. This means we must fit the FCF

Identifying the Fallen Condition Focus allows the preacher to identify the “So what?” of the sermon, which Chapell asserts is necessary for an instance of preaching to be a sermon as such.⁴⁹

Chapell explains “basic tools and rules for selecting and interpreting texts.”⁵⁰ He insists on the historical-grammatical method and on the observation of the passage's historical, cultural, literary, canonical, and redemptive-historical contexts: “We determine the meaning of a passage by seeing not only how words are used in the context of a book or its passages, but also how the passage functions in the entire scope of Scripture.”⁵¹ The fourth chapter concludes the discussion on principles for expository preaching and seeks to “identify the historical, homiletical, and attitudinal components of expository messages.”⁵² Chapell sees the pattern of biblical exposition as: “present the Word; explain what it says; and exhort based on what it means,” which generally consists of explanation, illustration, and application.⁵³

Chapter 5 begins the second section of the book, which concerns the preparation of expository sermons.⁵⁴ To this end, he advocates the use of “Six Critical

for unchurched and in-between cultural contexts as well” (*Preaching to a Post-Everything World: Crafting Biblical Sermons that Connect with Our Culture* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008], 45).

⁴⁹Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 44. He writes, “No passage relates neutral commentary on our fallenness. No text communicates facts for information alone. The Bible itself tells us that its pages instruct, reprove, and correct.” Go expects scriptural truths to transform his people. Faithful preaching does the same. The preacher who identifies a passage’s FCF for his congregation automatically gears them to consider the Bible’s solutions and instructions for contemporary life.”

⁵⁰Ibid., 50.

⁵¹Ibid., 70-73. Chappell footnotes Walter Kaiser’s *Toward an Exegetical Theology* for an explanation of the grammatical-historical interpretive method which both Kaiser and Chappell affirm, without noting the stark differences in the way they understand the method. Chappell provides no mention of the fact that Kaiser rejects the use of the analogy of Scripture (which Chappell affirms) as “wrongheaded historically, logically, and biblically.” See Walter C. Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 26.

⁵²Chappell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 76.

⁵³Ibid., 82, 85. According to Chapell, “A true expository message uses all of its resources to move to application” (79).

⁵⁴Ibid., 97-259.

Questions.” The first three “relate to the preacher’s research of the text’s meaning”; the second three “determine how the preacher will relate the text’s meaning.”⁵⁵ He considers outlining and structuring as crucial to the sermon as a whole: “a key to the revival of effective exposition is teaching pastors to hone the structure of their messages so that the truth of Scripture can shine clearly through this long-trusted approach.”⁵⁶ Application, Chapell argues, “fulfills the obligations of exposition” because “at its heart preaching is not merely the proclamation of truth, but it is truth applied.”⁵⁷

While Chapell refers to Christ-centered preaching throughout the volume, it is only in the final two chapters that he directly addresses a redemptive-historical approach to interpretation and preaching.⁵⁸ According to Chapell, the entire process of expository preaching depends on “a clear identification of the Fallen Condition Focus,” which gives the sermon a “distinct aim,” “unified purpose,” and “relevant application.”⁵⁹ Alongside homiletical considerations, the author’s theological argument for his position flows from the contention that “Scripture continually aims to restore some aspect of our brokenness to spiritual wholeness.”⁶⁰ Chapell insists that, without having identified the Fallen Condition Focus, “we do not really know what a text is about” and that we “should never

⁵⁵Ibid., 100-01. Chappell’s six critical questions are “(1) What does the text mean? (2) How do I know what the text means? (3) What concerns caused the text to be written? (4) What do we share in common with: (a) Those to (or about) whom the text was written, and/or (b) The one by whom the text was written? (5) How should people now respond to the truths of the text? (6) What is the most effective way I can communicate the meaning of the text?”

⁵⁶Ibid., 130, 132-38. According to Chapell, outlines should be marked by unity, brevity, harmony, symmetry, progression, distinction, and culmination.

⁵⁷Ibid., 199-200.

⁵⁸Ibid., 261-312. Griedanus, review of *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 283.

⁵⁹Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 263.

⁶⁰Ibid. Chapell’s touchstone text for the theological priority of interpreting and preaching the Bible in light of a Fallen Condition Focus is rooted in 2 Tim 3:16-17, which states, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.” He reasons that this “necessarily implies that even the most gifted persons remain spiritually incomplete apart from God’s revelation.”

preach on a passage until we have determined an FCF the Holy Spirit intended this Scripture to address.”⁶¹

Next, Chapell critiques moralistic preaching as sub-Christian.⁶² Chapell understands that it is possible for a preacher to state assertions that are true but, when stated in isolation from canonical context, misleading. He asserts that a sermon which does not recognize that “all Scripture predicts, prepares for, reflects, or results from the ministry of Christ” offers only human-centered, non-redemptive, moralistic messages that are damaging to true faith.⁶³ Chapell points out that the Bible gives moral instruction within a redemptive context, and ignoring that context “promotes pharisaism or prompts despair.”⁶⁴

Chapell’s final chapter provides methods for the construction of “expository sermons that reflect the redemptive content of every biblical text.”⁶⁵ Chapell begins with a broad perspective, instructing the preacher to capture the redemptive flow, indentify the Fallen Condition Focus, and specify the Christ-focus of the text.⁶⁶ His approach necessitates identifying and applying the redemptive principles evident in every text. The author believes that the bridge between the world of the text and contemporary world lies in the mutual condition of fallenness and the need for grace.⁶⁷ Chapell contends that the

⁶¹Ibid., 265.

⁶²Ibid., 267-69.

⁶³Ibid., 280-81. Chapell notes that evangelical preachers who fall into this error of non-redemptive preaching usually do so unintentionally and most often mean well.

⁶⁴Ibid., 285.

⁶⁵Ibid., 288.

⁶⁶Ibid., 289-98.

⁶⁷Paul Scott Wilson, review of *Christ-Centered Preaching*, by Bryan Chapell, *Homiletic* 20 (1995): 11-14. Wilson detects naïvete in Chapell’s approach: “One of the biggest problems for contemporary homiletics has been to find ways of discussing the ‘bridge’ between the biblical text and our world. Chapell’s approach that assumes a common identity between biblical people and us is open to the criticism of being historically and culturally naïve however pastorally effective it might be.” However, the apostle Paul makes the same assumption (Rom 4:23; 1 Cor 9:10; 10:11).

preacher who embraces the principles he advocates will be able to “explain the role of any epoch, event, person, and passage within the divine crusade of redemption, i.e., the sovereign victory of the Seed of the Woman over Satan.”⁶⁸

Christ-Centered Preaching has been a classic text on homiletics since its 1994 publication.⁶⁹ Any professor teaching an introductory course in Christ-centered preaching will find it difficult to avoid assigning this book. It focuses on the fundamentals of sermon preparation without losing a broad, coherent theological vision. Throughout, Chappell argues that method is not neutral; it is a theological matter. And this contention lends weight to his critique of atomistic, moralistic preaching.

Nevertheless, the volume lacks a comprehensive vision for Christ-centered preaching. While claiming that *Christ-Centered Preaching* is in the tradition of Vos and Clowney, Chappell’s text lacks any overarching eschatological focus. What drives Chappell’s Christocentric method is the commitment to finding the Fallen Condition Focus of the passage, only subsequently discerning the Christ-focus of the text. When one reads in Chappell that our “hope resides in the assurance that all Scripture has a Fallen Condition Focus (FCF),” one might conclude that a depravity hermeneutic is central to Chappell’s approach.⁷⁰ The danger in this is a methodological transformation from eschatologically oriented Christocentricity to anthropocentricity. Chappell does not advocate or discuss the two-age eschatology that is central to the Christocentric method of Geerhardus Vos and is reflected in Clowney’s work as well.⁷¹

⁶⁸Chappell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 297.

⁶⁹Griedanus, review of *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 282. He writes, “Bryan Chappell’s book, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, is one of the best contemporary books on the topic of preaching.” See also Timothy S. Warren, review of *Christ-Centered Preaching*, by Bryan Chappell, *Bib Sac* 152 (1995): 252-53. Warren writes, “This is the best book on expository preaching I have read since Haddon Robinson’s *Biblical Preaching*, published in 1980. *Preaching* magazine named *Christ-Centered Preaching* the 1994 ‘Book of the Year.’ It could easily have won ‘Book of the Decade.’ . . . This book will be in the classrooms and on the desks of preachers for years to come.”

⁷⁰Chappell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 41.

⁷¹Richard B. Gaffin, “Geerhardus Vos (1862-1949),” in *Dictionary of Major Biblical*

Consequently, Chapell's approach to biblical theology in preaching could cause some to have a flattened reading of Scripture. The primacy of Fallen Condition Focus gives man centrality in biblical interpretation and tends toward an individualized view of the gospel and salvation, obscuring that the gospel message is the message of the kingdom (Mk 1:15; Luke 4:43).⁷² When one understands the Christian life itself eschatologically, one realizes that biblical interpretation must begin with Christ, the eschatological man, and his eschatological Kingdom. Although Chapell recognizes that the biblical text is marked by historical progression and epochs that all relate to Christ, he never points his reader toward the vertical or eschatological dimension, the dimension that reminds the preacher that Scripture is a narrative always headed somewhere—toward Christ and the consummation of his kingdom (Rev 1:8, 17; 21:6, 8; 22:13). Anyone who desires to produce Christ-centered preaching must not ignore the Christocentric, eschatological pull of Scripture.

Chapell also contends that, though unlikely, “preachers may not specifically mention Jesus in some sermons and yet these messages can remain Christ-centered.”⁷³

Interpreters, ed. Donald K. McKim (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 1017. Gaffin summarizes Vos's approach, “Within the wide variety of literary genres present in Scripture, there is a common overall historical focus with an eschatological orientation. Specifically, that controlling framework is the history that begins with the entrance of human sin into the originally good creation; incorporates along the way the history of Israel, his chosen covenant people; and reaches its culmination in the person and saving work of the incarnate Christ, the triune God's supreme, nothing less than eschatological self-revelation.” See also Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology*; idem, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1994); and idem, *The Eschatology of the Old Testament*, ed. James T. Dennison (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001). Additionally, see Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 67. Clowney writes, “Preaching that has lost urgency and passion reveals a loss of the eschatological perspective of the New Testament.”

⁷²Though the phrase *Kingdom of God* does not appear in the Old Testament, the entire biblical storyline is built upon the conflict between the Serpent and the promised seed (Gen 3:15; Rev 12:5). Key Old Testament chapters that highlight the Old Testament expectation regarding the Kingdom of God include: Isa 2, 11, 61; Jer 31; Dan 7, 12; Joel 2; and Mic 4. For an excellent discussion of the Kingdom of God in the parables see David Wenham, *The Parables of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989).

⁷³Chapell, *Christ-centered Preaching*, 295. Chapell notes he is following Sidney Greidanus in his assertion you can preach a Christ-centered sermon without mentioning Christ. See Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1970), 144-45. Greidanus' point is that the sermon does not have to refer to Christ incarnate to be Christ-centered. It should be noted that when Greidanus defines the meaning of preaching Christ in a later volume he writes, “More specifically, to preach Christ is to proclaim some facet of the *person, work, or teaching* of

But, as Goldsworthy says, “Why would you even want to try to preach a Christian sermon without mentioning Jesus?”⁷⁴ Beyond that, it is impossible for a Christian preacher to preach a Christ-centered sermon without specifically mentioning Jesus because all legitimate biblical interpretation and application is mediated through Christ.⁷⁵ Chapell insists that sermons must preach grace, but how can grace be detached from the person and work of Christ? While mentioning the name of Jesus or events from His life does not necessarily make a sermon biblically faithful or Christ-centered, Chapell is mistaken when he asserts “Theocentric preaching is Christ-centered preaching.”⁷⁶

For instance, a sermon on Exodus 20:14 (“You shall not commit adultery”) could note that the command comes from a sovereign God who has been the redeemer of his people (Exod 20:1-2), explain that adultery violates God’s design (Gen 1:21-25), and enumerate negative consequences for disobeying the command. This sermon would be theocentric. It would speak of sin, redemption, and judgment. It would say true things. But it would be sub-Christian. Without mentioning Jesus, this is not a Christian sermon. Ephesians, for example, explains that adultery has always been evil because it lies to the

Jesus of Nazareth so that people may believe him, trust him, love him, and obey him,” (*Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 8).

⁷⁴Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 115.

⁷⁵Russell D. Moore, “Beyond a Veggie Tales Gospel: Preaching Christ from Every Text,” *Southern Seminary Magazine*, Spring 2008, 15. Moore writes, preaching Christ “means seeing all reality as being summed up in Christ and showing believers how to find themselves in the story of Jesus. . . . Why can’t I simply say true things from the Scripture without showing how it fits together in Christ? It is because apart from Christ, there are no promises of God. In his temptation of Jesus, Satan quotes Scripture and he doesn’t misquote the promises: God wants His children to eat bread, not starve before stones; God will protect His anointed One with the angels of heaven; God will give His Messiah all the kingdoms of the earth. All this is true. What is satanic about all of this, though, is that Satan wanted our Lord to grasp these things apart from the cross and the empty tomb. These promises could not be abstracted from the Gospel. The people in the pews can go to hell clinging to Bible verses abstracted from Jesus.”

⁷⁶Chapell, *Christ-centered Preaching*, 296. See David Michael King, “Preaching Christ from the Old Testament at Concord Baptist Church Chattanooga, Tennessee” (D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007), 48. King argues the book would have been more aptly titled *Grace-Centered Preaching*.

world about Christ and the church (5:22-32).⁷⁷ According to Paul, the “mystery” of the ages is further revealed in the one-flesh union of Christ and the church. The one-flesh union of male and female was created to prefigure the archetype.⁷⁸ Marriage was created to show us Christ and his faithful love. It is no less egregious to preach about marriage without reference to Christ than it would be to preach about the sacrificial system without mentioning him. Theocentric preaching leads away from Christ and his gospel when interpretation and application is not mediated through him.

Sidney Greidanus: Preaching Christ from the Old Testament

Sidney Greidanus is professor emeritus of preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Greidanus’s doctoral dissertation, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts*, was published in 1970. In the volume, Greidanus examined the “exemplary-redemptive-historical controversy” that raged in the reformed churches in the Netherlands in the 1930s and early 1940s and presented contemporary principles for preaching historical texts.⁷⁹ In 1988, Greidanus’ second volume, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature*, built on and expanded the discussion of his earlier work to include principles for preaching all biblical literary genres.⁸⁰

⁷⁷Clowney, *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments*, 91-105.

⁷⁸Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., *Whoredom: God’s Unfaithful Wife in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 157-58. Ortlund writes, “The interlacing of the two themes, human marriage and divine marriage, is now seen unambiguously to be meaningful and appropriate, not arbitrary or incidental. Human marriage, as envisaged in Paul’s instructions and as defined by Genesis 2:24, is to reveal the mystery of Christ loving his responsive church. Such a marriage bears living witness to the meaning of ‘two become one’, rendering visibly literal something of the eternal romance between Christ and his body. Paul calls such marriage a ‘profound’ mystery presumably because thy commonness of the institution may dull his readers’ eyes to its true significance. The adjective calls the reader to alertness, to sensitive, respectful perception.”

⁷⁹Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 1.

⁸⁰Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), xi.

In his first two books, Greidanus argues that moralistic and exemplary approaches to preaching are unacceptable. He contends instead for Christocentricity. His call for Christocentric preaching climaxes in *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Model*, published in 1999.⁸¹ The book grew out of a popular elective course Greidanus taught on Christocentric preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary. The work aims “to provide seminary students and preachers with a responsible, contemporary model for preaching Christ from the Old Testament” and “to challenge Old Testament scholars to broaden their focus and to understand the Old Testament not only in its own historical context but also in the context of the New Testament.”⁸² In 2007, Greidanus followed *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* with *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons*, which seeks comprehensively to apply his Christocentric method to the Genesis narratives.⁸³ This chapter, however, will focus on his magnum opus, *Preaching Christ in the Old Testament*.

The first four chapters of *Preaching Christ in the Old Testament* are theological and historical; the last four are methodological. Greidanus opens the book by arguing for the necessity of preaching both Christ and the Old Testament.⁸⁴ The author acknowledges the difficulty of defining what it means to preach Christ and suggests that examining the New Testament on the subject is more valuable than offering another

⁸¹David H. Schuringa, review of *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method*, by Sidney Greidanus, *Calvin Theological Journal* 36 (2001): 211. Schuringa writes, “Although that outstanding work [*The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*] began a discussion on this subject, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* breaks new ground as it provides a detailed and practical expansion upon his earlier teachings.”

⁸²Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, xii.

⁸³Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007). In the preface Greidanus describes *Preaching Christ from Genesis* as a complement to his *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, “further intended to demonstrate and reinforce the redemptive-historical Christocentric method.”

⁸⁴Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 1-32.

definition.⁸⁵ Greidanus notes that “the heart of apostolic preaching is Jesus Christ” and that preaching Christ means “preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God.”⁸⁶ Ultimately, he defines preaching Christ as proclaiming “some facet of the *person, work, or teaching* of Jesus of Nazareth so that people may believe him, trust him, love him, and obey him.”⁸⁷ Greidanus bemoans the lack of preaching from the Old Testament. Even when a sermon finds its way into the Old Testament, Greidanus notes, it frequently ignores Christ.⁸⁸ While acknowledging the difficulties of preaching the Old Testament, Greidanus offers compelling reasons for preaching from both testaments.⁸⁹

Greidanus focuses on the necessity of preaching Christ from the Old Testament and clarifies that he is not simply arguing “for the general category of God-centered preaching but for the more specific category of explicitly Christ-centered preaching.”⁹⁰ He emphasizes that “the Old Testament must be interpreted not only in its own context but also in the context of the New Testament.”⁹¹ Moreover, Greidanus roots his argument in an awareness of the progressiveness of redemptive history: “The arrival of Jesus in the ‘fullness of time’ and God’s final revelation in him calls for reading the Old Testament from the perspective of this final revelation.”⁹²

⁸⁵Ibid., 3.

⁸⁶Ibid., 4,8.

⁸⁷Ibid., 8.

⁸⁸Ibid., 15.

⁸⁹Ibid., 22-32. Greidanus lists the reasons for preaching the Old Testament as follows: it is part of the Christian canon, it discloses the history of redemption leading to Christ, it proclaims truths not found in the New Testament, it helps us to understand the New Testament, it prevents misunderstanding the New Testament, and it provides a fuller understanding of Christ.

⁹⁰Ibid., 37. Mike Graves, review of *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method*, by Sidney Greidanus, *Review and Expositor* 97 (2000): 129.

⁹¹Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 51.

⁹²Ibid., 52.

Greidanus summarizes the history of preaching Christ from the Old Testament, “[examining] this history primarily in terms of methods of interpretation and to let the original authors speak for themselves as much as feasible.”⁹³ He discusses the influence of allegorical, typological, and fourfold interpretation, analyzing what he perceives to be the strengths and shortcomings of each.⁹⁴ Greidanus spends a great deal of space explaining Luther’s Christological method of interpretation and Calvin’s theocentric method.⁹⁵ The author concludes his survey with the modern Christological hermeneutics of Charles Spurgeon and Wilhelm Vischer.⁹⁶ Following the 1930s, Greidanus summarizes, there was a half-century long “virtual silence on the topic of preaching Christ from the Old Testament.”⁹⁷

Chapter 5 transitions to methodological concerns. Greidanus warns against the Christomonism he finds in Wilhelm Vischer and others, maintaining that “the first New Testament principle to remember is that Christ is not to be separated from God but was sent by God, accomplished the work of God, and sought the glory of God.”⁹⁸ But Greidanus’s primary concern among his contemporary readers is the opposite danger:

⁹³Ibid., 69.

⁹⁴Ibid., 70-110.

⁹⁵Ibid., 111-151. Comparing Luther’s approach to Calvin’s, Greidanus writes, “In spite of broad agreement, however, Calvin’s hermeneutical approach is quite different from Luther’s. Luther was concerned mainly about the issue of salvation and focused on justification by faith in Christ. Consequently, finding Christ in the Old Testament became Luther’s priority. Calvin, though affirming justification by faith in Christ has a broader viewpoint, namely, the sovereignty and glory of God. The broader perspective enables Calvin to be satisfied with biblical messages about God, God’s redemptive history, and God’s covenant without necessarily focusing these messages on Jesus Christ” (127).

⁹⁶Ibid., 151-176. Greidanus critiques Spurgeon for virtually ignoring the cosmic, Kingdom implications of the gospel in his Christocentric approach: “Although his Metropolitan Tabernacle did start many different philanthropic organizations—from an orphanage to a Pastor’s College and from almshouses to mission halls—it cannot be denied that in his preaching Spurgeon considerably narrowed the scope of the gospel from the immense view of the coming kingdom of God to the salvation of the individual through the substitutionary atonement of Christ” (162).

⁹⁷Ibid., 176.

⁹⁸Ibid., 179.

“preaching the Old Testament in a God-centered way without relating it to God’s ultimate revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ.”⁹⁹

The heart of Greidanus’s project is his assertion that “many roads lead from the Old Testament to Christ.” He outlines seven of these roads: redemptive-historical progression, promise-fulfillment, typology, analogy, longitudinal themes, contrast, and New Testament reference.¹⁰⁰ Greidanus acknowledges that these paths are interdependent and frequently intertwine.¹⁰¹ He labels his approach a “redemptive-historical Christocentric method” that seeks to understand an Old Testament text “first in its own historical-cultural context” and then in the “broad contexts of the whole canon and the whole of redemptive history.”¹⁰² Greidanus discusses each of the roads that lead from the Old Testament to Christ and provides examples of how to apply them to particular sections of Scripture. But Greidanus, warns that “our concern should not be whether we have stuck to the precise parameters of a particular way. Our concern should rather be: Does this sermon preach Christ?”¹⁰³

Greidanus lists ten steps for the construction of Christocentric sermons from Old Testament texts.¹⁰⁴ He provides lengthy examples from Genesis 22, exploring each of the seven ways which could lead to Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁵ He desires “to clarify further the

⁹⁹Ibid., 182.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 203, 203-224, 234, 269. According to Greidanus, the interpreter should consider the way of New Testament reference “either last or at the end of the five ways of continuity, just before the way of contrast” so that “the New Testament references can confirm our findings, correct our insights and oversights, or provide new angles” (234). For a summary of Greidanus’s ways of preaching Christ from the Old Testament, see Sidney Greidanus, “Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,” *Bib Sac* 161 (2004): 3-13. See also idem, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 1-6.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 203.

¹⁰²Ibid., 228.

¹⁰³Ibid., 276.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 279-80.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 279-318.

use of this Christocentric method and to make questioning the text about its witness to Jesus Christ an ingrained habit.”¹⁰⁶ Of particular concern to Greidanus is the contrast between the redemptive-historical Christocentric method and an allegorical one.¹⁰⁷

Greidanus has been one of the most prominent advocates of Christ-centered preaching, and *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* is his most significant contribution. Brian D. Nolder reviews it enthusiastically: “Sidney Greidanus’ new book may be the most important book to be published on preaching since . . . his last book on preaching.”¹⁰⁸ The work has garnered much attention; and, while most reviewers are more tempered than Nolder, they almost universally predict its continued influence in the classroom and pulpit.¹⁰⁹ As Donald R. Glenn avers, “It should be recommended reading for all pastors and exegetes working with the Old Testament text and with the New Testament use of the Old.”¹¹⁰

Nevertheless, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* possesses notable deficiencies. Greidanus’s presentation of ways of preaching Christ is formulaic and does not adequately reflect their dynamic relationship. As David Peterson says, “The problem with Greidanus’ approach is determining which ‘way’ to follow and deciding which line

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 319.

¹⁰⁷The following are the Old Testament texts Greidanus uses to contrast his Christocentric approach to an allegorical one: Gen 6:9-8:22; Exod 15:22-27, 17:8-16; Num 19; and Josh 2 and 6.

¹⁰⁸Brian D. Nolder, review of *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament, Reformation and Revival Journal* 9 (2000): 181-89.

¹⁰⁹See the following reviews of *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*: Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Interpretation* 54 (2000): 218; Stephen Farris, *Homiletic* 25 (2000): 18-20; Donald R. Glenn, *Bib Sac* 160 (2003): 383-84; Mike Graves, *Review and Expositor* 97 (2000): 129-30; I. H. Marshall, *Evangelical Quarterly* 73, no. 4 (2001): 347-48; Todd Murphy, *JETS* 44 (2001): 330-32; Schuringa, *Calvin Theological Journal* 36 (2001): 211-14; Matthew Sleeman, *Churchman* 114 (2000): 186-87.

¹¹⁰Glenn, review of *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 384.

of interpretation should take priority. He does not show the link between these perspectives, other than to say they center on Christ.”¹¹¹ Goldsworthy echoes the concern:

My one concern with the excellent analysis proposed by Sidney Greidanus is that his proposal of some eight ways of linking the Old and New Testaments can give the impression that these are largely unconnected approaches which must be chosen to suit the particular instances under review.¹¹²

Greidanus also asserts that “The whole Old Testament throbs with a strong eschatological beat,” but his method does not consistently point to the overarching goal of the cosmos, the eschatological consummation of the Kingdom of Christ. He misses the most foundational connection between Old Testament and New, that all things are eschatologically summed up in Christ (Eph 1:10).

Commenting on the dangers of a formulaic approach to preaching Christ Sinclair Ferguson writes,

It is likely to produce preaching that is wooden and insensitive to the rich contours of biblical theology. Its artificiality would lie in our going through the motions of exegeting and expounding the Old Testament and then, remembering the formula, tidying our notes in order to align them with it. The net result over an extended period of time might be akin to that produced by children’s sermons in which the intelligent child soon recognizes that the answer to the minister’s questions will always be one of: 1. God; 2. Jesus; 3. Sin; 4. Bible; 5. Be Good! Of course we need to work with general principles as we develop as preachers; but it is a far greater desideratum that we develop an instinctive mindset and, corresponding to that, such a passion for Jesus Christ himself, that we will find our way to him in a natural and realistic way rather than a merely formulaic one.¹¹³

Although Ferguson is not targeting Greidanus specifically, the criticism applies. The Christ-centered instinct that Ferguson mentions is an excellent description of what one finds in apostolic preaching. Formerly vacillating, fearful disciples did not transform into bold preachers of the truth via technical study of hermeneutical formulae.

¹¹¹David Peterson, *Christ and His People in the Book of Isaiah* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity, 2003), 19.

¹¹²Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Biblical-Theological Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 248.

¹¹³Sinclair Ferguson, “Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: Developing a Christ-Centered Instinct,” *A Proclamation Trust Media Paper 2*, 2002, 5.

Rather, after the resurrection, these men began to understand that they were already a part of a new age in Christ, an eschatological kingdom-community, and that “in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son” (Heb 1:2). Their transformation was the result of an instinctual apprehension of a particular hermeneutic. They now read their Bibles with new eyes, believing that all Scripture testified of Christ and his kingdom (Luke 24:27; 44-45; John 5:39; Acts 1:3).¹¹⁴

Greidanus’s ways of preaching Christ from the Old Testament would be more useful if they were driven and connected by a larger Christocentric eschatological vision of the kingdom. As Ferguson remarks, drawing connections to Christ is not enough because “many sermons from the *Gospels*—where the focus is explicitly on the person of Jesus—never mind the Old Testament, are far from Christ centered.”¹¹⁵

Graeme Goldsworthy: Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture

Graeme Goldsworthy is retired lecturer in Old Testament, biblical theology, and hermeneutics at Moore Theological College in Sydney, Australia, where he continues to teach as a visiting lecturer. Goldsworthy is a Reformed, evangelical Anglican scholar who spent many years in full-time pastoral ministry.¹¹⁶ Arguably Goldsworthy’s most influential book, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of*

¹¹⁴Peterson, *Christ and His People in the Book of Isaiah*, 24-25. In drawing preaching guidelines from Acts, Peterson writes, “So Paul’s preaching of Christ and the facts of the gospel was set within the wider theological framework of proclaiming the kingdom.”

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 5-6. Ferguson also writes, “A second observation worth noting in this connection is that many (perhaps most) outstanding preachers of the Bible (and of Christ in all Scripture) are so instinctively. Ask them what their formula is and you will draw a blank expression. The principles they use have been developed unconsciously, through a combination of native ability, gift, and experience as listeners and preachers. Some men might struggle to give a series of lectures on how they go about preaching. Why? Because what they have developed is an *instinct*; preaching biblically has become their native language. They are able to use the language of biblical theology, without reflecting on what part of speech they are using.” It is important to note that, like Greidanus, Ferguson does provide a list of principles for preaching Christ in the Old Testament, but the difference lies in their presentation: Ferguson offers these principles to support a larger Christocentric, kingdom vision.

¹¹⁶Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, xii, xv.

Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching, was published in 2000.¹¹⁷ Prior to this volume, Goldsworthy wrote a series of biblical theology monographs for a popular audience in order to fill a perceived void in classroom literature.¹¹⁸ *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* was published in 1991 as a more comprehensive biblical theology written in the context of and for the benefit of the local church.¹¹⁹ Goldsworthy traces his interest in evangelical biblical theology and Christocentric interpretation and preaching through the tradition of Vos and Clowney, although most directly through Donald Robinson, his teacher at Moore College in the late 1950s.¹²⁰

The work of interest here is Goldsworthy's pivotal text of biblical theology, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*. Goldsworthy's goal for *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* "is to provide a handbook for preachers that will help them apply a consistently Christ-centered approach to their sermons" and "to understand the place of the gospel in expository preaching."¹²¹ Although Goldsworthy's target

¹¹⁷Mark Burkhill, review of *Preaching the Whole Bible*, *Churchman* 115 (2001): 115.

¹¹⁸Graeme Goldsworthy, "Biblical Theology in the Seminary and Bible College" (paper presented at the Gheens Lectures of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, March 19, 2008), 7. See Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom: A Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1981); idem, *The Gospel and Revelation* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1984); idem, *Gospel and Wisdom: Israel's Wisdom Literature in the Christian Life* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1987); and idem, "Biblical Theology as the Heartbeat of Effective Ministry, in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 280. Goldsworthy notes, "Indeed, biblical theology should be a core subject in all ministerial training, and it needs to be the heart of our preaching and of all Christian education in the local church. Yet it would seem that much academic theology has come to be self-serving, and its function to build up the church of God has been largely lost."

¹¹⁹Goldsworthy, "Biblical Theology in the Seminary and Bible College," 8. Goldsworthy writes that the entire book was "tried out chapter by chapter on several successive groups of ordinary church members." Subsequent to the publication of *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, see Graeme Goldsworthy, *Prayer and the Knowledge of God: What the Whole Bible Teaches* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity, 2003); and idem, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Biblical-Theological Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006).

¹²⁰Goldsworthy, "Biblical Theology in the Seminary and Bible College," 5-7. See also idem, "Is Biblical Theology Viable?" 29-39.

¹²¹Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, ix, 95.

audience is “theologically trained pastors,” the intentional lightness of its jargon maximizes the accessibility of the text.¹²² The book has eighteen chapters divided into two major sections. The first section treats basic questions about the Bible, biblical theology, and preaching in an attempt to reveal the inseparable connection between them for faithful expository preaching.¹²³ The second section applies biblical-theological principles to the various genres of biblical literature, concluding in the final chapter with a discussion of how to teach biblical theology in preaching.¹²⁴

Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture begins with an argument for the centrality of the gospel sourced in 1 Corinthians 2:2: “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”¹²⁵ Goldsworthy is concerned that, too often, preaching literature is “predominately weighted toward matters of effective communication and methods of sermon preparation” and tends to ignore biblical theology altogether.¹²⁶ He argues for the unique authority of the Bible and its organic unity, which Goldsworthy asserts “has been under attack since the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century.”¹²⁷ Goldsworthy argues that the Bible expresses its organic unity in Jesus Christ, who is “the central character” who “sums up and fulfills all that has gone before in the Old Testament.” Thus, the central question for the preacher should be “How does this passage of Scripture, and consequently my sermon, testify to Christ?”¹²⁸

Goldsworthy briefly recounts the history of the biblical theology movement

¹²²Ibid., xi. Goldsworthy has included some of the more technical discussion and references and footnotes and he also provides a substantial bibliography.

¹²³Ibid., 1-132.

¹²⁴Ibid., 133-256.

¹²⁵Ibid., 5-6.

¹²⁶Ibid., 7.

¹²⁷Ibid., 15.

¹²⁸Ibid., 19.

and distinguishes it from the discipline of systematic theology.¹²⁹ He affirms Geerhardus Vos's definition of biblical theology as "that branch of exegetical theology which deals with the process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible."¹³⁰ More simply, Goldsworthy says that biblical theology "involves the quest for the big picture, or the overview, of biblical revelation," which one must understand in light of Jesus, "the final and fullest expression of God's revelation of his kingdom."¹³¹

Goldsworthy argues for a Christ-centered biblical-theological view of preaching method based on three concepts: the Bible as the Word of God, Jesus as the Word of God, and the apostolic model of preaching:

The prophetic word prepares the way for the incarnate Word of God. After his ascension the ministry of preaching is the appointed means for the continuance of this saving principle. But since Christ is the creating word, proclamation that fulfills God's purpose is only ever the word about Christ. How does our preaching testify to Christ? That is the solemn and challenging question that we cannot avoid.¹³²

Goldsworthy contends that the best argument for the validity of evangelical biblical theology is Christ's own approach to the Scripture.¹³³ Goldsworthy asserts that Jesus was a biblical theologian.¹³⁴ Contrary to many contemporary scholars and biblical

¹²⁹Ibid., 22-29. Goldsworthy distinguishes systematic theology from biblical theology by noting that systematic theology "is concerned with establishing the Christian doctrine of any topic on the Bible," whereas biblical theology "is concerned with how the revelation of God was understood in its time, and what the total picture is that was built up over the whole historical process" (26). He also contends that any book that only deals with one of the Testaments can only be considered a biblical theology in a limited sense: "But, if what we have said about the Bible and the nature of biblical theology is valid, then, by definition, a theology of either the Old or New Testament is not really a biblical theology" (63).

¹³⁰Ibid., 22. Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, 5. Goldsworthy writes from a conservative evangelical perspective and is a harsh critic of neo-orthodox historical-critical elements within the biblical theology movement. In his review of Goldsworthy's book, Barry A. Jones critiques Goldsworthy for stating that Brevard Childs is "still tied to unbiblical presuppositions in his use of critical method," that postmodern thought is "atheistic nihilism," and that interfaith dialogue is "evangelical infidelity" (review of *Preaching the Whole Bible, Review and Expositor* 97 [2000]: 532).

¹³¹Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 22, 25.

¹³²Ibid., 45.

¹³³Ibid., 47.

¹³⁴Ibid., 46.

theologians, Goldsworthy maintains that there is a single controlling theme in the Bible: the kingdom of God.¹³⁵ He concludes that one should evaluate a sermon's value in terms of how well the proclamation testifies to Christ and his gospel.¹³⁶

He argues that one can see the unity of the Bible in the relationship between Jesus' conviction concerning the absolute authority of the Old Testament and his self-recognition as the one who fulfills the Scriptures in a way that challenges our understanding of Old Testament prophetic expectations. Thus, according to Goldsworthy, the recognition of the diverse epochal structure of biblical revelation must yield more than convenient categories; it must yield essential interpretive principles based on how Jesus and the apostles viewed their unity.¹³⁷ For Goldsworthy, the gospel functions as the hermeneutical key; and, "while there is much in the Bible that is strictly speaking not the

¹³⁵Ibid., 51-53. Goldsworthy rightly understands that suggesting "God" as the single controlling theme of Scripture is bland because "'God' is a three letter word without specific content. God is revealed through his saving work and words. The ontological trinity of systematic theology is not other than the God of the kingdom dynamic who reveals himself in his dealings with his people and, above all, in becoming one of them. The kingdom of God is never abstract because it is both the realm and rule of God." Goldsworthy's logic applies to designating "Christ" as the single controlling theme of Scripture as well.

¹³⁶Ibid., 62. Goldsworthy summarizes, "In short, what is relevant is defined by the gospel; what is helpful is defined by the gospel. The first question we all need to ask is not, 'Was it relevant?'; 'Did I find it helpful?'; or 'Were we blessed?'; but 'How did the study (the sermon) testify to Christ and his gospel as the power of God for salvation?'"

¹³⁷Goldsworthy is critical of Vos, Clowney, and VanGemeran for their treatment of the epochs of biblical revelation. He believes that, while their delineation of epochs identify periods, they do not show the underlying unity of Scripture and the structure of revelation. See "Is Biblical Theology Viable?" 32. Goldsworthy writes, "Edmund Clowney follows in Vos's footsteps and shows some developments and refinements. He defines the redemptive-historical development in terms of the periods marked by creation, the fall, the flood, Abraham, the exodus, and the advent. He does not explain why we would use these parameters, nor how the designated epochs relate. Everybody recognizes that there is development in the biblical message, and listing a series of significant events and people is hardly profound. Periodicity is not the issue. The issue is whether or not the various parts can be said to hang together in some kind of meaningful whole, and, if they do, what kind of unity they form." And, regarding VanGemeran, he states, "The epochal structure of redemptive history is more than a convenient way of handling a large corpus, as I am sure VanGemeran would agree. But it appears that his method does not take sufficient account of his own principles, and especially that of the centrality of Jesus Christ. Biblical theology is not a matter of carving the Bible into manageable chunks and then investigating how the various parts relate to one another and especially to the coming of Christ."

gospel, there is nothing in the Bible that can be truly understood apart from the gospel.”¹³⁸

Goldsworthy proposes a three-fold epochal perspective on the whole canon. He marks Abraham, David/Solomon, and Jesus Christ as “the key reference points in salvation history.”¹³⁹ One quibble with Goldsworthy’s structure is that, by beginning with Abraham, he relegates prior revelation to the status of prologue, thereby passing over the Adam/Christ figuration, which shapes our understanding of human identity and destiny and is vital to the epochal structure of the biblical narrative (Gen 1-3, Rom 5:12-21, 1 Cor 15:45-47). The omission is strange, especially in light of Goldsworthy’s commitment to a whole-Bible approach to biblical theology.

One of the most important sections of the book is Goldsworthy’s discussion of typology.¹⁴⁰ He defines typology as “the principle that people, events, and institutions in the Old Testament correspond to, and foreshadow, other people, events, or institutions that come later.” He laments that contemporary exegetes and preachers view typology with suspicion and urges his readers to utilize not only micro-typology (correspondence between persons, events, and institutions) but also macro-typology (correspondence between whole epochs of revelation).¹⁴¹

¹³⁸Ibid., 95.

¹³⁹Ibid., 99. Goldsworthy is following Donald Robinson in adopting this three-fold structure of the epochs of salvation history. He writes, “This is why I am firmly of the conviction that the three-fold structure taught to me by Donald Robinson is superior to, and more theologically productive than, the structures proposed by Vos, Clowney, and VanGemeren. Donald Robinson has pinpointed the gospel structure in the OT rather than merely a series of consecutive periods” (“Is Biblical Theology Viable?” 39). For Robinson’s summary of how this three-fold epochal structure originated, see Donald Robinson, “Origins and Unresolved Tensions,” in *Interpreting God’s Plan: Biblical Theology and the Pastor*, ed. R. J. Gibson (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1997), 1-17. See also Donald Robinson’s *Faith’s Framework: The Structure of New Testament Theology* (Blackwood, AU: New Creation, 1985), 71-96.

¹⁴⁰Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 109.

¹⁴¹Ibid., 111, 256. See also Graeme Goldsworthy, “Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics,” *SBJT* 10 (2006): 11. He writes, “If the Old Testament is somehow Christocentric, then it follows that the Bible is structured typologically.”

According to Goldsworthy, “The entire epoch of salvation history from Abraham to David and Solomon is confirmed in prophetic eschatology and fulfilled in Christ. All aspects of Old Testament salvation history bear a typological relationship to Christ.” This macro-typology provides the gospel basis for the application of any Old Testament pericope to contemporary Christians as mediated through Christ.¹⁴²

Goldsworthy’s central thesis for the entire volume is grounded in his macro-typology: “It underlines the central thesis of this book: all texts bear a discernable relationship to Christ and are primarily intended as a testimony to Christ.”¹⁴³

In response to the question, “Can I preach a Christian sermon without mentioning Jesus?” Goldsworthy counters, “Why would you even want to try to preach a Christian sermon without mentioning Jesus?” and then offers a resounding “No!”¹⁴⁴ He denigrates legalistic, moralistic preaching, which does not understand the ethical demands of the Bible in relation to Jesus and the gospel.¹⁴⁵ According to Goldsworthy, all true expository preaching is Christ-centered because “No Bible passage yields its true significance without reference to Jesus Christ in his gospel.”¹⁴⁶

The second section of the book applies biblical theology to preaching. Goldsworthy explains how texts from all biblical literary genres should be understood in their own biblical-theological context as a witness to what God would finally do in Jesus Christ. Goldsworthy defines literary genre and discusses it in relation to salvation history

¹⁴²Peterson, *Christ and His People in the Book of Isaiah*, 18. See also, Greg R. Scharf, review of *Preaching the Whole Bible*, *Trinity Journal* 22 (2001): 288. Scharf writes, “His treatment of typology will give the preacher permission to notice and proclaim what is often present in the text but sometimes suppressed as too reminiscent of unacceptable allegorizing.”

¹⁴³Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 113.

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 115, 122.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 118-119.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 122.

and biblical epochs.¹⁴⁷ These are the epochs Goldsworthy lists: “The kingdom revealed in Israel’s history,” “The kingdom of God revealed in prophetic eschatology,” and “The kingdom of God revealed in the fulfillment of promise and prophecy in Jesus Christ.”¹⁴⁸ This Kingdom-oriented epochal structure provides the macro-typological context of biblical interpretation, which allows the interpreter to understand the text in the “framework of history and theology” and provides a link to the contemporary hearer.¹⁴⁹

Goldsworthy’s ecclesiological drive has forced him not to be content with abstract musings about biblical theology.¹⁵⁰ Goldsworthy writes from the perspective of someone committed to the absolute authority and divine unity of the Bible, which demands a coherent, whole-Bible biblical theology.¹⁵¹ Thus, Goldsworthy offers a model of viewing every text in the Old *and* New Testament through an Christological lens. One of the strengths of Goldsworthy’s book is the author’s awareness that the problem of Christless preaching is not restricted to the Old Testament. Frequently, gospel-free sermons emerge from the gospel narratives themselves, their significance reduced to mere moralisms.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷Ibid., 137-139. Goldsworthy defines a literary genre as “a class or group of literary texts that are marked out by certain common features that enable us to distinguish them from other texts” (137).

¹⁴⁸Ibid., 139.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 139.

¹⁵⁰ Graeme Goldsworthy, “The Necessity and Viability of Biblical Theology” (paper presented at the Gheens Lectures of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, March 18, 2008), 1. He writes, “I have never really considered myself to be an academic. During my working life, I have spent more years in full-time pastoral ministry than I have in full-time theological teaching. I mention this only to emphasize that my passion for the discipline of biblical theology is not driven by the academy so much as by the perceived pastoral need for ordinary Christians in churches to be better able to understand the Bible.”

¹⁵¹Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 248. See also idem, “Is Biblical Theology Viable?” 18-19.

¹⁵²Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 224.

One of the helpful distinctives in Goldsworthy's work is that he holds the gospel as the starting point in all biblical interpretation: "Jesus is the sole mediator of the truth of God."¹⁵³ This means that the gospel is the hermeneutical key and the theological center of the entire Bible.¹⁵⁴ The issue for Goldsworthy is not the finding of pathways from a text to Christ; the issue is proceeding theologically with awareness that the entire biblical storyline finds its meaning and culmination in God's final word, Jesus.

Goldsworthy also connects Christ and his gospel to the Kingdom of God as the organizing principle of biblical theology. To assert that Jesus Christ is the theological center of the Bible and the interpretive key of the Scriptures is not simply to speak of his person and work in a static sense; it is to speak of what he has done in ushering in the kingdom and what he will do when the kingdom is consummated. It is the application of Goldsworthy's macro-typology to preaching that puts the preacher "in touch with Kingdom structures of thought," as David Peterson has written.¹⁵⁵ These epochal kingdom structures assure the interpreter Christ-centered application can spring from every text.¹⁵⁶

While noting that Goldsworthy rightly identifies a relationship between Christ and his gospel and the Kingdom of God, one must also note one of the weaknesses of his treatment: lack of eschatological focus. He tends to treat redemptive history in a linear way that focuses on understanding the progressive nature of the kingdom of God horizontally, but not vertically. And, although Goldsworthy does acknowledge the hermeneutical primacy of eschatology, his method does not adequately reflect it.¹⁵⁷ While

¹⁵³Ibid., 84, Furthermore, "The Bible is the word of God by virtue of its relationship to Christ and not by virtue of its spiritual application to our lives" (113).

¹⁵⁴Ibid., 86.

¹⁵⁵Peterson, *Christ and His People in the Book of Isaiah*, 18.

¹⁵⁶One should note that any application of a text not mediated through Christ is interpreted incorrectly and productive of either despair or self-righteousness.

¹⁵⁷Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 91. Following Peter Jensen, he writes,

championing the kingdom of God as the organizing principle and unifying theme of the Bible, Goldsworthy's treatment of the kingdom does not reflect the eschatological intrusion that drapes the entire Scripture with the shadow of the kingdom.

Summary Evaluation

Bryan Chapell describes Edmund Clowney as “this generation’s patriarch of redemptive-historical preaching.” He writes, “For decades he was the voice crying in the wilderness to encourage evangelical preachers to make Christ the focus of all their messages, since he is the aim of all the Scriptures. Now many others have joined Clowney’s gospel chorus.”¹⁵⁸ The most prominent members of that chorus since Clowney’s publication of *Preaching and Biblical Theology* in 1961 are Bryan Chapell, Sidney Greidanus, and Graeme Goldsworthy. Like any good chorus, these authors hit different notes while singing in ultimate harmony for Christ-centered preaching. Their works have helped to revitalize interest in the subject.¹⁵⁹ Each of the four is committed to the inerrancy and organic unity of the Bible; each believes the Bible is the record of the progressive self-revelation of God and that this makes its constituent texts interdependent. Yet each author differentiates himself from the rest in theory, method, and emphasis, as the following summaries illustrate.

Clowney authored *Preaching and Biblical Theology* in 1961, during a time

“Eschatology, or the study of last things, is usually confined to the last chapter of textbooks on systematic theology. This sounds logical: last things, last chapter. There is another logic: a *theo-logic*, which recognizes that eschatology is chapter 1. . . . Beginning with eschatology reminds us that all events take their meaning from the events that happened in Christ, and in what is yet to happen as God consummates his plan at the return of Christ.” See also Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 63, 221-23; and Peter Jensen, *At the Heart of the Universe: The Eternal Plan of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 10-11.

¹⁵⁸ Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, inside cover.

¹⁵⁹ Dennis E. Johnson, “On Practical Theology as Systematic Theology,” in *The Pattern of Sound Doctrine: Systematic Theology at the Westminster Seminaries—Essays in Honor of Robert B. Strimple*, ed. David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 123. Referring to the writings of Clowney, Chapell, Greidanus, and Goldsworthy, Johnson writes, “Recently resources have multiplied to help preachers proclaim Christ as the fulfillment of all the Scriptures.”

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.¹⁶⁰ The best these scholars could muster was biblical *theologies* and not a coherent biblical *theology*. But Clowney, following Vos, affirmed the inspiration of the Bible and asserted that “Biblical theology is a contradiction in terms unless the Bible presents a consistent message.”¹⁶¹ For Clowney, the organic unity of the Bible, a diverse collection of writings, means that observing innertextual connections (patterns, types, allusions, analogies, recapitulation) is fundamental for faithful interpretation and proclamation. Clowney’s writings and preaching ministry reinforced that “preaching Christ from all the scriptures is not an automatic product of an abstract hermeneutic method” but rather reading the Bible with Jesus the Messiah as the hero of the entire narrative.¹⁶²

Bryan Chapell’s “Fallen Condition Focus” as the interpretive and sermonic starting point could lead to a neglect of canonical intertextuality and reduce the perceived exigency of whole-Bible Scripture saturation.¹⁶³ One of the problems with contemporary interpretation and preaching is the dominance of this question as a starting point: “How does this text testify of me?” The preacher’s responsibility is not simply to apply the biblical story to the lives of his hearers but to apply the lives of his hearers to the biblical story and call them to find themselves in the story of Jesus.¹⁶⁴ Beginning with the fallen

¹⁶⁰For a helpful article demonstrating the biblical roots and antiquity of biblical theology, see J. V. Fesko, “On the Antiquity of Biblical Theology,” in *Resurrection and Eschatology: Theology in Service of the Church—Essays in Honor of Richard B. Gaffin*, ed. Lane G. Tipton and Jeffrey C. Waddington (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 443-47.

¹⁶¹Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 13.

¹⁶²Dennis E. Johnson, ed., *Heralds of the King: Christ-Centered Sermons in the Tradition of Edmund Clowney* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 10.

¹⁶³Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 40-44, 291-92.

¹⁶⁴Peterson, *Christ and His People*, 16. Peterson situates Christ as the starting point in interpretation and application: “First we must ask how the text applies to the person and work of Christ. Then we can begin to see how it applies to Christians through Christ or because of Christ.”

condition of the hearer feeds the individualism that many already bring to the text. This anthropocentric approach to the text and to sermon preparation can subtly center the individual and present Christ primarily as the answer to the individual's problem.¹⁶⁵ Biblically, Christ as king is primary, not the needs of individuals (Eph 1:10; Col. 1:18).¹⁶⁶ The preacher's hermeneutical and homiletical starting point must be the relation of the text to the person and work of Christ and eschatological fulfillment in his kingdom.

Sidney Greidanus's seven ways for preaching Christ from the Old Testament presupposes a commitment to the unity of the Bible and an awareness of the importance of innertextual connections. Yet, for Greidanus's approach to be effective, the preacher must saturate himself with Scripture such that the identification of the various ways to Christ from a passage becomes instinctual. The preacher must not mechanize his preparation so that the various ways become the focal point. In other words, the proper starting point for preparation needs to be Christ and his kingdom, not particular hermeneutical formulae. David Peterson is correct when he critiques Greidanus for an overcomplexity in approach that tends to focus the exegete on method itself.¹⁶⁷

Greidanus lists Christocentric interpretation as a component of the sixth of nine

¹⁶⁵Bryan Chapell, "What is Expository Preaching? An Interview with Bryan Chapell," *Preaching*, March-April 2001, 7. The following is Chapell's response to a question about how he makes sure his sermons are Christ-centered: "I am happy to use the words *redemptive* preaching, as well as *Christ-centered* preaching—to talk about *grace-focused* preaching as well. My bottom line is that we show how every text in its context is demonstrating that God is the answer to the human condition. We take people away from themselves as the instrument of healing."

¹⁶⁶Peter O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 111-12. Commenting on Ephesians 1:10, O'Brien writes, "Christ is the one *in whom* God chooses to sum up the cosmos, the one in whom he restores harmony to the universe. He is the focal point, not simply the means, the instrument, or the functionary through whom all this occurs."

¹⁶⁷Peterson, *Christ and His People*, 19. See also Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 234. Greidanus writes, "Usually one can make a case for several of these seven ways. This does not mean that preachers should use all the discovered ways in the sermon; in the interest of a unified sermon, they should use only the ways that are in line with the sermon theme." Greidanus acknowledges that these seven ways to preach Christ from the Old Testament often overlap, but he still advocates choosing particular ways. Edmund Clowney observes, "Greidanus' treatment of these ways is packed with rich insights. His distinctions overlap, however, and may be more simply grasped from the central teaching of the Old Testament about God's plan of salvation" (*Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 35).

steps for getting from Old Testament text to Christocentric sermon.¹⁶⁸ This tight, formulaic approach is at odds with what one finds in apostolic preaching. In *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, Richard Longenecker notes that apostolic sermons do not express a standardized formula; rather, “What these preachers were conscious of, however, was interpreting the Scriptures from a Christocentric perspective, in conformity with the exegetical teaching and example of Jesus, and along christological lines.”¹⁶⁹ Thus, the preacher’s methodological starting point must not be found in tracing lines to Christ but with Christ himself, and with the biblical presupposition that all reality is summed up in him.¹⁷⁰

In *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, Goldsworthy’s commitment to whole-Bible biblical theology necessitates a foregrounding of the Scriptural metanarrative that centers on Jesus. While acknowledging that theologies specific to the Old or New Testament make an important contribution to biblical studies, Goldsworthy himself is never content with anything less than whole Bible biblical theology that keeps the entire canon in view.¹⁷¹ Goldsworthy’s starting point is not man or method but the gospel of Jesus Christ. All interpretation and application must be mediated through him.

¹⁶⁸Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 307.

¹⁶⁹Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 86-87.

¹⁷⁰Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 44. Clowney writes, “While Greidanus might have drawn together his separate ‘ways’ to advantage, he opens the doors to textual interpretation that focuses on the meaning of the text to Israel, the original hearers. Even this commitment to original meaning cannot be made supreme in application to the Word of God. The prophetic richness of the Old Testament Christology goes beyond any grounding in the address to Israel. There was much that even David the king did not understand in his own writings. The witness of the Scriptures to Christ is the reason they were written—and of him and through him and to him are all things (Rom. 11:36). Greidanus rightly insists on careful literary explanation, but concerning Jesus Christ, as I am sure Greidanus realizes more than I, there is a fullness that can never be comprehended.”

¹⁷¹Goldsworthy, “Is Biblical Theology Viable?” 34. Goldsworthy contends that biblical theologies concerned exclusively with one testament reflect a failure to work out the biblical-theological implications of an evangelical doctrine of Scripture.

For Goldsworthy, the gospel structures the whole of revelation. Thus, Goldsworthy's epochal division of redemptive history is a series of typological manifestations of the Kingdom of God: the Kingdom in Israel's history (type), the Kingdom in prophecy (type confirmed), and, finally, the Kingdom fulfilled in Christ (antitype).¹⁷² This macro-typological structure forces the interpreter to keep the comprehensive Kingdom structure of biblical revelation always in view as each text is interpreted in the light of Jesus Christ (Heb 1:1-2). Following Goldsworthy's approach, there is no text of Scripture that will not connect with contemporary hearers when interpretation and application is mediated through Christ and his kingdom. Goldsworthy's kingdom-oriented, instinctively Christocentric approach is reflective of apostolic preaching.¹⁷³

Edmund Clowney did not emphasize a rigid methodology for exposing how the entire Scripture bears witness to Christ (though he did offer sound interpretive principles and guidelines), but he kept insisting and showing that it did.¹⁷⁴ He stands as a

¹⁷²Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 112.

¹⁷³George Eldon Ladd, *The Young Church* (Abingdon: New York, 1968), 36-37. In describing Paul's preaching in the book of Acts, Ladd writes, "The content of his message was not so much hope for the future as it was 'about the Lord Jesus Christ' (28:31; see also 28:23). Paul's message of the Kingdom consisted of the proclamation of what God had done in history in Jesus Christ. Thus the blessings of the Kingdom of God which belong to the Age to Come and the Day of the Lord have come to men in history; but the Kingdom of God also remains an object of hope." See also David Peterson, "Acts," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000). Peterson contends, "The central theme of Jesus' teaching continues to be 'the kingdom of god', but with a new emphasis. From the parallel account in Luke 24 it is clear that Jesus was teaching his disciples how to interpret his death and resurrection in light of Scripture, demonstrating how these events are at the heart of God's plan for Israel and the nations. In so doing he was outlining for them how to understand the Scriptures christologically and in terms of 'the kingdom of God', a short-hand way of referring to Israel's hope for a decisive manifestation of God's rule in human history. This theme is at the heart of apostolic preaching in Acts (e.g. 8:12; 19:18; 28:23, 31), where 'preaching the kingdom' (20:25) is actually equated at one point with declaring 'the whole purpose' or plan of God (20:27, Gk. *Pasan ten boulen tou theou*)."

¹⁷⁴Willem VanGemenen, e-mail message to author, May 12, 2008. VanGemenen writes, "Clowney's Christocentric approach has affected me in my approach to the Old Testament by his insistence that the Old be connected to the New in some manner. He did not spell out how, and he confessed that he did not have the expertise in the Old Testament to do so. Nevertheless, his model has remained with me for these nearly forty years."

preeminent practitioner of preaching and teaching Christ from all the Scripture.¹⁷⁵

Reading Clowney and listening to his sermons will help any preacher cultivate the Christ-centered instincts of which Sinclair Ferguson speaks so highly.¹⁷⁶

Chapell's Fallen Condition Focus and Greidanus's seven ways of preaching Christ from the Old Testament are important tools for every preacher who longs with Phillip to explain how every Scripture is about Jesus (Acts 8:34-35). The problem with these methods lies not in themselves but rather in their positioning. If the preacher has not internalized a radical Christocentric commitment, these methods will produce inadequate sermons. The insights of both Chapell and Greidanus will be invaluable tools for the preacher who utilizes them subsequent to a gospel-centered starting point like that advocated by Goldsworthy: "Thus we start with Christ so that we may end with Christ. Biblical theology is Christological, for its subject matter is the Scriptures as God's testimony to Christ. It is therefore, from start to finish, a study of Christ."¹⁷⁷

Goldsworthy's macro-typological kingdom structure of biblical revelation provides the interpreter a framework go backward and forward in understanding redemptive-historical patterns in the narrative of Scripture. If biblical truth is abstracted from this story, it ceases to be biblical truth at all. Every text in salvation history is only meant to be understood in light of its relationship to the person and work of Christ and eschatological fulfillment in his kingdom. Chapell and Greidanus embrace starting points that relegate eschatology to an event at the end of salvation history. Both Clowney and Goldsworthy recognize the priority of understanding the eschatological thrust of the entire biblical narrative; but both fail to methodologize this insight clearly. Goldsworthy

¹⁷⁵For an online catalogue of about one hundred of Clowney's sermons and lectures, see the Edmund P. Clowney Legacy Corporation's media archive, SermonAudio.com [on-line]; accessed 28 August 2011; available from http://www.sermonaudio.com/source_detail.asp?sourceid=epclegacy; Internet.

¹⁷⁶Ferguson, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: Developing a Christ-centered Instinct," 5.

¹⁷⁷Goldsworthy, "The Necessity and Viability of Biblical Theology," 8.

affirms the two-age, already-but-not-yet eschatological framework championed by Vos and Ladd but offers little explanation as to how this vision should effect sermon development and preaching.¹⁷⁸

In the epilogue of *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, Goldsworthy writes, “Gospel-centered interpretation is eschatological, in that the gospel shows that the meaning of every part of the Bible is given its ultimate expression in terms of the final outcome of the gospel—the *eschaton*.”¹⁷⁹ One wishes this assertion was in the prologue of *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* and developed throughout. Russell D. Moore observes, “In Scripture the *eschaton* is not simply tacked on to the gospel at the end. It is instead the vision toward which all of Scripture is pointing—and the vision that grounds the hope of the gathered church and the individual believer.”¹⁸⁰

All human history points to, culminates in, and finds its meaning in Christ, the eschatological man, whose casts his shadow on every page of Scripture.¹⁸¹ And, while Clowney, Chapell, Greidanus, and Goldsworthy have all advanced the practice of Christ-centered preaching, the Church has much more work to do on this matter. The next

¹⁷⁸Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 233. The schematic offered here reflects a two-age eschatological framework.

¹⁷⁹Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 314.

¹⁸⁰Russell D. Moore, “Personal and Cosmic Eschatology,” in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2007), 858.

¹⁸¹Geerhardus Vos, *The Eschatology of the Old Testament*, ed. James T. Dennison (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001), 73. Vos asserts, “It is not biblical to hold that eschatology is a sort of appendix to soteriology, a consummation of the saving work of God. Eschatology is not necessarily bound up with soteriology. So conceived, it does not take into account that a whole chapter of eschatology is written before sin. Thus, it is not merely an omission to ignore the pre-redemptive eschatology; it is to place the sequel in the wrong place. There is an absolute end posited for the universe before and apart from sin. The universe, as created, was only a beginning, the meaning of which was not perpetuation, but attainment. The principle of God’s relation to the world from the outset was a principle of action or eventuation. The goal was not comparative (i.e., evolution); it was superlative (i.e., the final goal).” See also Michael Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 5. Horton notes, “Taking advantage of the advances in biblical theology, this work will argue that eschatology should be a lens and not merely a locus. In other words, it affects the way we see everything in scripture rather than only serving as an appendix to the theological system.”

chapter will consider the importance of Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching for the local church.

CHAPTER 5
THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTOCENTRIC
KINGDOM-FOCUSED EXPOSITORY
PREACHING FOR THE
LOCAL CHURCH

Introduction

Humanity lives in the context of a battle of sermons. The Bible begins with the divine king of the universe preaching his word.¹ The entire cosmos exists and is sustained only by the Word of God (Gen 1; Pss 33:6-9, 148:5-6; Heb 1:3; 2 Pet 3:5).² Every Christian preacher who steps before the people of God to proclaim God's Word is positioned at the apex of kingdom warfare. John Woodhouse asserts, "At the very moment of the world's inception, we see the kind of relationship that God will have with his creation. As he brings the world into being, God's point of contact with his creation is his *Word*."³ God chose to create and act through his word as the mark of his sovereign, kingly authority over the cosmos.⁴ The beginning of John's Gospel presents Jesus Christ

¹James I. Packer, *Truth and Power: The Place of Scripture in the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1996), 163. Packer writes that Scripture "may truly be described as God preaching." See also Zack Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World: Crafting Biblical Sermons that Connect with Our Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 103. Under the heading "God is the King of Preachers," Eswine writes, "Everything changes when, standing at the bend in the road, a preacher realizes that the Bible he holds in his hands is the collected sermons of God. The fact that God speaks sets him apart from all other deities. He proclaims a Triune speech to the world: God the Father speaks (Gen. 1:3); God the Son speaks (John 1:18); God the Spirit speaks (Acts 4:25)."

²John Frame, regarding God's speaking, notes, "This communication is essential to God's nature. He is, among all his other attributes, a *speaking* God." (*The Doctrine of the Word of God* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010], 48).

³John Woodhouse, "The Preacher and the Living Word," in *When God's Voice is Heard: The Power of Preaching*, ed. Christopher Green and David Jackman (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1995), 47.

⁴Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 55.

as the eternal “Word” through whom all things were created, who appeared in human flesh as the living, acting, speaking Word of God (John 1:1-14).⁵ Hughes Oliphant Old explains,

One might even go so far as to say that according to the prologue of the Gospel of John, Jesus is God’s sermon to us preached in the living out of a human life. It is to this sermon, then, that all our sermons witness; it is this sermon that all our preaching unfolds and interprets.⁶

Timothy Ward bemoans contemporary reticence to apply the astounding implications of the biblical witness regarding the nature of God’s Word to the contemporary task of preaching his Word in the church:

Yet, despite the modern nervousness about identifying the sermon with the word of God, throughout the New Testament it is simply assumed that what the disciples preach really is to be identified with God speaking. . . . To claim that one’s own human speech about Christ crucified really is *God* speaking, and that the Holy Spirit comes in power through one’s apparently weak speech, seems to run dangerously close to blasphemy. Yet that is clearly the pattern for the extension of the gospel after Pentecost that Christ and the apostles established. Fraught with dangers and temptations though it is, it is simply given to us as our pattern of ministry. . . . The New Testament precedent is simply that the preacher can preach and must preach, fearful and trembling because he has been given the privilege of speaking God’s words and has no power to determine the result of his preaching, but is not so fearful that he loses his resolve to know and proclaim Christ and him crucified. . . . In light of this, what the faithful preacher does, and what the Holy Spirit does with

⁵ Timothy Ward, *Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 68. See also Vern S. Poythress, “The Supremacy of God in Interpretation” (classroom lecture notes, Westminster Theological Seminary, photocopy). Poythress writes, “At the very least, these connections might mean that the words spoken in Genesis 1 are analogous to the eternal Word, the second person of the Trinity. But closer reflection shows that there is here a much more startling claim. The utterances of God spoken in Genesis are themselves the manifestation and expression of God in his triunity. In particular, they are the manifestation and action of the second person of the Trinity. None of the utterances in its particularity and specificity exhausts the eternal Word, since other utterances occur besides. But each utterance is fully divine. Each constitutes one of the specific unfolding of the eternal Word through whom all things came to be (Col 1:16; 1 Cor 8:6; Heb 1:2). Moreover, we must include here not only the utterances directed to the subhuman world but the verbal communications with human beings in Gen 1:28-30. For one thing, these verbal communications, no less than all the rest, are what God speaks. In addition, they function specifically to light the path of human service and endeavor. They are thus an aspect of the life that ‘was the light of men’ (John 1:4). Jesus speaks similarly of his own words, ‘The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life’ (John 6:33).”

⁶ Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Biblical Period*, vol. 1 of *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 155.

Scripture through him, is best described as *a contemporary re-enactment of the speech act that the Spirit performed in the original authoring of the text.*⁷

The magnitude of the preaching moment means that, while there are certainly legitimate style and personality differences in preaching approaches, none of the choices made regarding the task of preaching are neutral or atheological.⁸ This dissertation contends that Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching represents the non-negotiable core of faithful biblical preaching and will yield sermons that reflect both the content and purpose of Scripture.⁹ Such preaching will possess a sense of gravity and authority because both congregation and preacher will be aware that the latter is speaking on behalf of the king of the cosmos, as his mouthpiece, delivering the Spirit-inspired Word of the kingdom.¹⁰ This type of preaching is rooted in the text of Scripture and

⁷Ward. *Words of Life*, 158-59, 162. See also Jason J. Stellman, *Dual Citizens: Worship and Life Between the Already and the Not Yet* (Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2009), 13. Stellman notes, “In fact, Paul insists that when the saints hear Christ *preached*, they are actually hearing Christ *Himself* (Rom. 10:14, NASB; Eph. 2:17), a point made powerfully in the Second Helvetic Confession, which states that ‘the preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God.’ Personal ‘quiet time,’ therefore, can never replace the regular hearing of the gospel preached in the context of the local church, for it is here that God addresses His people in a unique and powerful way.”

⁸Darrell W. Johnson, *The Glory of Preaching: Participating in God’s Transformation of the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 7, 12-13. Johnson writes regarding the preaching moment, “Whenever a human being, Bible in hand, stands up before a group of other human beings, invites the gathered assembly into a particular text of the Bible, and as faithfully as possible tries to say again what the living God is saying in the text, something always happens. Something transformative, empowering, life-giving happens. . . . For it turns out that as we preach, we participate in Jesus’ preaching of his Father; in the preaching moment, Jesus himself is pointing to and revealing his Father. And as we preach, we participate in the Father’s preaching of his Son; in the preaching moment, the Father himself is pointing to and revealing his Son: ‘This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased’ (Mt 3:17); ‘This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!’ (Mt 17:5). And as we preach, we participate in the Holy Spirit’s preaching of Jesus; in the preaching moment, The Spirit is pointing to Jesus, bearing his own witness to Jesus, and doing so in a way that brings conviction and faith (Jn 16:8-15). We participate in a divine work, in a trinitarian work, the end results of which are not on our shoulders.”

⁹Ward. *Words of Life*, 163. Ward writes, “Preaching obviously fails to be faithful to Scripture if it follows Scripture’s purpose without being fully shaped by its content. This is typical of preaching in theologically liberal churches, which seeks to give hope and inspire faith, but often proclaims a Christ different from the one found in the New Testament. It can also happen in those more orthodox evangelical circles that place a particularly high value on passion and emotion in their preachers. Yet preaching also fails to be faithful to Scripture if it follows Scripture’s *content* without also seeking to be the vehicle for the re-enactment of the *purpose* for which the content was given. This can happen in some conservative evangelical preaching, especially when the basic model of the preacher is assumed to be that of ‘Bible teacher’ (as it often is in the culture in which I have been trained for ministry). Faithful biblical preaching must certainly include exegetical and doctrinal instruction, but it cannot be content with just these things.”

¹⁰Roger Wagner, *Tongues Aflame: Learning to Preach from the Apostles* (Ross-shire, UK:

constantly calls hearers back to the biblical storyline, which involves kingdom conflict but never loses sight of the king, the gospel of the kingdom, and the eschatological triumph of the kingdom of Christ. Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching is vital for forming the gospel-centered kingdom communities that local churches are to represent living in the “already / not yet” of his kingdom promise (Col 1:28-29).¹¹

The Danger of Non-Christocentric Approaches

A standard definition of expository preaching is elusive.¹² Not everything that passes under the banner of expository preaching is conducive to the nurture of healthy churches.¹³ Russell D. Moore contends that Satan does not mind expository preaching as

Christian Focus, 2004), 74. Wagner also notes, “Many preachers are tempted to identify themselves with the congregation in preaching, rather than with God. This may be the most significant reason for their feeling ill at ease in speaking to their congregation in the second person. Such preachers do not want their people to get the impression that the preacher is holier than them—for preachers know that they are not. Conscious as they are of their sin, it is natural for them to identify themselves with their people as being in need of the grace of God, ready and willing to hear what God has to say from His Word. The genuine piety behind such an attitude is indeed commendable. Nevertheless, this point of view can come to expression in the wrong way, and create problems for the preacher. If a man, even for the most noble of motives, identifies himself primarily with the congregation in preaching, rather than with God, the best he will be able to do is speak from God to them. He will not function as God’s mouthpiece, bringing God’s life-giving message to the people—correcting, rebuking, and encouraging them in God’s name (i.e., on His behalf).” See also Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 18. He writes regarding Paul’s view of preaching, “Preaching in Paul’s mind did not consist of a man discussing religion. Instead God Himself spoke through the personality and message of the preacher to confront men and women and bring them to Himself.” See also John R. W. Stott, *The Preacher’s Portrait* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 30. Stott writes, “Here, then, is the preacher’s authority. It depends on the closeness of his adherence to the text he is handling, that is, on the accuracy with which he has understood it and on the forcefulness with which it has spoken to his own soul. In the ideal sermon it is the Word itself which speaks, or rather God in and through His Word.”

¹¹Michael Horton, *People and Place: A Covenant Ecclesiology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 50. Horton notes, “Therefore, the church is the community created by the gospel, not just entrusted with it.”

¹²Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 119.

¹³The discussion concerning contemporary church health is vast and rarely considers expository preaching vital. The following list is a small sample: Warren Bird and Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003); Neil Cole, *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005); Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005); Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004); Dick Iverson, *Growing Strong Churches: 19 Keys to a Healthy, Growing Church* (Portland, OR: City Christian Publishing, 2005); Chuck Lawless, *Disciplined Warriors: Growing Healthy Churches that are Equipped for Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids:

long as it misses the main point of God’s Word; in fact, Satan himself engages in a form of expository preaching and encourages that form of biblical exposition to be practiced as a means of deception:

Throughout the Old Testament, he preaches peace—just like the angels of Bethlehem do—except he does so when there is no peace. He points people to the particulars of worship commanded by God—sacrifices and offerings and feast days—just without the preeminent mandates of love, justice, and mercy. Satan even preaches to God—about the proper motives needed for godly discipleship on the part of God’s servants. In the New Testament, the satanic deception leads the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees to pore endlessly over biblical texts, just missing the point of Jesus Christ therein. They come to conclusions that have partially biblical foundations—the devil’s messages are always expository; they just intentionally avoid Jesus.¹⁴

A Displaced Gospel

Contemporary evangelical preachers who affirm expository preaching do not intentionally avoid Jesus in preaching, but some accepted approaches to expository preaching methodologically eclipse him in the name of honoring the text. For instance, Walter C. Kaiser rejects the possibility of a text’s possessing a canonical *sensus plenior* and argues that interpreting the meaning of every text in light of the fullness of New Testament revelation is “wrongheaded historically, logically, and biblically.”¹⁵ The implications of this position for preaching are monumental.

The consequences are compounded in light of the fact that, at least in some

Kregel, 2002); Stephen A. MacChia, *Becoming a Healthy Church: Ten Traits of a Vital Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004); Donald J. MacNair and Esther Lightcap Meek, *The Practices of a Healthy Church: Biblical Strategies for Vibrant Church Life and Ministry* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1999); Bob Russell, *When God Builds a Church: 10 Principles for Growing a Dynamic Church* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishing, 2000); Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (Carol Stream, IL: C&P Publishing, 1996); Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

¹⁴Russell D. Moore, “Preaching Like the Devil,” *Touchstone*, May/June 2010, 9-10.

¹⁵Walter C. Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 26. Contra, see Thomas R. Schreiner, “Preaching and Biblical Theology,” *SBJT* 10 (2006): 26. Schreiner asserts, “If we only preach antecedent theology, we will not accurately divide the word of truth, nor will we bring the Lord’s message to the people of our day.”

evangelical circles, “the Kaiser method” has taken on the status of gatekeeper of conservative orthodoxy in biblical interpretation.¹⁶ Many preachers cannot articulate the theoretical basis of Kaiser’s analogy of antecedent Scripture or his commitment to the single intention of the human author. Nevertheless, they enact this pattern each week. One may plausibly attribute this phenomenon to a mimesis of the theory and techniques presented during academic training.¹⁷

Because none of the truths of Scripture are meant to be understood in isolation, it is possible to preach only true assertions from the Scripture and yet mislead hearers. When ethical and moral imperatives are proclaimed as sufficient, even abstracted from Jesus, the result is a crossless Christianity in which the central message becomes an exhortation to live according to God’s rules. Hearers who possess a seared conscience may develop an attitude of self-righteousness: according to their judgment, they are adequately living by God’s rules. Faithful believers with tender consciences may despair because they know that they constantly fall short of God’s standard.¹⁸ In other words, preaching bare moral truths (moralisms) can drive people away from fellowship with

¹⁶Richard Schultz, review of *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, by Walter C. Kaiser, *WTJ* 45 (Fall 1983): 414.

¹⁷Millard J. Erickson writes, “Evangelical hermeneutics of the past quarter-century has placed a great deal of emphasis on the concept of authorial intent. This has been displayed in a number of ways, but one of the clearest and most direct has been the extensive utilization of the thought and writings of E. D. Hirsch, Jr. in evangelical hermeneutics courses. It is also evident in the writings of evangelical teachers of hermeneutics, who insist that a given passage of Scripture has only one meaning, and that this meaning is the meaning intended by the human author. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., has been the most consistent and insistent in advocating this idea, but others have also sought to make this case persuasively” (*Evangelical Interpretation: Perspectives on Hermeneutical Issues* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993], 11).

¹⁸I am indebted to Tim Keller through numerous lectures and sermons for the idea that moralistic preaching produces self-righteousness and despair in its hearers. Bryan Chapell makes the same point: “Thus, instruction in biblical behavior barren of redemptive truth only wounds, and though it is offered as an antidote to sin such preaching either promotes pharisaism or prompts despair. Christ-centered preachers accept neither alternative” (*Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994], 285). See also Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1970), 79.

Christ.¹⁹ Bryan Chapell does not overstate the case when he argues that a “message that merely advocates morality and compassion remains sub-Christian even if the preacher can prove that the Bible demands such behaviors.”²⁰ Perhaps we must go even further and say that such sermons, though well intentioned, are anti-Christian and a tool of satanic deception.

Moore explains the cosmic danger of non-Christocentric preaching in light of the temptation narrative (Matt 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-13), as quoted previously:

Why is this so important? Why can't I simply say true things from the Scripture without showing how it fits together in Christ? It is because, apart from Christ, there are no promises of God. In his temptation of Jesus, Satan quotes Scripture and he doesn't misquote the promises: God wants His children to eat bread, not starve before stones; God will protect His anointed One with the angels of heaven; God will give His Messiah all the kingdoms of the earth. All this is true. What is satanic about all of this, though, is that Satan wanted our Lord to grasp these things apart from the cross and the empty tomb. These promises could not be abstracted from the Gospel.²¹

D. A. Carson's concern that conservative evangelicals may displace the gospel without disowning it is particularly applicable to expository preaching.²² If a preacher exposit, verse-by-verse, through books of the Bible, pressing moral, ethical, behavioral, and attitudinal change upon the hearers without mediating the meaning and application of the text through Jesus, he teaches a dangerous lesson, even if he slaps a gospel presentation on the end. The message is that, while the gospel is necessary as the entry point, it is not at the center of daily Christian living. Such preaching communicates that,

¹⁹For a brief discussion of how pastors should understand and teach morality and ethics in light of biblical theology, see Michael Hill, “Biblical Theology and Ethics,” in *Interpreting God's Plan: Biblical Theology and the Pastor*, ed. R. J. Gibson (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1997), 91-109.

²⁰Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 268.

²¹Russell D. Moore, “Beyond a Veggie Tales Gospel: Preaching Christ from Every Text,” *Southern Seminary Magazine*, Spring 2008, 15. See also *Tempted and Tried: Temptation and the Triumph of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011). Moore writes, “The devil was right, you know. Jesus refused to heed his offer not because he was wrong but precisely because he was quoting an accurate Scripture.”

²²D. A. Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry: Leadership Lessons from 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 26.

after the believer walks through the gospel door, his or her focus should be keeping God's rules, learning timeless principles, and noting which biblical characters to emulate and which to spurn. None of these concerns are the center of the biblical message.²³

Graeme Goldsworthy suggests that the reason this approach to preaching is prevalent and popular is because "we are all legalists at heart."²⁴ Moreover,

We would love to be able to say that we have fulfilled all kinds of conditions, be they tarrying, surrendering fully, or getting rid of every known sin, so that God might truly bless us. . . . The preacher can aid and abet this legalistic tendency that is at the heart of the sin within us all. All we have to do is emphasize our humanity: our obedience, our faithfulness, our surrender to God and so on. The trouble is that these things are all valid biblical truths, but if we get them out of perspective and ignore their relationship to the gospel of grace, they replace grace with law.²⁵

Moralistic Sermons

What Moore describes as "golden-rule Christianity" differs very little functionally from Protestant liberalism.²⁶ Thomas Schreiner notes the dangerous "trickle down" of moralistic preaching in theologically conservative churches:

Moreover, too often our congregations are poorly trained by those of us who preach. We have fed them a steady diet of moralistic preaching, so that they are taught to be kind, forgiving, loving, good husbands and wives (all good things of course!), but the theological foundation for such is completely neglected. We have ample illustrations and stories to support the lifestyle we advocate, and people's hearts are

²³Michael R. Emler, *Crosstalk: Where Life and Scripture Meet* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2009), 23-39.

²⁴Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 118.

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶Moore, "Beyond a Veggie Tales Gospel," 14. See J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 47. Machen writes, "The liberal preacher is really rejecting the whole basis of Christianity, which is a religion founded not on aspirations, but on facts. Here is found the most fundamental difference between liberalism and Christianity—liberalism is altogether in the imperative mood, while Christianity begins with a triumphant indicative; liberalism appeals to a man's will, while Christianity announces, first, a gracious act of God." Machen critiqued the theological liberals of his day for defining faith by subjective feelings and liberal preachers for moralistic preaching which abandoned a focus on the gospel. These same critiques can be pointed today at many who will gladly sign theologically conservative doctrinal statements and intellectually affirm the inerrancy of the Bible. For a similar observation regarding the applicability of Machen's critique of the liberalism of his day to contemporary conservative evangelicals, see Stephen J. Nichols, *Jesus Made in America: A Cultural History from the Puritans* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 119-21.

warmed and even edified. Meanwhile, the wolf is lurking at the door. How could such preaching open the door for heresy? Not because the pastor himself is heretical. He may be fully orthodox and faithful in his own theology, while neglecting to preach to his people that storyline and theology of the Bible. He has *assumed* theology in all his preaching. So, in the next generation or in two or three generations the congregation may inadvertently and unknowingly call a more liberal pastor. He too preaches that people should be good, kind, and loving. He too emphasizes that we should have good marriages and dynamic relationships. The people in the pew may not even discern the difference. The theology seems to be just like the theology of the conservative pastor who preceded him. And in a sense it is, for the conservative pastor *never* proclaimed or preached his theology. The conservative pastor believed in the inerrancy of Scripture but not its sufficiency, for he did not proclaim all that the Scriptures teach to his congregation.²⁷

The difference between preaching the moral truths of the Bible and preaching moralism is whether or not the meaning (not simply the significance) of the truth is contextualized by the gospel of the kingdom.²⁸ Edmund Clowney writes,

The Scriptures are full of moral instruction and ethical exhortation, but the ground and motivation of all is found in the mercy of Jesus Christ. We are to preach all the riches of Scripture, but unless the center hold all the bits and pieces of our pulpit counseling, of our thundering at social sins, of our positive or negative thinking—all fly off into the Sunday morning air. . . . Let others develop the pulpit fads of the passing seasons. Specialize in preaching Jesus!²⁹

Since everything in heaven and on earth will be summed up in Jesus Christ, the preaching ministry of the local church should constantly model this eventuality to the subjects of the kingdom (Eph 1:10). Regarding Ephesians 1:10, Peter O'Brien notes, "Christ is the one *in whom* God chooses to sum up the cosmos, the one in whom he restores harmony to the universe. He is the focal point, not simply the means, the instrument, or the functionary through whom all this occurs."³⁰ The implications for

²⁷Thomas R. Scheiner, "Preaching and Biblical Theology," 21. See also Michael Horton, *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 88. Horton writes, "The goal of so much preaching in both liberal and conservative churches is to make good people a bit better, instead of proclaiming from the biblical text the saving acts of God."

²⁸For a classic treatment of the gospel of the kingdom, see George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959).

²⁹Edmund P. Clowney, "Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures," in *The Preacher and Preaching*, ed. Samuel T. Logan (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1986), 191.

³⁰Peter O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 111-15.

preaching in the present age of inaugurated eschatology are readily apparent. Since God's plan is that all things be eschatologically summed up in Christ, then the role of those upon whom the ends of the ages has already come is to do so right now (1 Cor 10:11, Heb 9:26). The expository pulpit must call the church to comprehensively reorient its vision of reality in light of the person and work of Jesus Christ and the eschatological triumph of his kingdom.

The alternative modeled by many committed to verse-by-verse expository preaching is to sum up all things in the biblical text in light of self.³¹ The preacher analyzes a pericope grammatically, syntactically, and literarily; he develops the context of the historical author; and he exhorts his hearers to apply certain principles educed from the text. Walter C. Kaiser calls this "principalization": restating "the author's propositions, arguments, narrations, and illustrations in timeless truths with special focus on the application of those truths to the current needs of the Church and individual."³² Kaiser maintains that principalization excludes the use of chronologically subsequent biblical data, which he derides as reading the Bible backward and as eisegesis.³³

³¹ Timothy J. Keller, *Preaching in a Post-Modern City: A Case Study: I*, E-newsletter of the Redeemer Church Planting Center, June 2004 [on-line]; accessed 27 August 2011; available from <http://www.westerfunk.net/archives/theology/Tim%20Keller%20on%20Preaching%20in%20a%20Post-Modern%20City%20-%203>; Internet. Keller asserts, "There is, in the end, only two ways to read the Bible: is it basically about me or basically about Jesus?" See also R. Albert Mohler, "Expository Preaching: Center of Christian Worship," in *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship*, ed. Philip G. Ryken, Derek W. H. Thomas, and J. Ligon Duncan III (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), 110. Mohler writes, "The therapeutic concerns of the culture too often set the agenda for evangelical preaching. The issues of the self predominate, and the congregation expects to hear simple answers to complex problems. The essence of most therapeutic preaching comes down to an affirmation of the self and its importance."

³²Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 152. See also Walter C. Kaiser, *Recovering the Unity of the Bible: One Continuous Story, Plan, and Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 163-68. Kaiser affirms the Bible as possessing a coherent and unified testimony. Thus, when Kaiser argues for principalization he is rejecting those scholars who argue against the Scripture as propositional revelation and possessing any canonical theological unity. While affirming Kaiser, as far as he goes, my contention is that he does not go far enough because his analogy of antecedent theology fails to take the fact of the divine organic unity of the Bible to its logical conclusion in interpretation and application.

³³Walter C. Kaiser, "A Principalizing Model," in *Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Gary T. Meadors (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 23. See also, Daniel M.

Atomistic preaching, which isolates a particular truth from the fabric of redemptive history, may result in moralistic preaching, though it almost always passes for expository preaching.³⁴ Edmund Clowney makes a helpful distinction between what he described as “truth to the first power” and that truth realized in Christ: “truth to the *n*th power.”³⁵ When the preacher goes straight from a particular truth to immediate application without mediating the text through fulfillment in Christ, moralistic preaching is the result.³⁶ The implicit message of such preaching is that the Bible is all about the individual. As Clowney notes, “It unconsciously assumes that we can go back to the Father apart from the Son.”³⁷

Misapplied Sermons

Understanding the text in light of the person and work of Christ and eschatological fulfillment in him does not simply provide an additional meaning and application of the text. A non-Christocentric approach to the text can yield a fundamentally different understanding and application of the text than a Christocentric, kingdom-focused reading. For instance, in the David and Goliath narrative, a typical

Doriani, “A Response to Walter C. Kaiser Jr.,” in *Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Gary T. Meadors (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 53-55. Critiquing Kaiser’s principalizing hermeneutic, Doriani writes, “First, principalizing treats the particularity and cultural embeddedness of Scripture more as a problem to be overcome than as something essential to the givenness of the Bible. Kaiser says cultural issues ‘intrude’ in the text; the problem is ‘handled’ by principalizing’ the text. Again, Kaiser says, ‘principles . . . must be given priority over accompanying cultural elements, especially . . . the times and setting in which’ a text was written. . . . Second, and more seriously, principalizing’s insistence on timeless, propositional truth privileges on form of divine communication above others. . . . Third, Kaiser appears to claim a privileged position with regard to the text, as if he might be able to transcend both the original culture of the Bible and his own. How else can he gain his stated goal: ‘to restate the author’s propositions, arguments, narrations, and illustrations in timeless abiding truths.’”

³⁴Michael Horton, “What Are We Looking for in the Bible? A Plea for Redemptive-Historical Preaching,” *Modern Reformation*, May/June 1996, 5.

³⁵Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 32-33.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 32.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 33.

sermonic approach uses David as an exemplar of courage and exhorts the congregation to defeat the giants in their life through faith.³⁸ But a Christocentric reading identifies the congregation with the cowering Israelites: they cannot meet the challenge of the enemy; they should be “dismayed and greatly afraid.” Their only hope is a champion, a substitute, a mediator, who can meet the challenge of God’s enemy (1 Sam 17:11).

David’s role in the narrative is typical of Christ.³⁹ He enters the scene as the unlikely shepherd boy from Bethlehem who becomes the Spirit-anointed king of Israel (1 Sam 16:1-13). He is not simply a courageous boy but God’s chosen mediator who displays God’s power in weakness. The narrative mentions the anointed one’s crushing the head of God’s enemy five times in 1 Samuel 17, recalling the initial gospel promise in Genesis 3 and anticipating the antitype in Revelation 12 (Gen 3:15; 1 Sam 17:46, 49, 51, 54, 57; Rom 16:20; Rev 12:9-11).⁴⁰ The application of the passage is not to have the

³⁸For instance, see Max Lucado, *Facing Your Giants: A David and Goliath Story for Everyday People* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 2. Lucado exhorts, “Your Goliath doesn’t carry a sword or a shield; he brandishes blades of unemployment, abandonment, sexual abuse, or depression. Your giant doesn’t parade up and down the hills of Elah; he princes through your office, your bedroom, your classroom. He brings bills you can’t pay, people you can’t please, whiskey you can’t resist, pornography you can’t refuse, a career you can’t escape, a past you can’t shake, a future you can’t face. You know well the roar of Goliath. . . . Rush your giant with a God-saturated soul.”

³⁹John Woodhouse, *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 336. In this collection of Christocentric sermons from 1 Samuel, Woodhouse writes, “As we have come to our fourth and final installment of the great story of David and Goliath, we come at last to the moment of victory. The story has been told at great length, mainly so we will appreciate the wonder of the victory we are to witness now. As David defeated that terrible enemy of God’s people, we need to understand that God was doing (admittedly on a smaller scale and with more limited ramifications) what he has now done in Jesus’ victory.”

⁴⁰Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Model* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 239. Greidanus writes, “The essence of this story, therefore, is more than Israel’s king defeating the enemy; the essence is that the Lord himself defeats the enemy of his people. This theme locates this passage on the highway of God’s kingdom history which leads straight to Jesus’ victory over Satan. The history of enmity began right after the fall into sin when God said to the serpent (later identified as Satan): ‘I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel’ (Gen 3:15). Thus the battle between David and Goliath is more than a personal scrap; it is more than Israel’s king defeating a powerful enemy; it is a small chapter in the battle between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent—a battle which reaches its climax in Jesus’ victory over Satan, first with his death and resurrection, and finally at his Second Coming when Satan will be thrown ‘into the lake of fire and sulfur’ (Rev 20:10).”

courage of David but to trust in the Lord's anointed, who defeats the enemy of God on your behalf. Only in his victory can one plunder the enemy to the glory of God, receiving the fruit of his work (1 Sam 17:51-53; Matt 12:29; Luke 1:31-33, 11:15-19).⁴¹ The Christocentric and non-Christocentric interpretations of the text produce fundamentally different meanings and distinct applications.⁴²

Moreover, it may be *immoral* to emulate the behavior of biblical characters in certain narratives. These kinds of texts should lead the exegete to conclude that the point of the passage is something other than a behavioral imperative. Clowney provides an excellent example of such a narrative:

The real problem comes, however, when Bible characters seem to be commended for doing dreadful things. Saul disobeys the Lord by not utterly destroying the Amalekites when the day of God's judgment against them comes (1 Samuel 15). Saul claims to have been perfectly obedient, and Samuel asks, "What about the bleating of the sheep and lowing of the cattle that I hear?" When Samuel learns that Saul has spared King Agag, he demands that the prisoner be brought in, and does to the king what Saul had failed to do. He hews him to pieces before the Lord. Samuel's action, and its approval in the narrative, remains baffling on a moralistic level. To understand we must take account of the history of redemption. Samuel's bringing down of the divine curse must be understood in the context of the Lord's conquering the enemies of his kingdom.⁴³

⁴¹See Peter J. Leithart, *A Son to Me: An Exposition of 1 and 2 Samuel* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003), 97-100; Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom: A Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1994), 22-29, 103-04; and Bruce Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 642-43.

⁴²Timothy J. Keller, "Preaching the Gospel in a Post-Modern World" (classroom lecture notes, Reformed Theological Seminary, *Doctor of Ministry Program*, January 2002, photocopy), 70. Keller observes, "This is a fundamentally different meaning that the one that arises from the non-Christocentric reading. There is, in the end, only two ways to read the Bible: *is it basically about me or basically about Jesus?* In other words, is it basically about what I must do, or basically about what he has done? If I read David and Goliath as basically giving me an example, then the story is really about me."

⁴³*Ibid.*, 33. See also Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1961), 79-82. For another example, in the book of Judges, one wonders what a left-handed assassin (Judg 3:12-30) and a head crushing wife who is grotesquely handy with a tent peg and a hammer (Judg 4:17-22) have to do with the gospel of Jesus Christ? This is a dilemma with which every person preaching, teaching, or studying the book of Judges has to grapple. But when one considers the book as part of the fabric of the grand narrative of redemptive history, then its dramatic, suspense-filled stories of sin, salvation, and violent warfare do not seem as foreign to us as followers of Jesus. Since the first promise of the gospel was that of a messianic seed who would be born of woman, engage in mortal combat with the serpent, and ultimately crush his head (Gen 3:15), it is apropos that the motif of "death by head wound" marches through the book and the whole Old Testament, from Sisera and Abimelech to Goliath and Absalom. Jael's driving of a tent peg through Sisera's temple is described as the means God used to subdue

Abstract Sermons

Non-Christocentric expository preaching can also have the tendency to equate the proclamation of true information with faithfulness to the preaching task. The abstract informational approach to expository preaching is problematic whether it comes in the form of dense, systematic doctrinal treatises or self-improvement “how-to” messages because both disassociate biblical information from redemptive history. When the preacher keeps the biblical storyline in view, it becomes apparent that the goal of preaching must not simply be orthodox systematic doctrinal formulations or personal ethics. Principalization, as defined by Kaiser, is an inadequate model because faithful expository preaching seeks to transform people through the gospel, not merely to inform them or make them well behaved.⁴⁴ Moore warns, “A sermon that simply collates and regurgitates what you read in commentaries can make the Word of God a matter of cognition, not submission.”⁴⁵ It is equally true that the call to submit must not be submission to abstract principles or ideas but to the authority of Christ, whose gospel provides the only hope for justification, sanctification, and glorification.

the enemy (Judg 4:23) and leads to a song of praise in the next chapter (Judg 5:24-31). This first promise echoes throughout redemptive history, as seeds born of women crush the heads of the enemies of God (John 8:44). There are various saviors in the Bible who serve as types of the promised skull-crushing Savior, and Judg is no different. The Holy Spirit records that, although these warrior-saviors were often flawed in action, they were not so flawed in faith (Heb 11:32-35). For a contrary view of Judges, see Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, The New American Commentary, vol. 6 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 70-72. Block argues rightly that the point of the book of Judges is not to present the deliverers as virtuous heroes after whom Christians should pattern their lives. Nevertheless, Block wrongly rejects understanding the book in light of the New Testament (specifically Heb 11:32) because, he argues, the writer of Hebrews is simply embracing “the idealizing tendency” found in other Jewish writings of the time.

⁴⁴Edmund Clowney, *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments*, ed. Rebecca Clowney Jones (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 7-8. Regarding the Ten Commandments, Clowney writes, “Jesus fulfills the law by obeying it, but also by revealing its promise. When Jesus comes, the law takes on a different meaning and function. Its role of prophecy ends, for Jesus is the end (the *telos*, the goal) of the law. For this reason, once Jesus has come, God’s people will never think of the law in quite the same way. As we have seen, God’s law is not given as an abstract moral code. Such a code would not be prophetic. God’s law is given in the course of his saving work, and the whole of that work is leading us to Jesus Christ. The fulfillment of the law came when Jesus came and will continue until Jesus comes at the end of this age.”

⁴⁵Moore, “Preaching Like the Devil,” 12.

Individualistic Sermons

Some approaches to expository preaching teach congregations to approach the text as a collection of divinely authoritative principles or systematic theological truths to be arranged into categories like an encyclopedia.⁴⁶ With particular reference to Ephesians, Timothy G. Gombis rejects this isolated type of reading because it does not “ignite a compelling vision of living as the people of God in the new world created by the resurrection power of the Spirit.”⁴⁷ Gombis contends that one should comprehend Ephesians as “a drama in which Paul portrays the powerful, reality-altering, cosmos-transforming acts of God in Christ to redeem God’s world and save God’s people for the glory of his name.”⁴⁸ Gombis’s remarks are not limited to Ephesians; they apply to the entire biblical storyline as well.

Gombis explains the danger in what he describes as “the typical modern approach to Bible interpretation”:

On a modern conception of the interpreting individual, the task of interpretation is relatively isolated from the rest of life—I, as an individual, can sit down, read my Bible, recognize and isolate one or two truths from Scripture and get up and go on with my life, regardless of whether I ever do anything with these truths I have found in Ephesians. I may find some way to apply these things to some aspect of my life, but if I do not, there will not be any marked difference in how I conduct myself in relationships or how I play a role in society. But if we think in terms of a compelling and inviting drama that communities seek to inhabit and perform, this demands the participation of the whole person and of entire communities. God does not merely aim to inform or to provide Christians with material for an abstracted theological system that I am supposed to prune and maintain in good order.⁴⁹

⁴⁶Timothy G. Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians: Participating in the Triumph of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 13-33. Gombis writes, “After all, Paul is not a modern intellectual, formed in a post-Enlightenment Western culture, but a thoroughly Jewish follower of Jesus steeped in the worldview of the dramatic and narratively shaped Scriptures of Israel. I do not doubt that my asking readers to leave a scientifically oriented worldview and to enter a narrative frame of thought is an easy or insignificant thing. But for those who are hesitant, I would ask you to consider the extent to which our familiar interpretive approaches have served to stop our ears to God’s always devastating and always renewing word of life” (18).

⁴⁷Ibid., 15

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid., 17.

The “typical modern approach to biblical interpretation” that Gombis critiques acquired its dominance partly from its prevalence in the pulpits of conservative evangelical churches.⁵⁰ Preaching that presents biblical truth as isolated principles or bare doctrine represents a distorted understanding of the Word of God and its role in forming the kingdom communities known as local churches.⁵¹ When preaching shapes a congregation to approach the Word of God in this isolated and individualized manner, listeners tend to maintain a metanarrative of their own construction, simply tacking on particular theological facts and principles to it.⁵² Russell D. Moore explains,

No human being can live without stories, without a central narrative explaining his existence and his place in the world. Most of these stories are self-justifying and false, perversions of the story of Christ. But no one can live without such a story, and so human beings in their rebellion make up narratives. . . . We are all longing for a past, a future and a storyline that makes sense of it all. According to the prophets and apostles, that story is the story of Christ.⁵³

⁵⁰Schreiner, “Preaching and Biblical Theology,” 20. Schreiner contends, “In many conservative churches pastors almost always preach on the horizontal level. The congregation is bombarded with sermons about marriage, raising children, success in business, overcoming depression, conquering fears, and so on and so forth. Again, all these subjects must be faced in our pulpits. We must not go to the other extreme so that we never address these matters. But what is troubling is that these sort of sermons become the staple week in and week out, and the theological worldview that permeates God’s word and is the foundation for all of life is passed over in silence. Our pastors turn into moralists rather like Dear Abby who give advice on how to live a happy life week after week.”

⁵¹Russell D. Moore and Robert E. Sagers, “The Kingdom of God and the Church: A Baptist Reassessment,” *SBJT* 12 (2008): 76, 79. Moore and Sagers write, “The Kingdom of God is where God rules or reigns, where his enemies are put beneath the feet of his king. This is why Jesus announces, “if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt 12:28). In the New Testament, Jesus has been given “as head over all things to the church” (Eph 1:22), which is where the King rules now. . . . The Kingdom/flock of Jesus is governed by the voice of the King, a voice recorded in Holy Scripture and advanced by the Great Commission proclamation of the church. Through the preaching of the Word, the Kingdom colony is being prepared to discern the voice of Christ, as opposed to the words breathed out by the spirit of antichrist (2 Tim 4:3-4). . . . The church, then, as the outpost of the kingdom is made up of those who hear the voice of the Holy Spirit of Christ and harden not their hearts, but rather respond in belief (Heb 3:7-4:16).”

⁵²Moore, “Beyond a Veggie Tales Gospel,” 14. Moore writes, “Whenever we approach the Bible without focusing on what the Bible is about—Christ Jesus and His Gospel—we are going to wind up with a kind of golden-rule Christianity that doesn’t last a generation, indeed rarely lasts an hour after it is delivered.”

⁵³*Ibid.*, 15.

Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching seeks to understand all reality in the context of the storyline of the biblical narrative, which comes into focus in Jesus Christ. Such preaching is not content with anything less than teaching hearers to “find themselves in Christ, to conform to His life and to follow His steps through His Spirit, looking always to His cross, His resurrection and His glory,” as Moore says.⁵⁴ When Paul proclaimed to the Corinthian church, “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified,” he was contending that he possessed a new metanarrative by which he interpreted everything (1 Cor 2:2).⁵⁵ Paul was not speaking of Christ’s crucifixion in an isolated and abstract sense but instead as the basic fact of the gospel.⁵⁶ George Eldon Ladd explains that, for Paul, “The gospel is, therefore, the proclamation of the *historical fact* and the *redemptive meaning* of the cross, which includes both present and future blessings.”⁵⁷ William D. Dennison concludes regarding 1 Corinthians 2:2, “Although this may seem like a simple statement, it nevertheless means the full-orbed eschatological message of the gospel. . . . For Paul, to preach Christ crucified is to preach the complete gospel (1 Cor 1:17).”⁵⁸

This full-orbed gospel message of Christ crucified is what Paul refers to as “the word of the cross,” which represents “the wisdom of God” over against “the wisdom of the world” (1 Cor 1-3). According to Paul, “the word of the cross” (understanding based on the “already / not yet” of the age to come in Christ) provides an antithetical worldview

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 61. Garland explains that in Paul’s discussion the cross of Christ represent “a framework for interpreting life.”

⁵⁶George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 423.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸William D. Dennison, *Paul’s Two-Age Construction and Apologetics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1985), 75.

to “the wisdom of the world” (understanding based on the present evil age) and provides the interpretive framework for biblical interpretation and all of life.⁵⁹ Isolated moral facts and life principles wrenched out of the totality of the biblical storyline can easily be assimilated into personal metanarratives, which present little challenge to the “wisdom of the world.”

Therapeutic Sermons

One manifestation of the loss of the biblical storyline in evangelical preaching is the contemporary tendency to use biblical texts as self-help principles while assuming modern psychological categories and speaking in therapeutic rather than biblical terminology.⁶⁰ The biblical storyline forces us to redefine our problems and our successes. We cannot start with self-oriented definitions of our problems and use the Scripture as a sourcebook in an attempt to answer preconceived notions about self-fulfillment. Paul’s preaching was an assault on the “wisdom of the world” because the

⁵⁹Ibid., 67, 72. This discussion concurs with Dennison’s view regarding Paul’s all-inclusive use of the word *wisdom* in 1 Cor 1-2. He writes, “In this context Paul’s point is that those who exist according to the wisdom of the world have a distinct world and life view. This world and life view stands in opposition to the revelation of the cross and under the judgment of the cross. . . . In summary, redemptive history qualifies Paul’s all-inclusive use of the concept *sophia* from 1:17 through 2:16. The term denotes either the “wisdom of the world,” the way of unbelief conditioned by the Fall or the wisdom grounded in the Godhead who enlightens believers to the benefits of salvation. In both meanings, *sophia* describes the response of man to the preaching of the ‘word of the cross.’ Man’s response to the message of Christ is either with the wisdom from man or with the wisdom from God.”

⁶⁰R. Albert Mohler, “Expository Preaching: Center of Christian Worship,” in *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship*, ed. Philip G. Ryken, Derek W. H. Thomas, and J. Ligon Duncan III (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), 110. See also R. Albert Mohler, *He is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 19, 51-52. Mohler writes, “Moreover, the therapeutic concerns of the culture too often set the agenda for evangelical preaching. Issues of the self predominate and the congregation expects to hear simple answers to complex problems. The essence of most therapeutic preaching comes down to an affirmation of the self and its importance. . . . One symptom of our modern confusion is found in the fact that so many preachers would claim that their preaching is expository, even though this often means no more than that the preacher has a biblical text in mind, no matter how tenuous may be the actual relationship between the text and the sermon.” Also see Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 192. Lints observes, “The clergy (both conservative and liberal) of modern America are more nearly dominated by the model of the therapist and the manager than by the model of pastor/theologian. Pastors no longer serve as purveyors of God’s truth but rather as maestros orchestrating the self-fulfillment of the church community.”

text of every sermon was proclaimed as a part of the alternative metanarrative provided by the eschatological intrusion of the age to come in the person of Jesus Christ, who is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor 1:30).

The Benefit of Christocentric, Kingdom-Focused Expository Preaching

“The predictable Jesus bit” is how Graeme Goldsworthy summarizes a common caricature of Christocentric preaching that stresses the Scripture’s organic unity.⁶¹ Some of the loudest critics of redemptive-historical preaching share a similar evangelical heritage with its proponents.⁶² Jay Adams provides a more sophisticated restatement of the “predictable Jesus bit” critique:

The general problem is that the sermons of some who have become enamored with biblical theological *preaching* turn out to be journeys through the Bible that follow the trail of a word, metaphor, theme, or concept from Genesis to Revelation. . . . These biblical-theological trips are like a one week tour of Europe: very little time can be spent at any one location. That means that little justice is given to particular passages. The big picture is constantly held before a congregation; the emphasis is

⁶¹Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, xi. He writes, “Such predictability is, hopefully, a bit of a caricature. Yet, at a more sophisticated level it can exist. Some of the students that I teach at Moore Theological College discussed their concerns with me about listening to preachers who deal with the Old Testament in such a way that the students were moved to think, in the course of the sermon, ‘Ho hum! Now here comes the Jesus bit.’ These preachers were attempting to avoid an exposition of the Old Testament without Christ, which so often leads to a moralizing approach. Obviously a preacher needs to have a clear sense of the relationship of Old Testament texts to the person and work of Jesus, but that preacher also needs to be able to communicate this relationship in ways that avoid such stereotyping. It is also obvious that something is very wrong if the preacher’s way of relating the text to Jesus is felt to be boring and predictable.”

⁶²For a sample of the evangelical critics of some forms of redemptive-historical preaching in this intramural debate, see Jay Adams, “Proper Use of Biblical Theology in Preaching,” *Journal of Pastoral Practice* 9 (1987): 47-49; idem, “Westminster Theology and Homiletics,” in *The Pattern of Sound Doctrine: Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, Essays in Honor of Robert B. Strimple*, ed. David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 261-68; John Carrick, *The Imperative of Preaching: A Theology of Sacred Rhetoric* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2002); idem, “Redemptive-Historical Preaching: A Critique,” in *Reformed Spirituality: Communing with Our Glorious God*, ed. Joseph A. Pipa and J. Andrew Wortman (Taylors, SC: Southern Presbyterian Press, 2003), 153-74; John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 290-97; idem, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987), 207-12; Hendrik Krabbendam, “Hermeneutics and Preaching,” in *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Samuel T. Logan (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1986), 212-45; Geoffrey Thomas, “Powerful Preaching,” in *The Preacher and Preaching*, ed. Samuel T. Logan, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1986), 369-96.

on the forest, not on the trees. Such preaching tends to by-pass the *telos* of these passages in favor of a few, great concerns.⁶³

Krabbendam suggests that redemptive-historical preaching is often like riding in a plane high above the landscape, mesmerized by the panoramic view, but far removed from a genuine experience of anything within the actual terrain.⁶⁴ John Frame observes that some redemptive-historical preachers emphasize the redemptive-historical setting of every text more than they focus on the text itself.⁶⁵ Daniel M. Doriani, an advocate of redemptive-historical preaching, notes a common gibe: “redemptive-historical preachers have only one sermon, but at least it is a good one. That is, every sermon ends the same way and has the same main point, but at least it’s about Christ.”⁶⁶

The Necessity of Expository Sermons

The solution to these critiques is to emphasize *expository* Christocentric, kingdom-focused preaching. However, some of its practitioners position it as an alternative to traditional, verse-by-verse expository preaching. Derek Thomas states, “There is a view of redemptive-historical preaching that is currently critical of expository preaching styles of the past.”⁶⁷ Michael Horton exemplifies this attitude:

Having been raised in churches which painstakingly exegeted a particular passage verse-by-verse, I have profited from the insights this method sometimes offers. Nevertheless, it too falls short of an adequate way of preaching, reading, or interpreting the sacred text. First, an explanation of how this is done. I remember the pastor going through even rather brief books like Jude over a period of several months and there we would be, pen and paper in hand as though we were in a

⁶³Adams, “Proper Use of Biblical Theology in Preaching,” 47.

⁶⁴Krabbendam, “Hermeneutics in Preaching,” 235-36.

⁶⁵Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 292.

⁶⁶Daniel M. Doriani, “A Response to Kevin J. Vanhoozer,” in *Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Gary T. Meadors (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 205. Doriani was a student at Westminster Theological Seminary, known for its commitment to a redemptive-historical hermeneutic, in the 1970s.

⁶⁷Derek Thomas, “Expository Preaching: Keeping Your Eye on the Text,” in *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching*, by R. Albert Mohler Jr. et al. (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2002), 79-80.

classroom, following his outline—either printed in the bulletin or on an overhead projector. Words would be taken apart like an auto mechanic taking apart an engine, conducting an extensive study on the root of that word in the Greek language. This is inadvisable, first, because word studies often focus on etymology (i.e., what is the root of the word in the original language?) rather than on the use of the word in ancient literature, for very often the use of a particular word in ancient literature had nothing at all to do with the root meaning of the word itself. It is dangerous to think of biblical words as magical or different somehow from the same words in the secular works of their day.⁶⁸

But the problem with the preaching he describes lies in the execution, not the method; an example of poor expository preaching is not an argument against the method itself.

Expository preaching and a Christocentric approach to biblical interpretation and proclamation are the logical consequence of biblical inerrancy and the fact of the organic unity of God's Word.⁶⁹ The goal in expository preaching is to bend one's mind to the Scripture and to avoid using the text to support one's own thoughts.⁷⁰ Rightly done,

⁶⁸Michael Horton, "Preaching Christ Alone," *Modern Reformation*, March/April 1993, 3.

⁶⁹John F. MacArthur, "The Mandate of Biblical Inerrancy: Expository Preaching," *The Masters Seminary Journal* 1 (1990): 4-5. MacArthur argues, "Should not our preaching be biblical exposition, reflecting our conviction that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God? If we believe that 'all Scripture is inspired by God' and inerrant, must we not be equally committed to the reality that it is 'profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work'? Should not that magnificent truth determine how we preach? . . . The only logical response to inerrant Scripture, then, is to preach it expositionally." See also Peter Adam, "Preaching and Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 108. Adam explains, "Although all preaching ought to include an exposition of the Bible, I am here referring to the practice of preaching through books of the Bible sequentially, verse by verse. . . . It is the obvious way to preach the Bible, as it reflects the way in which God caused the Scripture to be written (in books, not isolated texts or paragraphs). It enables us to imitate God in respecting the humanity of the authors and their style and historical context. It also reflects the way of reading books, and models a good use of Scripture to the congregation. However, as Peter Jensen has pointed out, preaching consecutively through the whole Bible is not necessarily to preach the whole Bible: 'The goal of "preaching the whole Bible" is attained when we so preach Christ that every part of the Bible contributes its unique riches to his gospel.'"

⁷⁰Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 20. Robinson points out that whether or not the preacher bends his thought to the thought of Scripture is a different question from asking only if the sermon was orthodox and evangelical. A sermon could be completely true and yet be unfaithful to a given text of Scripture. Many sermons referred to as expository are actually textual sermons. A textual sermon merely refers to a particular biblical text, but the main point of the text is not the main point of the sermon. The text does not determine the content and form of the sermon. See also James I. Packer, "Why Preach?" in *The Preacher and Preaching*, ed. Samuel T. Logan (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1986), 4. Packer points out that the results of topical preaching are often unhealthy: "In a topical sermon the text is reduced to a peg on which the speaker hangs his line of thought; the shape and thrust of the message reflect his own best notions of what is good for people rather than being determined by the text itself. But the only authority that his sermon can then have is the human authority of a knowledgeable person speaking with emphasis and perhaps raising his voice. In my view topical discourses of this kind, no matter how biblical their

expository preaching uniquely honors all of the Scripture as God’s Word, nourishes the congregation on the whole counsel of the Word of Christ, and benefits the preacher because he is forced to consistently encounter God according to God’s own terms.

Preaching Christ from all the Scripture is not an addition to expository preaching. Neither should it be viewed as a style or type of preaching but rather the way faithful expository preaching is done. Ignoring the Christ-centered canonical context of Scripture is no less reductionistic and problematic than ignoring the immediate context of the human author. A wooden application of the grammatical historical hermeneutic that fails to account for the fact that the Scriptures are the supernatural word of a sovereign God errs in the same way allegory does: both approaches exclude indispensable context. One excludes the context of the human author; the other excludes that of the divine author. Christocentric preaching does not mean neglecting exegesis in order to slip Christ in the sermon; it is rather the exposing of authorial intent, both human and divine.⁷¹

The *expository* of Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching is what rescues the redemptive-historical approach from the charge of monotony. The Scripture represents sixty-six books, myriads of human authors, diverse settings and genres; it was written over 1,500 years and contains thousands of stories. But all of these stories constitute a single story, one only partially intended by human authors: the story of Jesus Christ and his kingdom.⁷²

component parts, cannot but fall short of being preaching in the full sense of that word, just because their biblical content is made to appear as part of the speaker’s own wisdom.” See also Jacques Ellul, *The Humiliation of the Word* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 109. Ellul warns, “And what if I err, substituting my ideas and opinions for God’s revelation—if I proclaim my word as the Word of God, in order to give it weight and sparkle, in order to beguile my listeners? Then my word, ungratified by God and disavowed by the Holy Spirit, becomes the cause for my condemnation.”

⁷¹Ward, *Words of Life*, 86. Ward, opposing the notion that inspiration only extends to the message of the Bible and not the words of Scripture, writes, “Instead verbal inspiration claims that the Bible says *exactly* what God wants to say because the Holy Spirit was responsible for every word written in Scripture. He is the divine Author behind the human authors.”

⁷²Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 12. He writes, “The gospel needs to be defined as to its content and effects, and the Bible needs to be asserted as to its nature and authority. Evangelicals have often dealt with the latter concern by affirming their sense of the authority of the Bible in terms of its

The Gospel is Always in View

Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching allows every text to uniquely bring its diverse riches to our understanding of Jesus and his gospel of the kingdom.⁷³ The overall structure of biblical revelation reflects what Graeme Goldsworthy calls micro and macro typology because the “typological correspondence is not simply between persons, events, and institutions, but between whole epochs of revelation.” Peter J. Leithart explains it this way: “The Bible tells the same story over and over, though never in exactly the same way twice.”⁷⁴ And Peter F. Jensen articulates the indissoluble marriage of a Christocentric approach to expository preaching: “The whole gospel of Christ is made up by the diversity of the Bible; the diversity of the Bible is summed up in the gospel of Christ. To be selective in our preaching is to diminish Christ; our aim is to proclaim the whole Christ in the whole Bible.”⁷⁵

The redundancy that some fear if Christ is preached from every text of Scripture will only occur if the preacher abandons a rigorously expositional approach.⁷⁶

inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy. I do not propose to enter into that discussion here except to say that I understand all these properties to stem from, and to be rightly understood in the light of, the nature of the gospel and the relationship of the Bible to Jesus Christ.” See also Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 59. Goldsworthy notes, “God speaks through a word that is both divine and human. We see this in the Word of God, Jesus Christ, who is both God and man. We do not honor the divine nature of Christ by playing down his humanity, nor do we honor his humanity by ignoring his divinity. The fact that the Bible finds its meaning in the divine Word who becomes flesh, helps us to understand the nature of the Bible as a divine-human word. The word of God comes to mankind through the agency of human beings and in the midst of human history.”

⁷³Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology*, 263. Lints writes, “The covenantal relation between God and his people has a history to it, and in order to understand the relationship between God and his people, one must understand their history together. Redemption does not happen all at once, nor does it evolve uniformly. Rather it develops with strange twists and turns in separate but related epochs. These epochs are demarcated largely by God’s act and redemptive covenants.”

⁷⁴Peter J. Leithart, *A House for My Name: A Survey of the Old Testament* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2000), 37.

⁷⁵Peter Jensen, “Preaching the Whole Bible,” in *When God’s Voice is Heard: The Power of Preaching*, ed. Christopher Green and David Jackman (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity, 1995), 64.

⁷⁶Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*. The exegetical rigor and discipline outlined by Kaiser in *Toward an Exegetical Theology* is sorely needed but to fully flesh out a biblical exegetical theology his principle of antecedent theology must be traded for a robust application of the

When exposition coaxes each passage to speak from the multiplicity of its contexts, human and divine, the hearers will see the gospel freshly in the diverse unfolding of the testimony of redemptive history.⁷⁷

For instance, the gospel in Judges and Romans is the same gospel, but their situations in the drama of redemptive history provide unique windows through which the preacher can proclaim the beauty and glory of the gospel message. Conversely, when sermons ignore the holistic biblical storyline and treat the Scripture as if it were primarily a book of systematic doctrine, morality, or life principles, the result is weekly monotony. When the gospel is minimized to a slogan, people in the pew tragically can think that they are bored with its message. When truth is treated as abstract, people easily evade application.⁷⁸ Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching is indispensable for the life and health of a local church because, as Tom Nettles writes, “The power of a Christ-centered theology materializes in Christ-centered preaching.”⁷⁹

The Word and Kingdom Warfare

The first verse of the Bible establishes the God of Israel as Lord of all, the autonomous, self-evident creator-king of the universe. His sovereign authority was on display as he simply spoke his word. As John Currid puts it, “His awesome, crushing power was demonstrated dramatically by that command of just four words in English

analogy of faith.

⁷⁷Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 270. Chapell explains, “We must relate even seed-form aspects of the text to the mature message they signal, or for which they prepare us, in order fully and rightly to interpret what the passage means. You do not explain what an acorn is, even if you say many true things about it (e.g., it is brown, has a cap, is found on the ground, is gathered by squirrels) if you do not in the same way relate it to an oak tree. In a similar sense, preachers cannot properly explain biblical revelation, even if they say many true things about it, until they have related it to the redeeming work of God that all Scripture ultimately purposes to disclose.”

⁷⁸Moore, “Preaching Like the Devil,” 11.

⁷⁹Tom Nettles, *Ready for Reformation? Bringing Authentic Reform to Southern Baptist Churches* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2005), 95.

(only two in Hebrew). . . . By mere verbal fiat, the light was called to break into the formlessness, empty and dark world” (Gen 1:2-3).⁸⁰ Robert I. Vasholz asserts, “With no effort He speaks into existence His kingdom-creation. Just the saying of it does it.”⁸¹ His sovereignty as demonstrated by the power of His Word marks him from the very beginning as the king of the cosmos. Graeme Goldsworthy has noted, “*Sovereignty* means exercising kingly power. We use the word in relation to God meaning that there is absolutely nothing which he does not control. Creation is a demonstration of this sovereignty.”⁸² God’s sovereign authority as king of the cosmos was on display as he preached his authoritative Word. Alan Carefull explains,

God’s revelation begins with a sermon; God preaches and the world is made. ‘God said, ‘Let there be light’, and there was light.’ Six sermons are preached in a wonderful sequence; the Word of God is proclaimed in heaven’s pulpit and all comes to pass; the preaching forms the universe. . . . [T]he Word preached is no empty word; it accomplishes what it pleases and never returns void to him who speaks.⁸³

In the climax of the narrative, God, established as the creator-king of the cosmos in Genesis 1 by the power of his Word, made man and woman in his own image and according to his own likeness as the pinnacle of his creative work (Gen 1:26-27).⁸⁴

⁸⁰John D. Currid, *Genesis*, Evangelical Press Study Commentary (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 2003), 1:61.

⁸¹Robert I. Vasholz, *Pillars of the Kingdom: Five Features of the Kingdom of God Progressively Revealed in the Old Testament* (Lanham, MD: University Press, 1997), 6.

⁸²Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 117. Also see Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Biblical-Theological Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 71. He writes, “The fact that the divine word brings creation from nothing means that God’s word is clear as to meaning, sovereign as to purpose, incontrovertible and inerrant.”

⁸³ Alan Carefull, *The Priest as a Preacher* (Birmingham, UK: Additional Curates Society, n.d.), 2, quoted in Peter Adam, *Speaking God’s Words: A Practical Theology of Expository Preaching* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 15.

⁸⁴Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 160. Mathews points out that the narrative marks the creation of man in a special way that highlights its importance. First, human creation is the final creative act. Second, this creative act alone is preceded by divine deliberation. Third, the creative act is described in personal terminology. Fourth, man alone is described as being created in the “image” of God. Fifth, the verb *created* is used three times in v. 27. Sixth, the author provides a longer description than for the other

The description of humankind as God’s image sets them apart from the rest of the created order. The creation narrative foregrounds humanity’s unique responsibility to the creator-king.⁸⁵ The unique responsibility of humanity involves the glory and honor of ruling God’s earthly kingdom-creation, under his authority as expressed in his Word, as vice-regents of the earth (Gen 1:26-28, 2:19-20; Ps 8).⁸⁶ Gerard Van Groningen describes humanity in the creation narrative as “God’s royal co-workers . . . created as members of God’s royal family.”⁸⁷

In Genesis 2, God places his image bearers in a garden (Gen 2:8).⁸⁸ Mathews points out that the text describes the garden as being “in Eden,” which means that Eden refers to a larger area of which the garden was only a part.⁸⁹ According to John H. Sailhamer the word translated “Eden” in Genesis 2:8 means “delight,” and “we may assume that the name was intended to evoke a picture of idyllic delight and rest.”⁹⁰

Gordon J. Wenham contends that the reader should envision a “royal park” surrounded

creative acts. Seventh, the chiasmic arrangement highlights “image.” Eighth, man is uniquely referred to as the result of God’s direct creation.

⁸⁵Mathews, *Genesis*, 164. This dissertation assumes Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. See J. G. Vos, *Genesis* (Pittsburgh: Crown and Covenant, 2006), 3-4. Vos writes, “The traditional Jewish and Christian view, which we believe to be correct, is that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. . . . The common Jewish conviction that Moses wrote the Pentateuch has the sanction of our Lord Jesus Christ. Over and over again our Lord quoted from the Pentateuch and attributed it to Moses (Matt. 8:4, 19:8, 23:2; Mark 1:44, 7:10, 10:3; Luke 5:14, 16:29-31, 20:37, 24:44; John 5:46, 7:19-23). . . . The witness of Jesus Christ cannot be set aside by Christians. Either Moses wrote the Pentateuch or Jesus was mistaken, and to say Jesus was mistaken destroys His authority as the Son of God and the infallible teacher of truth.”

⁸⁶For an exceptional treatment of the nobility of humanity see Erich Sauer, *The King of the Earth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962).

⁸⁷Gerard Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1990), 99, 101.

⁸⁸Eden is also referred to as “the garden of the LORD” (Gen 13:10, Isa 51:3), and “the garden of God” (Ezek 28:13, 31:9).

⁸⁹Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 200.

⁹⁰John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 98.

by a hedge when they read about the garden in Eden.⁹¹ Graeme Goldsworthy summarizes the concept of Eden as the earthly exhibition of the kingdom:

Creation . . . establishes the foundation for all our understanding of reality. It establishes once and for all the sovereignty of God, and the fact that things are because God made them so. The climax of God's creation was the establishment of a kingdom. . . . In Eden God set his people . . . made in his image and reflecting his rule—in their own dominion over the rest of the created order (Gen. 1:26). God's own rule was epitomized in the probationary word which set the bounds of human freedom within the kingdom (Gen. 2:15-17). The blessedness of kingdom existence consisted in both the relationship of man to God, and the relationship of man to the creation. Nature was submissive to man's dominion and fruitful in providing his needs.⁹²

Donald S. K. Palmer concludes,

So here we see the prototype earthly kingdom—*paradise*—with man face-to-face in communion with God, having access to the tree of life, and being crowned king in Eden over the whole created order (cf. Ps. 8:4-8). . . . The institution of the kingdom is central to this chapter.⁹³

Establishing the kingdom context of Genesis 1 and 2 is essential to understanding the events recorded in Genesis 3. Suddenly, a serpent, “more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made,” becomes the central figure of the narrative (Gen 3:1). Wenham notes that such “explicit characterization of actors in the story is rare in Hebrew narrative” and is intended to spur the reader to attention.⁹⁴ Genesis 1 and 2 leave the reader with a sense of delight, basking in the glorious provision of the great God and king who had established his kingdom by the power of his word and where his vice-regents were to serve him in the created world.

⁹¹Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 61.

⁹²Goldsworthy, “The Kingdom of God and the Old Testament,” *Present Truth Magazine*, February 1976, 18, quoted in Donald S. K. Palmer, *The Kingdom of God* (Hertfordshire, UK: Evangelical Press, 1986), 19-20.

⁹³Palmer, *The Kingdom of God*, 19.

⁹⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 72.

The appearance of the crafty serpent in Genesis 3 seems sinister from the opening verse.⁹⁵ Immediately, the serpent speaks to the woman in a counter-sermon (Gen. 3:2).⁹⁶ Bruce K. Waltke describes the scene, “With subtle guise, the adversary speaks as a winsome angelic theologian . . . but he subverts obedience and distorts perspective by emphasizing God’s prohibition, not his provision.”⁹⁷ The serpent makes God’s pronouncement a pure prohibition, adding “not” at the head of the clause and removing “freely” (Gen 2:16-17; 3:11).⁹⁸ The kingdom of God was established by the sovereign and authoritative Word of God. He preached the cosmos into existence and the serpent’s proclamation of the Word of God with his deceptive oratorical spin was nothing less than an assault on the kingdom, its king, and its vice-regents. Zach Eswine observes, “Satan’s primary weapon is a word,” and we must recognize that “Satan has been preaching throughout history as well.”⁹⁹

⁹⁵The term translated “crafty” (צָרוּם) is a neutral term that can describe a desirable or an undesirable characteristic, but in Genesis 3 the narrative seems to point toward a negative use almost immediately. See, Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 187; Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 791; C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006), 171. Collins notes, “Further, even though Genesis never calls the serpent Satan, it is unmistakable that the serpent is not acting as a mere serpent but as the mouthpiece for a Dark Power.”

⁹⁶Sydney H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 13. Page notes, “In addition to displaying unusual knowledge, the serpent exhibits an unmistakable malevolence of purpose. By flatly contradicting what God had said about the consequences of eating the forbidden fruit and by suggesting that God’s motives in giving the prohibition were selfish, the serpent shows that he is not living in harmony with his Creator. Indeed, the creature is an enemy of God.” See also Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2009), 205. Merrill writes, “One could almost speak of its being the incarnation of the adversary of God or, better still, his image, representing him just as mankind was created to represent God.”

⁹⁷Bruce A. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 90.

⁹⁸Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 235. Notice the slight difference in the wording: “The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely’” (Gen 2:16); “And he said to the woman, ‘Indeed, has God said, “You shall *not* eat from *any* [emphasis mine] tree of the garden?’”” (Gen 3:1).

⁹⁹Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World*, 233. This study concurs with the traditional view that the voice behind the serpent in the garden should be identified with Satan. Isa 14:12-15 and Ezek 28:12-19, texts classically thought to be descriptions of the original fall of Satan, bolster the identification of the snake in the garden with Satan. The role of the serpent in the garden is consistent with Satan as the

In the ensuing dialogue between Eve and the serpent, the question that comes to mind is, “Where is Adam?”—which is the question Yahweh asks Adam (Gen 3:9). Eve had usurped Adam’s role, and Adam had passively abdicated his responsibility to lead the woman God had given to be his “helper” (Gen 2:18, 24).¹⁰⁰ The serpent knew that Eve was vulnerable since she was not created when the original word from God regarding the trees was given to Adam.¹⁰¹ Mathews points out that “the woman’s first mistake was her willingness to talk with the serpent and to respond to the creature’s cynicism by rehearsing God’s prohibition.”¹⁰² The serpent’s oratorical distortion of what God had said was effective and Eve’s subsequent comments continue along the path of disparaging what God had provided by additional prohibitions to what God had actually said (Gen 3:2-3).¹⁰³

When the serpent says, “You surely will not die!” he claims kingly authority and asserts the superiority of his word over the Word of God (Gen 3:4). The fact that the serpent sought to usurp the place of God as the king of the cosmos with Adam and Eve serving under his authority becomes clear by the nature of his argument. The serpent

adversary depicted in Job 1 and 2 and the accuser in Zech 3:1 and 1 Chr 21:1. In the New Testament, serpents continue to be a symbol of deceit, death and the Devil’s work in the world (Matt 3:7, 12:24, 23:31-33; Luke 3:7). Jesus identifies the Devil as “the father of lies” who “was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44) which directs the readers back to the garden. In 2 Cor 11, Paul confronts the deception of the false teachers in the church, and he notes that this deceit makes them like Satan who “disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Cor 11:13-14). His fear is that the believers would be “led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ” by this deception “as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness” (2 Cor 11:3). In Rom 16:20, Paul alludes to Gen 3:15 when he reminded believers that the ancient promise applied to them by writing, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.” The most explicit statement of the connection between the serpent in the garden and Satan is found in Rev 12:9 when John refers to “the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan.” (cf. Rev 20:2).

¹⁰⁰Eugene H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion*, 203.

¹⁰¹Currid, *Genesis*, 1:117.

¹⁰²Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 235.

¹⁰³Waltke, *Genesis*, 91. See also Leon R. Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 86. Kass notes, “Crucial to the serpent’s successful seduction of the woman is the rational power of doubt, opposition, negation, and contradiction: in the Hebrew text, the first word of the serpent’s final response (‘Ye shall not surely die’) is ‘not.’”

contends that God was holding humanity back and that only through obeying his own words would they be “like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:5).¹⁰⁴ He challenges the essence of God’s character by challenging God’s proclamation of the goodness of his kingdom. His speech is treason; it places him in the role of a usurper, another king who will create another kingdom. Michael Williams notes, “It was not the nature of the tree that made it dangerous, the bearer of the covenant curse and death, but what it stood for: obedience to the word of God.”¹⁰⁵

The woman looks at the tree with serpentine logic. She concludes that it is “good for food,” “a delight to the eyes” and “desirable to make one wise” (Gen 3:6). God’s sermon had declared the he is the one who is capable to determine what is “good” (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 25, 31). Mathews observes that “the verbal echo of God’s earlier evaluation suggests that she has usurped God’s role in determining what is ‘good.’”¹⁰⁶ Although God’s prohibition had been for their good, man and woman trusted the proclamation of the serpent rather than the proclamation of God. Now they lived with guilt, shame, alienation, and fear, hiding from each other and from God (Gen 3:8-13).¹⁰⁷ Mathews notes that instead of becoming like God, now “they are afraid even to commune with him.”¹⁰⁸ Sin did not only affect humanity; it discorded the entire garden-kingdom.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴Francis A. Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1972), 82. Schaeffer perceptively notes, “It is a lie, of course, that she is going to be like God, because experiential knowledge of evil is not what makes God God. God is God because he is infinite, the non-dependent one. No created being will ever be able to be like him in this. Even in the area of knowledge, what Satan has said is a lie because God is infinite and knows all the possibilities, and he is not bound by limitedness. We, however, with all our knowledge are still bound by limitedness and always will be.”

¹⁰⁵Michael D. Williams, *Far as the Curse is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005), 67.

¹⁰⁶Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 238.

¹⁰⁷Peter J. Leithart, *The Kingdom and the Power: Rediscovering the Centrality of the Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1993), 29. Leithart contends, “God would eventually have permitted Adam and Eve to eat of this tree. He wanted them to become mature kings and to participate in His royal judgments, but first they needed to grow up. They needed to show their faith in God. Before they were given greater responsibility, they needed to learn how to obey their covenant Lord.”

¹⁰⁸Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 239. Contra, see Terence E. Fretheim, “The Book of Genesis:

The garden environment was now marked by self-protecting, distorted human accusations against one another, which were ultimately charges against the creator-king (Gen 3:9-13).¹¹⁰ The original garden-kingdom reflected the glory of its creator-king, but now the garden was surrendered to a snake. God's vice-regents were captive to the words of the serpent, and their behavior began to reflect him. Palmer summarizes:

Adam lost both the *reign* and *realm* for himself and the whole human race. Man consciously repudiated the sovereignty of God over himself, preferring to serve and worship the creature rather than the Creator. He flatly denied God's kingship and has been doing so ever since. The consequence for all of this is judgment.¹¹¹

Preaching as Kingdom Warfare

Proclamation is central to the creation narrative and to all of history.¹¹² God's initial sermon displayed his sovereign authority through the creative power of his Word. But another voice intruded and clashed: the appearance of the serpent, contradicting God's word, is the first example of spiritual warfare in the Scripture. The appearance of a

Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *Genesis to Leviticus*, vol. 1 of *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 361. Fretheim argues that the reference to God is purposely ambiguous and can refer to minor deities and that it is wrong to see "the primal sin as a desire to be like God."

¹⁰⁹William J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning: Revelation 21-22 and the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1985), 181. He writes, "Sin is thus the breach of the harmony of relationships established between the orders of creation in [Genesis] chapter 2. Sin affects not only man and woman, but the world in which they live. Nothing less than a redemption of mankind and his world can therefore be included in a biblical doctrine of redemption."

¹¹⁰Peter Jensen, *The Revelation of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 74. Jensen writes, "The loss of God's ruling word was mirrored by the loss of the power of human speech, which became untruthful, cruel and divisive."

¹¹¹Palmer, *The Kingdom of God*, 20. See also, Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament*, 106. Van Groningen writes, "By way of summary: rejecting their royal status, they lost it; refusing their royal position, they became prisoners of sin and Satan; disobeying the Sovereign's expressed will, they became slaves of Satan, the master of deceit and evil. Fallen mankind had become dethroned and enslaved royalty."

¹¹²Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 47. Greidanus's distillation of the theme of Gen 1:1-2:3: "With his powerful word, the King of the universe created the earth as his good kingdom." See also George Eldon Ladd, *Jesus Christ and History* (Chicago: InterVarsity, 1963), 49-50. Ladd notes the primacy of God's proclamation throughout redemptive history when he writes, "In the beginning, God spoke, and the world came into being (Genesis 1:9; John 1:1, 3; Hebrews 11:3). In the incarnation, God spoke, and redemption was accomplished (John 1:1-14; Hebrews 1:1-3). At the end, Christ will speak, and evil will be destroyed."

snake in the garden that can talk, reason, and offer persuasive explanation of God's own words highlights the primacy of proclamation in the cosmic war.¹¹³ God is *the* preacher, and, as Eswine explains,

That Satan is a preacher may catch us off guard. Yet it was neither magic nor miracle but words that Satan used for the garden temptation. . . . The devil is not God's opposite—he is a being God created. The devil is not omniscient, omnipresent, or omnipotent. He cannot know our every thought, hear every prayer, or discern our hearts. Only God can do this. But as a creature, Satan listens; he speaks. He has been around for a long while, so he knows the human tendency. He delivers a message, and he gets people to act as a result of the effect of his message. One must not underestimate the fact that Satan is a powerful preacher.¹¹⁴

God's curse on the serpent illustrates, as Mathews notes, "an ongoing war between the serpent and the seed of woman." And the serpent is personal; he, as a being, will experience the curse all "the days of [his] life" (Gen 3:14-15).¹¹⁵

The entire biblical storyline follows this ongoing cosmic war. Its center is Jesus as "the Word," in whom "all the promises of God find their Yes" (Gen 3:15, John 1:1-14, 2 Cor 1:20).¹¹⁶ Peter Jensen puts it this way: "The story of salvation, with which the rest of the Bible is occupied, tells how God re-establishes his kingdom through his

¹¹³ Page, *Powers of Evil*, 12. Page notes, "Not only is the story unique in the Old Testament, it is without parallel in all of the literature of the Ancient Near East." See also Walter C. Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 38. Kaiser notes, the crafty serpent has "intelligence, conception, speech, and knowledge . . . indeed, a knowledge that surpasses either what the man or woman have. The tempter speaks as if he has access to the mind of God—or at least to the supernatural world."

¹¹⁴Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World*, 233.

¹¹⁵Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 234. See also, Davis, *Paradise to Prison*, 86. Davis asserts the personal nature of the one controlling the serpent when he writes, "The contention that it is biologically impossible for a serpent to speak is irrelevant; Satan, the master deceiver, was certainly capable of making a serpent speak. The evidence is decisive that Satan, who had already been cast from the presence of God, used this 'subtle' and beautiful animal, which apart from Satan was not evil. Satan is not mentioned in 3:1, but the serpent's words are in character for the one called by John the 'father of lies' (John 8:44)."

¹¹⁶John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 309-10. Frame writes, "The Great Commission carries this theme into the new covenant. Christ is himself the promised seed, the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15. He fills all things with his presence (Eph. 1:23; 4:10). And he takes title to all lands in God's creation (Matt. 28:18). . . . This is the age in which Christ has fulfilled history, but in which nevertheless he calls his disciples to apply his finished work."

word.”¹¹⁷ John’s prologue opens “In the beginning,” drawing the reader’s attention back to Genesis 1 and God’s kingly, authoritative, creative Word. Thus, when John announces Jesus as the divine, incarnate, eternal “Word” (λόγος), he is making explicit the relationship between Jesus and the Scripture.¹¹⁸ Graeme Goldsworthy remarks, “The prologue to John’s Gospel reminds us that the divine communication by which the worlds were made is the same Word that has taken human flesh in order to dwell among us.”¹¹⁹

The original kingdom-creation began through the Word and the new creation kingdom is inaugurated through the Word become flesh (John 1:14).¹²⁰ John Frame summarizes John’s prologue, noting “a threefold identity between God, Christ, and the creative word.” He concludes,

So the word is God. When we encounter the word of God, we encounter God. When we encounter God, we encounter his word. We cannot encounter God without the word, or the word without God. God’s word and his personal presence are inseparable. His word, indeed, is his personal presence. Whenever God’s Word is spoken, read, or heard, God himself is there.¹²¹

Revelation’s description of the eschatological triumph of the kingdom of Christ and the final defeat of “that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan” represents the full and final vindication of the textual Word of God and the personal Word of God (Rev 12:9, 19:13, 20:4).

As Eswine says, “Preaching is an act of spiritual war.”¹²² Yet the standard evangelical works on preaching largely ignore this.¹²³ Goldsworthy explains, “The

¹¹⁷Jensen, *The Revelation of God*, 74.

¹¹⁸Ward, *Words of Life*, 67. Ward notes, “John is referring much more directly to the meanings of the phrase ‘the Word of God’ in the Old Testament than he is the usages of *logos* in Greek thought. If he intends to allude to the later, he is wanting to subsume those Greek notions into the more truthful all-encompassing reality of Jesus Christ, and in so doing transform them.”

¹¹⁹Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 33.

¹²⁰Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*, 228. Old writes, “The kingdom of God is a new creation, and the new creation, as the old creation, has its beginning in the Word of God.”

¹²¹Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 68.

¹²²Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World*, 244.

narrative of Genesis 1-3 leaves room only for a total end there and then, or for the grace of God to operate in the whole process that leads eventually to the new creation and the glorious kingdom of God.”¹²⁴ The *protoevangelium* in Genesis 3:15 represents the gift of warfare that unfolds throughout redemptive history as recorded in Scripture.¹²⁵

Immediately after the fall, God proclaimed enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman; and this enmity is nothing other than spiritual (and, in Israel’s case, physical) warfare. From the creation of the cosmos, kingdom warfare has been a conflict over the Word of God (which we have preserved for us in Scripture) and the Word of God (Jesus Christ), who is the final word (Heb 1:1-2).¹²⁶ Such is still the case. Thus, the preacher, as the recognized mouthpiece for God in a local church, opposes Satan and stands at the apex of kingdom conflict in this age.¹²⁷ Faithful or unfaithful, his role as preacher of God’s Word thrusts him to a place of primacy in kingdom warfare.

Martin Luther explains the danger of Christian preaching:

¹²³From a non-evangelical perspective on preaching as an act of spiritual war, see the following works: Charles L. Campbell, *The Word Before the Powers: An Ethic of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002); and David G. Buttrick, *Preaching Jesus Christ: An Exercise in Homiletic Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988).

¹²⁴Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 47.

¹²⁵James Hamilton, “The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15,” *SBJT* 10 (2006): 30-31. Hamilton convincingly argues that “from start to finish, the OT is a messianic document, written from a messianic perspective, to sustain messianic hope,” while contending that the Messianism introduced in Genesis 3:15 can be shown to influence “the rest of the OT and into the New.” Hamilton also illustrates one expression of kingdom warfare raging throughout the biblical narrative: the heads of Satan kingdom keep getting crushed, echoing Gen 3:15 (Num 24:17; Judg 4-5, 9; 1 Sam 17:49; Isa 1:4-9; Jer 23:19; Hab 3:13; Pss 68:22; 110). See also Vasholz, *Pillars of the Kingdom*, 17. Vasholz writes, “The eventual triumph of God in His kingdom-creation would be demonstrated by repeated victories along the way. These high moments would translate into assurances for the final victory of mankind.” The phrase “parasite kingdom” comes from Gerard Van Groningen, *From Creation to Consummation* (Sioux Center, IA: Dordt Press, 1996), 1:103. He writes, “A parasite is an organism that is totally dependent on another living organism. A parasite does not have the means and ability to exist by virtue of its own means and methods.”

¹²⁶Ward, *Words of Life*, 176. Ward notes, “For the one place where the voice of God, and therefore what I have called ‘the semantic presence of God’, may always reliably be found, is in his speaking and acting in the words of Scripture.”

¹²⁷For the “mouthpiece for God” language, see Wagner, *Tongues Aflame*, 71.

How difficult an occupation preaching is. Indeed, to preach the Word of God is nothing less than to bring upon oneself all the furies of hell and of Satan, and therefore also of . . . every power of the world. It is the most dangerous kind of life to throw oneself in the way of Satan's many teeth.¹²⁸

To argue the primacy of the Word of God to the life and health of God's people in spiritual battle is not to assert something new but to acknowledge the biblical witness. Mark Dever notes, "God's people have always been created by God's Word. From creation in Genesis 1 to the call of Abram in Genesis 12, from the vision of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37 to the coming of the living Word, God has always created His people by His Word."¹²⁹

Graeme Goldsworthy affirms the primacy of preaching when he writes that preaching is God's "chosen means of creation and new creation."¹³⁰ Thus, when the magisterial Reformers applied the principle of *sola Scriptura*, the formal cause of the Reformation, they argued that faithful preaching of the Word was the preeminent mark of a true church. Calvin wrote, "Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists."¹³¹ Luther contended that, if there were no other sign but the word of the gospel rightly preached, "it would still suffice to prove that a Christian, holy people must exist there, for God's word cannot be without God's people. And conversely, God's people cannot be without God's word."¹³² Contemporary church

¹²⁸Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimar: Verlag Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1902), 25:253, quoted in Campbell, *The Word Before the Powers*, 69.

¹²⁹Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 8-9. See also Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 34. Clowney writes, "At every step in the history of redemption the sovereign power of God's word is manifested."

¹³⁰Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 45.

¹³¹John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 2:1023.

¹³²Martin Luther, "On the Councils and the Church," in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 547. For a contemporary baptistic theologian who affirms Calvin and Luther's view of the marks of a true church, see Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 865.

historian John S. Hammett points out that, when the Reformers spoke of God’s Word, it always included “the narrower meaning of the Word as the gospel.”¹³³ The Word purely and rightly preached ensures the gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed (Phil 2:16, Col 1:5).¹³⁴ Dever urges, “The place to begin is God’s beginning with us—His speaking to us. That is how our own spiritual health has come, and that is how our church’s health will come, too.”¹³⁵

The problem with many contemporary approaches to expository preaching is that they are simply not expositional enough. One fully exposes the meaning of the text only in light of the biblical storyline, which presents a warfare worldview that centers on the person and work of Christ and eschatological fulfillment in his kingdom.¹³⁶ Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching equips local churches to view spiritual warfare not as a specialized ministry but as the essence of our individual and corporate struggle as Christians living in the overlap of the ages.¹³⁷

¹³³John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 63. See also Philip G. Ryken, “An Apostolic Church,” in *The Church: One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Phillip G. Ryken, and Mark Dever (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 104. Ryken writes, “An apostolic church is Bible-based in its teaching—both testaments. An apostolic church is not simply a New Testament church; it is also an Old Testament church. It is a church that preaches Christ from the Old Testament Scriptures as the apostles did.”

¹³⁴Murray J. Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 18. Harris suggests that a possible translation of the phrase “word of truth” (Col 1:5) is “the true preaching.”

¹³⁵Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 7.

¹³⁶For an explanation of the biblical storyline as presenting a warfare worldview, see Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 13. In this volume Boyd does a masterful job describing the biblical data as it relates to a warfare worldview. While Boyd’s description of this phenomenon is without equal, the theological conclusions that he draws related to the problem of evil and suffering are both unique and dangerous. Boyd argues for a form of cosmic dualism and contends that the answer to the problem of evil is that God is not in absolute control: he does not act with absolute power, nor does He always have a purpose in every event (20, 284). For an excellent review, see D. A. Carson, “God, the Bible and Spiritual Warfare: A Review Article,” *JETS* 42, no.2 (1999): 251-69. For an excellent treatment of the divine warrior motif in Scripture without the theological aberrations of Boyd, see Tremper Longman III and Daniel G. Reid, *God is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

¹³⁷Clinton E. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 27. Arnold contends, “We need to begin thinking about spiritual warfare in a broader way. *Spiritual warfare is a way of characterizing our common struggle as Christians. . . . Spiritual warfare is all-*

Mainline theologian and ethicist Stanley Hauerwas describes the failure of both liberal and conservative preachers to recognize that preaching itself is an act of spiritual war:

“Cosmic struggle” sounds like a video game that middle-class children play. Most of us do not go to church because we are seeking a safe haven from our enemies; we go to church to be assured we have no enemies. . . . Of course, I should not be surprised that a soulless church produces a soulless ministry devoid of passion. The ministry seems to be captured in our time by people who are desperately afraid they might actually be caught with a conviction at some point in their ministry that might curtail their future ambition. They, therefore, see their task to “manage” their congregations by specializing in the politics of agreement by always being agreeable. The preaching such a ministry produces is designed to reinforce our presumed agreements, since a “good church” is one without conflict. . . . In contrast, I am suggesting that our preaching should presume that we are preaching to a church in the midst of a war—a position you may find odd to be advocated by a pacifist. . . . God has entrusted us, His Church, with the best story in the world. With great ingenuity we have managed, with the aid of much theory, to make that story boring as hell.¹³⁸

The Centrality of the Gospel of the Kingdom

The Great Commission. A loss of the Christocentric, kingdom-focused, biblical warfare storyline in preaching lukewarms a congregation’s passion for the evangelistic mandate. The New Testament describes Satan as “the ruler of the demons” (Matt 9:34, 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15), “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11), “the god of this world” (2 Cor 4:4), and “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2). He is the one whom all the perishing in unbelief serve; they have pledged allegiance to his parasite kingdom, wittingly or unwittingly. Ladd notes, “As an instrument of

encompassing. It touches every area of our lives—our families, our relationships, our church, our neighborhoods, our communities, our places of employment. There is virtually no part of our existence over which the Evil One does not want to maintain or reassert his unhealthy and perverse influence. Conversely, Jesus longs to reign as Lord over every area of our lives. This is the locus of intense struggle for all believers. And it is a power struggle. To which kingdom—and source of power—do we yield?”

¹³⁸Stanley Hauerwas, “Preaching as Though We Had Enemies,” *First Things*, May 1995, 46-47. Hauerwas notes the irony that a pacifist such as him is calling for understanding preaching as warfare. He writes, “In contrast, I am suggesting that our preaching should presume that we are preaching to a Church in the midst of a war—a position you may find odd to be advocated by a pacifist. I hope the oddness, however, might encourage you to reexamine your understanding on Christian nonviolence—which, if you are like me, was probably shaped by Reinhold Niebuhr. Who more than a Christian pacifist knows that Christians are in a war against war?”

judicial righteousness God has permitted Satan to exercise such influence in This Age that Paul can speak of him as the god of This Age.”¹³⁹ Under this demonic occupation, humanity’s only hope is the insurgency of the age to come led by Jesus of Nazareth. In his person the kingdom of God was already at hand. Yet the kingdom will not be consummated until the end. As Russell D. Moore and Robert E. Sagers explain, “The gospel is victory proclamation, knowing that what Christ has accomplished in the past will be consummated in the future.”¹⁴⁰

Expository preaching that fails to communicate that the believer lives in the overlap of the ages, a time of constant warfare, a time in which God is at work rescuing sinners “from the domain [kingdom] of darkness” and transferring them “to the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Col 1:13) obscures the cosmic implications of evangelism. The believer presently participates in the eschatological age to come, while at the same time living in this sin-filled world.¹⁴¹ As George Eldon Ladd explains, “Because of Christ’s death, the justified person stands already on the age-to-come side of the eschatological judgment, acquitted of all guilt. . . . Thus believers live in a tension of experienced and anticipated eschatology.”¹⁴² When preaching fails to recognize the Christocentric eschatological tension of the Christian life it is guilty of stripping the biblical text of its evangelistic hope and promise.

Theologian Thomas N. Finger asserts that in Scripture,

¹³⁹Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 30.

¹⁴⁰Moore and Sagers, “The Kingdom of God and the Church,” 80.

¹⁴¹Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*, 19-27.

¹⁴²George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 597. See also Geerhardus Vos, “The Eschatological Aspect of the Pauline Conception of the Spirit,” in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980), 92. Vos refers to the present overlap of the ages as “semi-eschatological.” He writes, “Through the appearance of the Messiah, as the great representative figure of the coming aeon, this new age has begun to enter into the actual experience of the believer. He has been translated into a state which, while falling short of the consummated life of eternity, yet may be truly characterized as semi-eschatological.”

The eschatological atmosphere of the ‘already/not yet’ pervades every action and thought. Ultimately it does not matter whether the consummation is near or far off. In either case hope of Christ’s return puts all things in new perspective. If Jesus has already conquered the powers of evil and if he will surely return to consummate all of God’s plans, then no situation of evil, tragedy, or despair can be as threatening as it looks. It must pass away. If the final evil, death, has already been conquered and if the power of resurrection now lives within us (cf. Eph. 1:19-21), then nothing, not even death, can defeat the life and love which now flow through us.¹⁴³

Finger also contends that for the first Christians, “Their eschatology was not merely a set of beliefs concerning future events but also the attitude or atmosphere aroused by these events.”¹⁴⁴ Effective preaching conveys this atmosphere of eschatological hope, a hope sourced in the triumph of the gospel of the Kingdom of Christ. The hope of the church and the hope it proclaims to the world is the triumph of the gospel of the Kingdom.

Richard Lints observes, “Texts do not stand in isolation. . . . Rather, the texts stand in a teleological relation to one another because they have one divine author who has brought the facts of history into teleological relation to one another.”¹⁴⁵ Thus, when any one of a text’s contexts is ignored, it vacuums out a component of its intended meaning.¹⁴⁶ For instance, Russell D. Moore observes that, although evangelical Protestants discuss the Great Commission as practical, personal exhortation, “rarely do we grasp what it means in the cosmic purposes of God in forming a kingdom for his Messiah” (Matt 28:16-20).¹⁴⁷ He continues,

The Scriptures, however, reveal an entirely different vision of the Great

¹⁴³Thomas N. Finger, *Christian Theology: An Eschatological Approach* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1985), 1:102.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology*, 188.

¹⁴⁶Ibid. Lints explains that the meaning of a text is wrapped up in the historical, epochal, and canonical context. He writes, “The part has meaning within the whole, and the whole gains meaning from the parts.”

¹⁴⁷Russell D. Moore, “A Theology of the Great Commission,” in *The Challenge of the Great Commission: Essays on God’s Mandate for the Local Church*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Thom S. Rainer (Crestwood, KY: Pinnacle Publishers, 2005), 49.

Commission. When Jesus announced the Commission to his disciples (Matt 28:16-20), he was not launching a global public relations campaign. He was declaring war. When Jesus grants the Great Commission, he is signaling the onset of the last days—the expansion of the gospel to the ends of the earth means that God has indeed granted him the nations as his inheritance. Thus, the Great Commission is a decisive stage in the warfare of God against the serpent of Eden, and the expansion of global missions represents the plundering of the kingdom of Satan (Mark 3:27; John 12:31-32; 2 Tim 2:25-26). The Great Commission is a theology of cosmic warfare—a theology centering on the unveiling of the long-hidden mystery of Christ and his church.¹⁴⁸

Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching ensures that gospel-centered evangelistic preaching is not an occasional series or special emphasis but the essential core of every sermon preached.¹⁴⁹ Each sermon reminds the congregation of its position in the kingdom of God and issues orders for the king’s conquest of the world. Expository preaching that isolates texts from their holistic Christocentric canonical context is forced to make a sharp distinction between edificational preaching for believers and evangelistic preaching geared toward unbelievers.¹⁵⁰ Tim Keller argues that such a distinction evaporates when every passage and truth of Scripture is understood and

¹⁴⁸Ibid., 49-50. See also Longman and Reid, *God is a Warrior*, 134. Longman and Reid write, “Matthew’s use of the divine-warrior motif culminates in a scene suggesting the enthronement of the victorious Christ. Jesus is exalted to the position of universal sovereign (Mt 28:18b), the heralds are sent forth to proclaim his kingship (28: 19-20a), and the security of his enthronement is assured to the end of the age (28:20b). The ancient pattern of the divine warrior’s triumph and enthronement has shaped the turning of the ages.” Also see D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Regency Reference Library, 1984), 594-95. Carson notes, “The Son becomes the one through whom *all* God’s authority is mediated. He is, as it were, the mediatorial King. This well-defined exercise of authority is given Jesus as the climatic vindication of his humiliation (cf. Phil 2:5-11); and it marks a turning point in redemptive history, for Messiah’s ‘kingdom’ (i.e., his ‘king-dominion,’ the exercise of his divine and saving authority; see on 3:2; 13:37-39) has dawned in new power.”

¹⁴⁹Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*, 283. “When Christian preaching is done the way it should be done, then it is evangelistic.”

¹⁵⁰Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 41-42. Johnson critiques Jay Adams’s view that evangelistic preaching has no place in the corporate worship of the church. He writes, “But does not this separation between evangelistic and edificatory preaching convey the impression that the gospel of grace and the gratitude it evokes can be left in the background as Christians go on to deal with the nitty-gritty issues of sanctification? As we will see in Part 2, the apostolic model of *parenesis* (exhortation) in the New Testament grounds believers’ obligations in the gospel itself, showing how the indicatives describing Christ’s saving work precede and entail the imperatives that define our believing response to mercy.” See Jay Adams, *Preaching with Purpose: The Urgent Task of Homiletics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 70.

applied in light of the Christocentric redemptive-historical biblical storyline.¹⁵¹ Thus, one preserves the unity of ethics and evangelism and equips the congregation for spiritual warfare in the cosmic theater. What every sermon listener, believer and unbeliever, needs is the gospel of the kingdom.

Eschatological hope. The *protoevangelium* is not only the first gospel; it is the first eschatology.¹⁵² The unfolding of that promise in the biblical narrative means that all of redemptive history generates an eschatological or Christotelic pull.¹⁵³ Van Groningen explains the eschatology of Genesis 3:

To think of eschatology is to think of the messianic task. Biblical messianism and eschatology are inseparable. The seed of the woman will determine the full dimensions of the restored fellowship between the sovereign Lord and his viceregents. It will determine the future of mankind's status, position, and function in the cosmos, and because of that, a future cosmos as well.¹⁵⁴

The entire Bible is rightly recognized as Christian Scripture because every part is organically connected to the τέλος of Scripture in the eschatological kingdom of Christ. As Thomas N. Finger explains, "Biblical narrative directs all divine and human acts toward a cosmic climax."¹⁵⁵ Therefore, expository preaching that treats eschatology

¹⁵¹Keller, "Preaching the Gospel in a Post-Modern World" (classroom lecture notes, Doctor of Ministry Program, Reformed Theological Seminary, January 2002, photocopy), 16. Keller contends the goal of exposition in preaching is "*To expound and teach the text so they understand Christ.*" He adds, "You haven't expounded the text unless you have integrated its particular message with the climax of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. It is to ask: '*What does this tell me about Jesus?*'" He concludes that, when preaching is properly Christocentric and application is properly contextualized in light of the gospel, it renders "the distinction between 'evangelistic' and 'edificational' sermons obsolete."

¹⁵²Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 257. Johnson explains, "Genesis 3:15 is the redemptive covenant in miniature."

¹⁵³Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament*, 114.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 115. See also Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 154. Enns writes, "To read the Old Testament 'christotelically' is to read it *already knowing* that Christ is somehow the *end* to which the Old Testament story is heading."

¹⁵⁵Thomas N. Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology: Biblical, Historical, Constructive* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 512.

simply as a doctrinal category presents the Scriptures as sub-Christian.¹⁵⁶ Jesus is the eschatological man and his people, the church, represent the eschatological kingdom community who heed his voice and eagerly await consummation of his kingdom.¹⁵⁷ As Moore writes,

The overarching story—with a beginning, a middle, and an end—makes sense of all of the smaller stories of our individual lives. In Scripture the *eschaton* is not simply tacked on to the gospel at the end. It is instead the vision toward which all of Scripture is pointing—and the vision that grounds the hope of the gathered church and the individual believer.¹⁵⁸

Moore continues,

The future has a name: Jesus of Nazareth, like all doctrines of the faith, eschatology is the outworking of Christology. God’s final purpose with his creation is to “bring everything together in the Messiah, both things in heaven and things on earth in Him” (Eph. 1:10 HCSB).¹⁵⁹

Biblical expository preaching does not excise a passage from the biblical metaplot to stage it for application. Instead, this sort of preaching takes the hearer to the text in its natural habitat, so to speak; the task is not to fit the text to the world of the

¹⁵⁶Stephen J. Wellum, “Editorial: Thinking Biblically and Theologically about Eschatology,” *SBJT* 14, no.1 (2010): 2-3. Wellum notes a tragic reason for much contemporary reticence regarding preaching about eschatological matters. He writes, “There are probably numerous reasons for this tendency. Some may tend in this direction as an overreaction to the first approach to eschatology so that, in their thinking any discussion of eschatology inevitably leads to predictions and charts, and thus must be avoided entirely. However, there may be an additional reason which, if we are not careful, may reflect our sad state of being more conformed to this world and its thoroughly secular mindset, i.e., a ‘this-worldly’ perspective, instead of being transformed by God’s Word (see Rom 12:1-2).”

¹⁵⁷George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 265. Ladd notes that New Testament eschatology has a vertical and horizontal dimension. The vertical dimension reveals that “The world below is the realm of darkness, of satanic power, of sin, and of death. The world above is the world of the Spirit, of light, and life. In Jesus’ mission light and life have invaded the darkness to deliver people from darkness, sin, and death, to give them the life of the Spirit.” The horizontal dimension reveals that the invasion of the world above “is an invasion into *history*,” which focuses on present and future (linear progression). See also Geerhardus Vos, *The Life and Letters of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. James T. Dennison (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005), 51-52. Dennison describes Vos as transforming traditional biblical study “by introducing an intersecting plane hermeneutic: the intrusion of the vertical into the horizontal, the penetration of the temporal by the eternal, the intersection of the protological and the eschatological.”

¹⁵⁸Russell D. Moore, “Personal and Cosmic Eschatology,” in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2007), 858.

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 892-93.

reader as much as it is to fit the reader to the world of the text. Faithful preaching drags hearers into the amazingly diverse but unified biblical storyline so they can find themselves in Jesus and the story of his kingdom (Col 3:3).

The repetitiveness of this Christocentric, kingdom-focused model of preaching is not monotonous or boring when it is matched with a rigorous expository approach that reveals the inexhaustible riches and perspectives found in the biblical witness.

Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching will not mute the call to obey the moral and ethical imperatives of Scripture (1 Cor 10:11). To the contrary, such an approach will strengthen the call to obey because it provides the only possible context for obedience—faith.¹⁶⁰ Sanctification, just as justification, is by faith alone.¹⁶¹ Genuine spiritual motivation in preaching must be presented in terms of the gospel; people must be set free before they can walk in freedom.¹⁶² When the moral imperatives of Scripture

¹⁶⁰Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 80. Clowney writes, “The redemptive-historical approach necessarily yields ethical application, which is an essential part of preaching the Word. Whenever we are confronted with the saving work of God culminating in Christ, we are faced with ethical demands. A religious response of faith and obedience is required. But that response must be evoked by the truth of the particular revelation which is before us. To understand that truth we must know the context of the revelation in its period. Without this structure biblical history becomes a chaotic jumble, and little in the lives of biblical characters seems either relevant to our lives or worthy of imitation.”

¹⁶¹Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John Richard DeWitt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 256. Ridderbos notes, “Indicative and imperative are both the object of faith, on the one hand in its receptivity, on the other in its activity.” See also Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 55-56. Johnson describes Timothy Keller’s preaching model as “The Gospel Changes Everything,” and explains one of Keller’s central emphases in the following way: “What both the unbeliever and the believer need to hear in preaching is the gospel, with its implications for a life lived in confident gratitude in response to amazing grace. Christians are constantly tempted to relapse into legalistic attitudes in their pursuit of sanctification, so we never outgrow our need to hear the good news of God’s free and sovereign grace in Christ. Sanctification, no less than justification, must come by grace alone, through faith alone—we grow more like Christ only by growing more consistent in trusting Christ alone, thinking, feeling, acting, ‘in line with the truth of the gospel’ (Gal. 2:14). From this grace alone can flow true sanctification, motivated by gratitude and empowered by the Spirit.”

¹⁶²Some scholars have expressed the primacy of the gospel over ethical instruction in terms of an indicative (what God has done in the gospel) and imperative (what man must do) structure. The gospel indicative must always precede the imperative. See Ridderbos, *Paul*, 257-58. Ridderbos argues that Paul adopted such a structure: “This relation of the indicative and imperative is altogether determined by the redemptive-historical situation. The indicative represents the ‘already’ as well as the ‘not yet.’ The imperative is likewise focused on the one as well as the other. On the ground of the ‘already’ it can in a certain sense ask all things, is total in character, speaks not only of a small beginning, but of perfection in Christ. At the same time it has its basis in the provisional character of the ‘not yet.’ Its content, therefore, is

are preached apart from the gospel, the fruit is moralistic legalism; and, when to gospel is preached without the consequential imperative, antinomian liberalism flourishes.¹⁶³

Kingdom community. Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching remedies the contemporary fetishizing of the individual; it foregrounds the church. As New Testament theologian Herman N. Ridderbos argues, the “eschatological, the Christological, and the ecclesiological point of view are never separable in the preaching of the Kingdom.”¹⁶⁴ According to him, “three ideas—of the Kingdom, of the Messiah, and of the *ekklesia*—formed an integrated unity in the original gospel.”¹⁶⁵ Peter Enns contends that apostolic hermeneutics were both Christotelic and ecclesiotelic because “the apostolic use of the Old Testament does not focus exclusively on the *person* of Christ, but also on the *body* of Christ, his people, the church.” Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching will inevitably reject radical individualism.¹⁶⁶ Allen Mitsuo Wakabayashi critiques the individualistic focus of the American church and defines individualism as “a cognitive framework that sees only the individual at the center of

not only positive, but also negative. At the same time there is in the ‘not yet’ the necessity for increasing, pushing ahead on the way that has been unlocked by the ‘already.’ The whole character and content of the Pauline paraenesis and of the new obedience is contained *in nuce* in these different points of view.” See also Richard B. Gaffin Jr., *By Faith, Not by Sight: Paul and the Order of Salvation* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2006), 71-72. Gaffin contends, “There are two important and related points to be made about the indicative-imperative relationship. First, that relationship is *irreversible*. The indicative has priority; it is foundational and grounds the imperative. The imperative is its fruit, not the reverse. If it needs saying, Paul’s gospel, as gospel, stands or falls with the irreversibility. . . . But this irreversible relationship is an *inseparable* relationship. Paul, we may also generalize, never writes in the indicative without having the imperative in view, at least implicitly.”

¹⁶³Gaffin, *By Faith, Not by Sight*, 72. Regarding Paul, Gaffin asserts, “On balance, the imperative without the indicative leads into a soteriological legalism, to using the imperative either to achieve or secure one’s salvation; it makes Paul a moralist. On the other hand, the indicative without the imperative tends to an antinomianism; it leaves us with Paul the mystic.”

¹⁶⁴Herman N. Ridderbos, *When the Time Had Fully Come: Studies in New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 23.

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 22-23.

¹⁶⁶Mohler, *He is Not Silent*, 121. Mohler contends that postmodern culture represents the triumph of the therapeutic and that contemporary preaching often reflects the same: “In a post-modern world, all issues eventually revolve around the self.”

everything.”¹⁶⁷ There is no room for such individualism in the church; preaching should offer an alternative conception of the individual, one that locates the individual’s identity and value in Christ and His Kingdom.

Christ, kingdom, and church are inextricable. The New Testament goes so far as to say that Christ does not even reckon himself complete apart the church. Ephesians 1:23 describes the church as “his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.” John Calvin explains the implications of this verse:

This is the highest honor of the Church, that, until He is united to us, the Son of God reckons himself in some measure imperfect. What consolation is it for us to learn, that, not until we are along with him, does he possess all his parts, or wish to be regarded as complete! Hence, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, when the apostle discusses largely the metaphor of a human body, he includes under the single name of Christ the whole church.¹⁶⁸

If Christ does not even reckon himself complete apart from the church, how can the individual do so?

Myopic, principalizing approaches to expository preaching encourage an unhealthy individualized focus and work against the cultivation of kingdom community. Marva Dawn observes that “the Bible is most often written in the plural” and that Christians should be equipped to act on that plurality.¹⁶⁹ Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching lifts hearers above self-focus; it attacks the hermeneutical

¹⁶⁷Allen Mitsuo Wakabayashi, *Kingdom Come: How Jesus Wants to Change the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 17. Wakabayashi adds, “Unfortunately, I believe that our Western individualism has caused us to misperceive and misunderstand the gospel in a way that blunts the gospel’s world-transforming force. Furthermore, the tradition of the Western church, steeped in this individualism, has stamped its approval on narrow conceptions of the gospel that leave us living in ways that do little to change our society.”

¹⁶⁸John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, in vol. 21 of *Calvin’s Commentaries*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 218. For a contemporary commentator who agrees with Calvin that “fullness of him” in Ephesians 1:23 is a reference to the church, See Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 147-52.

¹⁶⁹Marva Dawn, “The Call to Build Community,” in *The Unnecessary Pastor: Rediscovering the Call*, ed. Peter Santucci (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 214-15. Dawn writes, “We all need to become Southerners to read the Bible correctly, because to inhabit its world is to speak about our lives as *y’all* (plural), instead of *you* (singular). . . . It takes a long process to change the Western individualized vocabulary that is ruining *our* church.”

presupposition of the primacy of personal need. The gospel is about Christ and his kingdom. As Moore says, the very existence of the church “is a declaration of war” and represents an “outpost of the kingdom—a colony of the reign that will one day engulf the world (Eph 1:20-23).”¹⁷⁰ The individual believer is a citizen of “the kingdom of his beloved Son” and is a part of a community of believers who are called to fight the spiritual battle *together*, not as isolated individuals (Col 1:13, Eph 6:10-18).¹⁷¹ Peter J. Leithart summarizes the matter succinctly: “The apostles could not have imagined anyone living the Christian life outside of the church.”¹⁷² Effective expository preaching will not allow congregants to envision living the Christian life outside of Christ or his kingdom outpost—the church.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that a sermon is not faithful simply because it contains true assertions. Rather, textual truths isolated from the biblical metanarrative can bear false witness when their historical, epochal, or canonical contexts are ignored. No individual text or truth should stand alone; instead, preachers should encourage their congregations to conceive of what Clowney calls “truth to the *n*th power.”¹⁷³ Every truth comes to its fullest meaning in light of its relationship to Christ and his kingdom. This Christological, eschatologically oriented approach to preaching is the key to avoiding the sermonic misuse of individual texts and truths. The preacher should preach Christ from

¹⁷⁰Moore, “A Theology of the Great Commission,” 62.

¹⁷¹Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians*, 155, 157. Gombis contends, “Paul situates the church as the divine warrior, carrying out spiritual warfare in the world.” Further he contends, Ephesians 6:10-18, a passage almost always preached as an admonition to individual Christians is actually a message to “the entire church gathered.” He continues, “They are the presence of God in Christ on earth, a reality brought about by the Spirit of God. It is the Spirit who draws the community up into the presence of God and radiates the presence of God among the community.”

¹⁷²Peter J. Leithart, *The Kingdom and the Power*, 143.

¹⁷³Clowney, “Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures,” 180.

every text of Scripture because the entire Bible is fundamentally a book about Christ. Superficial, imaginative connections to Christ are unnecessary and will starve the congregation of the genuinely diverse biblical testimony about Christ and his kingdom. Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching is indispensable for equipping the church for cosmic spiritual warfare, maintaining the primacy of the gospel, giving urgency to evangelistic witness, instilling eschatological hope, and building genuine kingdom community.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has argued that Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching from the entire Bible is not an optional type or style of preaching but constitutes the core of all faithful biblical proclamation. Within the wide variety of literary genres present in Scripture, there is a Christocentric, kingdom focus that is eschatologically oriented. This Christocentric, kingdom focus is true of biblical revelation in its entirety and necessitates that the meaning of every text is rightly interpreted only in light of Christ and his kingdom. God's revelation in Scripture is the progressive unfolding of his redemptive deeds in history, which consummates in Christ's person, work, and kingdom.¹ Thus, the historical, epochal, and canonical horizons of the biblical narrative unite to elucidate the meaning of any portion of the Scripture.² Simply put, the kingdom of Christ makes every story in the Bible *one* story.

A Christocentric, kingdom-focused approach to expository preaching does justice to the dual authorship of Scripture and liberates the preacher to proclaim the entire Bible, Old Testament and New Testament, as Christian Scripture. When God is recognized as the ultimate author of Scripture, more concentrated attention should be given to the unique contribution of the human authors, not less, because God's revelation presents itself in history. Uncovering the distinctive testimony of the diverse range of

¹Derke P. Bergsma, *Redemption: The Triumph of God's Great Plan* (Kearney, NE: Morris Publishing, 1989), 21. Bergsma writes, "In Christ all revelatory events receive their real meaning in relation to God's saving purpose in history."

²Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 15.

human authors will illuminate canonical divine intention and the organic unity of biblical revelation.

As Paul House notes, Old Testament scholars are often fearful that the notion of Christocentric preaching will relegate the Old Testament narrative to “serving as background for the NT, the ‘real Bible.’”³ Ironically, Old Testament scholars such as Walter C. Kaiser, who defend the importance and equality of Old Testament revelation by severing its interpretation from subsequent canonical revelation, may win the academic argument while contributing to the dearth of OT sermons in local churches.⁴ Biblical prescription and basic Christian intuition demand that Christian preachers must preach Christ; and, when convinced that the Old Testament is not Christocentric, many will simply relegate Old Testament preaching to an occasional sermon. Kaiser rightly eschews any subjectivism in interpretation and proclamation; but his methodology, in championing the single intention of the human author, treats Scripture like any other book.⁵ Certainly, expository sermons that ignore or diminish human authorship are a

³Paul House, “Christ-Centered Zeal: Some Concerns from an OT Scholar,” the Gospel Coalition Blog, entry posted 17 February 2011 [on-line]; accessed 18 August 2011; available from <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2011/02/17/christ-centered-zeal-some-concerns-from-an-ot-scholar/print/>; Internet.

⁴Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament: Guide for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 10. Kaiser is the leading advocate of the single-intention-of-the-original-author approach to biblical interpretation. After noting many positives in contemporary evangelical churches, he notes, “Yet despite this vanguard of favorable signs, there remains a distressing absence of the Old Testament in the church. It is possible to attend some churches for months without ever hearing a sermon from the older testament, which represents well over three-fourths of what our Lord had to say to us.” It may be that the popular acceptance of Kaiser’s interpretive methodology has contributed to the lack of OT sermons that he decries.

⁵Millard J. Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation: Perspectives on Hermeneutical Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 30. Erickson convincingly explains the inadequacy of the single-intention position to account for the supernatural activity of the divine author: “The problem here, however, is that God presumably has a knowledge of the future that far exceeds that of the author or any other human. This knowledge, however, is not merely information that humans do not have, but also involves even the categories that a human who had not experienced the future would not ordinarily have. Thus, for the human author to intend what God intends, it would be necessary for him to be given extensive knowledge of the future to provide a framework within which to understand it and thus to consciously intend what he was going to write.”

betrayal of biblical exposition; but so are those that diminish divine authorship. A Christocentric, kingdom-focused approach to expository preaching comprehends the entire Bible, both testaments, as Christian Scripture and considers Jesus Christ to be the mediator of meaning (Luke 24:24-49, 1 Cor 2:2, 2 Cor 10:5, Eph 1:10).⁶

Chapter 2 argued that hermeneutics is inseparably linked to the task of preaching. Dennis Johnson has accurately described the contemporary failure to link hermeneutics and preaching as a “tragic divorce.”⁷ Raymond Bailey correctly notes that every person is a hermeneut of sorts and that every Christian has some theory of hermeneutics.⁸ The preacher bears the unique responsibility of rightly interpreting the Bible not only for himself but also for others.⁹ Therefore, the preacher is constantly training listeners in how to interpret the Scripture as they listen to his sermons. The preacher is most often the primary influencer in how Christians understand and read their Bibles. Hermeneutics is never theologically neutral. The chasm between a Christocentric, kingdom-focused approach to biblical interpretation and a Kaiserian approach, which limits interpretation to the single intended meaning of the human author, is vast. They often yield divergent interpretations and applications.

When the totality of the canonical biblical storyline is eclipsed in interpreting the meaning of the biblical text, secondary matters take center stage. As Michael Horton

⁶Kaiser’s argument that Paul’s assertion “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2) is a special case and a hyperbolic statement is unconvincing. (*Recovering the Unity of the Bible: One Continuous Story, Plan, and Purpose* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009], 219).

⁷Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 3-4. Johnson writes, “To testify faithfully and effectively about Jesus the Christ in the twenty-first century, as the apostles did in the first, we need to reconcile three divorced ‘couples’ whose ‘marriages’ were made in heaven: we need to reunite *Old Testament* and *New Testament*, apostolic *doctrine* and apostolic *hermeneutics*, biblical *interpretation* and biblical *proclamation*.”

⁸Raymond Bailey, “Hermeneutics: A Necessary Art,” in *Hermeneutics for Preaching: Approaches to Contemporary Interpretations of Scripture*, ed. Raymond Bailey (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 7-8.

⁹*Ibid.*, 8.

explains, “The result is that God becomes a supporting actor in our story instead of the other way around.”¹⁰

This study identified Genesis 3:15, and Luke 24:25-27, 44-46 as key texts, revealing that the entire biblical storyline testifies of, and has as its theological center, the kingdom of God in Christ.¹¹ Dennis Johnson writes that “Genesis 3:15 provides a useful paradigm for us as we seek to relate every Scripture to the cosmic renewal to which God has set his hand.”¹² In Luke 24, the risen Jesus provides a lesson in biblical interpretation. He asserts himself as the hermeneutical key to the OT Scripture and as the messianic fulfillment both of the *protoevangelium* and of all subsequent gospel promises.¹³ The post-resurrection preaching of the apostles never varied from eschatologically-minded kingdom Christocentrism.¹⁴ The resolution of the promised kingdom warfare in Genesis

¹⁰Michael Horton, *The Gospel-Driven Life: Being Good News People in a Bad News World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 18.

¹¹Sinclair Ferguson, “The Christ of History,” in *These Last Days: A Christian View of History*, ed. Richard D. Phillips and Gabriel N. E. Fluhrer (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2011), 2-3. Ferguson also lists Gen 3:15 and Luke 24:25-46 as key texts. He conjectures that Jesus began his conversation with the weary disciples on the road to Emmaus with Gen 3:15: “We could say that [the Bible] is simply a series of extended expressions, footnotes, and expositions of this word of conflict in Genesis 3:15—and ultimately of Christ’s final victory over the serpent.”

¹²Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 257.

¹³David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Luke,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 400. Pao and Schnabel write, “The narrative of Jesus’ appearance to two disciples on the road to Emmaus contains several terms that speak of scriptural interpretation: *syzeteo* (24:15), *dianoigo* (24:31-32), *dierneneuo* (24:27), and perhaps *homileo* (24:14-15), characterizing Jesus as teacher and Jesus’ followers as interpreters of OT Scripture.”

¹⁴Richard B. Gaffin Jr., “For Our Sakes Also: Christ in the Old Testament in the New Testament,” in *The Hope Fulfilled: Essays in Honor of O. Palmer Robertson*, ed. Robert L. Penny (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 66. Gaffin explains the Christocentric, kingdom focus of Jesus’ teaching in Luke 24: “In the overall presentations of the teaching of Jesus in Luke, as well as the other Synoptic Gospels, the kingdom of God/heaven is the theme that is both central and all-encompassing. From this we may infer in verse 44 that the comprehensive focus of the teaching of Jesus, pre- as well as post-resurrection, concerned the necessary fulfillment of the whole Old Testament that has been inaugurated in the arrival of the kingdom in his person and work. For his post-resurrection teaching this inference is made explicit in the passage that overlaps Luke 24:44-52 at the beginning of part two to Theophilus, Acts 1:3-11. What characterized the forty days between the resurrection and ascension in terms of teaching was that, all told, to the apostles (v.2) Jesus was ‘speaking about the kingdom of God . . .’ (v. 3; literally, ‘the things concerning the kingdom of God’). To speak of the necessary fulfillment of everything written in Scripture about him is to speak about the kingdom of God.”

3:15 is the triumph of the kingdom of Christ. This is the metanarrative of redemptive history.

Once the light of Christ and his kingdom has illuminated the types and shadows of the OT, it would be a denial of reality to obscure that light in a pursuit of supposed hermeneutical purity.¹⁵ Some fear that Christocentric interpretation is a slippery slope: what will keep interpreters from uncontrolled allegory, subjectivism, or Gnosticism?¹⁶ The canon answers this objection by constraining the *sensus plenior*.¹⁷ Kaiser and other single-intention proponents have not adequately explained how ascertaining human authorial intent in one book is less subjective than seeking divine authorial intent in the canon as a whole. Scripture is a commentary on Scripture, and the

¹⁵B. B. Warfield, *Biblical Doctrine*, vol. 2 of *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1932), 141-42. Advocating reading the OT under the illumination of NT revelation, Warfield writes, “The Old Testament may be likened to a chamber richly furnished but dimly lighted; the introduction of light brings into it nothing which was not in it before; but it brings out into clearer view much of what is in it but was only dimly or even not at all perceived before. The mystery of the Trinity is not revealed in the Old Testament; but the mystery of the Trinity underlies the Old Testament revelation, and here and there almost comes into view. Thus the Old Testament revelation of God is not corrected by the fuller revelation which follows it, but only perfected, extended and enlarged.”

¹⁶Kaiser, *Recovering the Unity of the Bible*, 217. Regarding the notion of a textual *sensus plenior*, Kaiser asserts, “But there lurks in evangelical thought the occultic idea that a hidden meaning lay just outside the purview of the human authors of the Old Testament that can be unlocked now that we have the New Testament. This is damaging to the case for inspiration and for the unity of Scripture. It posits that there exists somewhere in cyberspace a meaning that cannot be reached by the grammatico-historical interpretation of the text. But since it is not in the words, grammar, or syntax of the sentences or paragraphs, it must be located between the lines. If that is so, then it is not *graphe*—that is, what is ‘written’—that is said to be inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16-17), but rather what is not written.” Kaiser’s trenchant critique of *sensus plenior* ignores canonical context. Meaning clarified and extended by canonical context would only be “occultism” if there were no author of the canon as a whole.

¹⁷Donald Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 110. Fairbairn explains the interpretive approach of the church fathers as a type of Christocentric canonical *sensus plenior*: “The Fathers had no qualms whatsoever about reading preconceived theological ideas into a given passage, as long as they got those ideas from elsewhere in the Bible. In fact, they regarded any attempt to avoid such a reading to be un-Christian. The Fathers believed that the entire Bible was a book about Christ, and therefore they were determined to read every passage of Scripture as being directly or indirectly about Christ, the Christian’s relationship to Christ or the church’s relationship to Christ.”

interpreter should suppose that meaning of the text itself is fuller than the meaning in the human author's mind.¹⁸

Apostolic preaching as recorded in the New Testament reveals a commitment to understanding biblical redemptive history as the eschatological movement of the kingdom of Christ. As Peter Leithart says, "The apostles teach us to recognize that 'how it turned out' exposes dimensions of the original event or text that may not have been apparent, and perhaps were not even there, until it turned out as it did."¹⁹

Chapter 3 of this work developed a Christocentric, kingdom-focused model of expository preaching based on apostolic preaching. It contended that apostolic sermons are intended to serve as patterns for modeling contemporary preaching. It denied the notion that we are to commit our lives to all the teaching of the apostles save hermeneutics.²⁰ It is inconsistent for evangelicals to denounce the rejection of, say, the virgin birth or wifely submission on the basis of cultural enlightenment and interpretive autonomy while rejecting the apostolic hermeneutic on the very same basis.

Expository preaching that follows in the apostolic tradition is committed to the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture. Thus, a key preparation for such preaching is to saturate oneself with Scripture. It is the preacher's understanding of the whole story that shapes his understanding of individual biblical stories. Scripture saturation allows the

¹⁸David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 178.

¹⁹Peter J. Leithart, *Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 74. Leithart argues, "Typological reading is simply reading of the earlier texts in the light of later texts and events."

²⁰Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 198. See this notion in Longenecker's conclusion: "What then can be said to our question, 'Can we reproduce the exegesis of the New Testament?' I suggest that we must answer both 'No' and 'Yes.' Where that exegesis is based on a revelatory stance, or where it evidences itself to be merely cultural, or where it shows itself to be circumstantial or *ad hominem* in nature, 'No.' Where, however, it treats the Old Testament in more literal fashion, following the course of what we speak of today as historic-grammatical exegesis, 'Yes.' Our commitment as Christians is to the reproduction of the apostolic faith and doctrine, and not necessarily to the specific apostolic exegetical practices."

interpreter to detect literary structure, plot structure, connections, allusions, analogies, symbols, and types throughout the biblical narrative, absorbing the Bible's worldview and patterns of thought. The Bible is not a list of timeless principles. Reading it as such mutes its message. The use of biblically subsequent information in determining the fuller meaning of a biblical text is not eisegesis, as Kaiser contends, but rather the heart of apostolic hermeneutics.²¹

The New Testament writers urge readers to reconsider the Old Testament in light of Jesus Christ (Rom 15:4, 1 Cor 10:1-12). Contemporary preachers can often be intimidated by the charge of subjectivity from single-authorial-intention advocates. The charge presumes the attainment of some sort of scientific precision in determining the historical situation and intention of the original author. This presumption is unwarranted.²² Moreover, apostolic sermons show no hesitation to interpret Scripture through Christ and his kingdom, and they give no warnings against the practice.²³ Speaking of Peter's transformation, Sinclair Ferguson notes that he received a six-week seminar from Jesus on how to read the Bible, after which "Peter appears on the day of

²¹Walter C. Kaiser, "A Principalizing Model," in *Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Gary T. Meadors (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 23. Kaiser writes, "A greater temptation is to introduce a truth taught in the New Testament and to read the Bible backwards (as in 'eisegesis') and claim here was a 'deeper truth' or something that was a *sensus plenior*, presumably encrypted between the lines and not in the grammar or syntax per se."

²²Philip Barton Payne, "The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author's Intention," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 72. "The Bible authors' intentions are an elusive matter for many reasons. We will consider only four reasons here: 1) 'Intention' can be understood at many levels; 2) an author may have more than one reason for making a statement—his intention, in other words, may be complex; 3) intention is a complex category involving mental states that are in a constant flux; intention may suggest subconscious as well a conscious factors; and 4) it is difficult to demonstrate what the intentions of the biblical authors were, since we are separated from them by many centuries and their thoughts are known to us only through their writings."

²³Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), 51. Henry asserts, "The apostolic view of the kingdom should likewise be definitive for contemporary evangelicalism. There does not seem to be much apostolic apprehension over kingdom preaching."

Pentecost, preaching as though all his life he has been meditating on the way in which the Scriptures, pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ, fit together.”²⁴

Because of the incarnation, life, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, the apostles were conscious of the fact that they were living in the “last days.” In him, they had entered the eschatological age (Acts 2:17; 1 Cor 10:11; 2 Tim 3:1; Heb 1:1-2, 6:5; 2 Pet 3:3). We live and preach in the same age as the apostles, the already-but-not-yet of the kingdom of Christ, the overlap of the present evil age and the age to come. Faithful preaching is not only eschatologically oriented; it is itself an eschatological event (Eph 3:7-13).

Following the apostles, contemporary preachers must understand that the meaning of every sermon text is determined by its relationship to Christ and his kingdom. The Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preacher calls believers to find their identity in union with Christ, the eschatological man, and his eschatological kingdom (2 Cor 10:3-5; Phil 3:20). Christocentric sermons oriented toward kingdom eschatology always keep the gospel in view, provide hope for living between the times, and retell the biblical story. Chapter 3 concludes that Scripture saturation, the centrality of the person and work of Jesus Christ, and the centrality of eschatological fulfillment in the kingdom of Christ are the key components of apostolic sermons and provide the foundation for contemporary expository sermons.

Among contemporary advocates of this type of preaching, four individuals stand out, each represented by his pivotal work: Edmund Clowney’s *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (1961), Bryan Chapell’s *Christ-Centered Preaching* (1994), Sidney Greidanus’s *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (1999), and Graeme Goldsworthy’s *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (2000).²⁵ Chapter 4

²⁴Ferguson, “The Christ of History,” 13.

²⁵Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994); Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical*

critiqued the approach of each author and summarily evaluated each in relation to the Christocentric, kingdom-focused model advocated in his work. Each of these men has contributed an important model of Christocentric interpretation and proclamation, and their achievements are even more remarkable because of the environment of Enlightenment rationalism in which they were created: the mass of both the left and right wings of theological thought was against them.²⁶

While many recognize theological liberalism's descent from Enlightenment rationalism, few discern the Enlightenment's impact on evangelicalism. Theological liberals tried to retain the essence of Christianity by minimizing it to a moral code and abandoning the aspects of the faith that the modern world deemed indefensible.²⁷ Many conservative evangelicals retained a commitment to the systematized fundamentals of the faith but embraced an Enlightenment-fueled hermeneutic that reduced meaning to morality.²⁸ Dennis E. Johnson explains:

Method (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

²⁶Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity*, 114. Regarding modern conservative evangelical biblical interpretation, Fairbairn notes, "Whether we admit it or not, we are influenced by the idea that the Bible is primarily a human book, and our preoccupation with the human author's intent at the time leads us to the kind of interpretation we adopt. . . . As evangelicals we reject the idea that the Bible is primarily a human book, that it is a collection of disparate accounts and that other passages of Scripture are not relevant to the interpretation of the one we are dealing with at any given time. But even though we reject these premises, they were the premises of the biblical scholars who forged the dominant method of biblical interpretation that we use today. Whether we like it or not, whether we admit it or not, we are influenced by a method of biblical interpretation that treats the Bible as a set of unrelated human testimonies to the divine-human encounter. At this point, we as evangelicals should notice a significant incongruity latent in our situation. We accept (albeit with reservations) a method of biblical interpretation that historically arose among scholars who rejected most of our core convictions about the Bible—that it is from God, that it is a book telling a single story, that its various writings are fundamentally unified, that its central subject is Christ."

²⁷J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1923). See also Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Biblical-Theological Foundations and Principles* (Nottingham: InterVarsity, 2006), 120-29.

²⁸Leithart, *Deep Exegesis*, 29-30. Leithart argues that this hermeneutic produces "Kantian evangelicals": "Much evangelical preaching, further, is known for its tropological bent. Evangelicals want to make the Bible practical, and that often means drawing moralistic conclusions from the text. Evangelicals who make morality the primary content of religion may not be affected by Kant directly, but the hermeneutical results are the same: the events are moral allegories."

Thus over the last three centuries, the theological substructure of apostolic hermeneutics and homiletics has been assaulted both by the ‘hostile fire’ of Enlightenment criticism and by the ‘friendly fire’ of Bible-believing students who sought to develop an objective hermeneutic sufficient to withstand the acidic rigors of Enlightenment doubt.²⁹

It was in this cultural milieu that Edmund Clowney appeared as a lone voice for the application of a Christ-centered biblical theology (influenced by the insights of Geerhardus Vos) to the task of preaching.³⁰ Clowney’s approach was focused on learning how to read the Bible as redemptive history in light of Christ, not on nuanced hermeneutical methodology. And, although sermonistic Christocentrism sounded novel to some in Clowney’s time, it was arguably the majority viewpoint in church history.³¹ For

²⁹Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 5.

³⁰Arturo G. Azurdia III, “The Greatness of God’s Ultimate Word: Hebrews 1:1-3,” in *Heralds of the King: Christ-Centered Sermons in the Tradition of Edmund P. Clowney*, ed. Dennis E. Johnson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 204. In this volume of Christ-centered sermons, eleven men who were directly influenced by Clowney offer tributes to him along with expositions that exemplify his influence. The reoccurring theme is that these authors approached Christ-centered preaching with reluctance because of its divergence from the pervading evangelical hermeneutic. In the end, Clowney’s expositions persuaded all of them. Azurdia, for example, writes, “Preaching Christ from the Old Testament was the name of the class. I entered with my resistance level at its peak because years earlier I had been outfitted with a hermeneutic that argued one must never preach Christ unless he is mentioned in the specific text at hand. Of course, the negative corollary was equally emphatic: preaching Christ from the entire Bible could only be the result of medieval allegorizing—a Bible study approach to be spurned as an interpretive interloper. Yet for three hours each day Dr. Clowney displayed from both exegetical and theological perspectives how the Old Testament relentlessly point to Jesus Christ. At the risk of sounding hopelessly sentimental, it was something of an Emmaus Road experience for me.”

³¹Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 103-04. It is not uncommon for single-intended-meaning-of-the-human-author advocates to claim the Antiochene interpretive tradition. However, this claim fails to understand the issue that was at hand. As Johnson writes, “Despite the sharpness of their disagreement over layers of symbolism, however, Alexandria and Antioch shared an underlying consensus, already visible in Justin and Irenaeus, which affirmed both the biblical text’s historical context and its broader canonical context. Unlike the philosophers’ allegorizing of pagan myths and even, to some extent, Philo’s allegorizing of the Jewish Scriptures to make them compatible with neo-Platonic thought, the allegorical emphasis of Alexandria did not minimize the ‘literal’ historical reality of the biblical events. (The ‘literal’ level, however, receded in its interpretive and pastoral significance.) Unlike some Jewish, dispensational, and historical critical interpreters, the typological emphasis of Antioch did not restrict an Old Testament text’s meaning to its sense in its original context but always sought to keep in view the broader canonical context, as well as the focus and fulfillment of the whole trajectory of redemptive history in Christ.” See these works as well: Robert W. Bernard, “The Hermeneutics of the Early Church Fathers,” in *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture*, ed. Bruce Corley, Steve Lemke, and Grant Lovejoy (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 59-70; and Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now*.

over thirty years, Clowney's *Preaching and Biblical Theology* stood virtually alone in evangelical homiletical literature.

Thankfully, the past twenty years have seen more attention to the task of preaching Christ in all the Scriptures. Bryan Chapell's approach in *Christ-Centered Preaching* is for the preacher to identify the Fallen Condition Focus of the text and then the redemptive focus (based on text disclosure, type disclosure, or context disclosure). Sidney Greidanus's *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* offers a heavily methodological approach, urging the preacher to consider seven ways in which Christ can be preached from the Old Testament. Greidanus is the most cautious of the four authors analyzed in chapter 4. Graeme Goldsworthy's *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* is committed to a Gospel-centered, whole Bible biblical theology, in which all texts are primarily a witness to Christ. Goldsworthy's notion of macro-typology sustains his strong claim of Christocentric primacy.

Chapter 4 offered a summary evaluation of each of these approaches to Christocentric interpretation and proclamation. Although each approach advances the cause of Christocentric preaching, I do not consider any of the models to be the last word on the issue. My hope is that every book about preaching would essentially become a treatise explaining what it means to preach Christ from all the Scripture; my hope is that contemporary apprehension about the dangers of looking for Christ in all the Scripture will be exchanged for a dread of missing Christ in any of the Scripture.

In his book *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers*, Donald Fairbairn evaluates and defends the interpretive methodology of the church fathers in a way that is instructive for this discussion. He concedes that their Christocentric method of interpretation was prone to error; however, so are all methods. According to Fairbairn, the key question is,

What kind of mistakes does one tend to commit if one sees the entire Bible as pointing to Christ? And what kinds of mistakes does one commit if one sees no

connection between the books of the Bible or if one sees the connection in terms of something more peripheral to the Christian faith than Christ?³²

Fairbairn concludes that the church fathers got the fundamental idea of Scripture correct, and they looked for it everywhere. Thus, “the sorts of mistakes to which the early church was prone are not as dangerous as the ones to which we are prone.”³³

One of the most underemphasized aspects in the contemporary models of Christocentric expository preaching is the eschatological orientation of a Christocentric approach to interpretation and preaching. The world was created for a Christocentric τέλος (Gen 1:1, Eph 1:10, Col 1:16). The eschatological pull of redemptive history revolves around the triumph of the consummated kingdom of Christ.

Therefore, the entire biblical narrative is a war chronicle (Gen 3:15, Rev 20:1-10). Interpreting the Bible for the purpose of preaching is not simply an academic discussion; it is a key aspect of kingdom warfare. Just as hermeneutics is inseparable from preaching, preaching is inseparable from spiritual warfare. Preaching is kingdom warfare. Chapter 5 explained the implications of this for the local church.

The New Testament writers essentially retell the Old Testament story in light of the inauguration of the kingdom in Jesus Christ. They call the church to live with hope as they participate in spiritual war, living in overlap of the ages, awaiting the consummation of the kingdom. All of the promised blessings to Israel are fulfilled in one Jew, Jesus of Nazareth, who perfectly obeyed the law of God, is crucified for his people, and raised from the dead for their justification. Ethnic Jews and Gentiles, indwelt by the Spirit, are incorporated into all of the promises of God by being united by faith to Jesus the warrior-king, who is receiving an eternal kingdom from his Father. He is the reason for human history, redemptive history, and the cosmos itself. Paul summarizes the call of

³²Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity*, 120.

³³*Ibid.*,

preaching by naming this man: “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ” (Col 1:28).

Following the method of the apostles by pursuing the meaning of all biblical history in light of Christ is not is not allegorizing or dehistoricizing the biblical text. Rather, it is a matter taking biblical history seriously: it is purposive; it is going somewhere. The church of Jesus Christ is the outpost of the kingdom and is made up of people united by faith to king Jesus who are living on the basis of the good news of his kingdom. When contemporary preachers refuse to retell biblical history in light of Jesus’ inauguration of the kingdom, they displace the gospel in the life of their churches. A diet of eschatologically static sermons teaches the congregation that Christ is not the key to understanding Scripture.

And, if Christ is not the center of the biblical story, hearers conclude that he is not the center of their personal story either. Chapter 5 argued that the movement from “What was the original author’s intent in this text?” to “What does it mean for me?” can produce five infelicities: moralistic sermons, misapplied sermons, abstract sermons, individualistic sermons, and therapeutic sermons.

Such preaching structurally suggests that the hearers are the center of the biblical narrative; it shifts focus onto what they must do to complete their own story. Furthermore, non-Christocentric expository preaching is a weak weapon of spiritual warfare because, in principle, Satan is not opposed to morality, self-improvement, information, or improved mental and physical health. In fact, Satan is a theologian. His sermons are full of Scripture. Yet, just as he tempted Jesus, he tempts his hearers to claim the promises of the Bible apart from the cross and the kingdom.³⁴

³⁴See Russell D. Moore, *Tempted and Tried: Temptation and the Triumph of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 97-128; idem, “Preaching Like the Devil,” *Touchstone*, May/June 2010, 9; Bruce A. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 90; and Zack Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World: Crafting Biblical Sermons that Connect with Our Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 231-44.

In contemporary preaching, the gospel is too frequently an addendum and not the energizing center and eschatological hope. The gospel is reduced to a formula; it becomes background noise. It is not an object of daily reflection. Walter Brueggemann's analysis of much contemporary preaching (liberal and conservative) rings true:

The gospel is too readily heard and taken for granted, as though it contained no unsettling news and no unwelcome threat. What began as news in the gospel is easily assumed, slotted, and conveniently dismissed. We depart having heard, but without noticing the urge to transformation that is not readily compatible with our comfortable believing that asks little and receives less. The gospel is thus a truth widely held, but a truth greatly reduced. It is a truth that has been flattened, trivialized, and rendered inane. Partly, the gospel is simply an old habit among us, neither valued nor questioned.³⁵

The entire cosmos is caught up in a divine drama of spiritual war, a battle of rival kingdoms. The biblical testimony is that, in his life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ has already inaugurated the promised kingdom and triumphed over Satan and the powers. Nevertheless, the New Testament explains that the church lives between the “already” of Christ's inaugurated kingdom and the “not yet” of Christ's consummated kingdom. And, as the war rages against Satan and the powers, the Word of God is the center of contention, as it has been from the beginning. In this overlap of ages, the church triumphs through the proclamation of the Word; and faithful preaching constitutes the primary means of warfare because it functions as the living voice of Christ in the world.

Non-expository Christocentric sermons are inadequate. They starve hearers of the richness and diversity of the canon's presentation of the gospel. Contrary to this, Christocentric sermons can only be redundant by abandoning the exposition of particular texts. In fact, Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching avoids the two most common sermonic clichés, the predictable Jesus bit and the predictable morality bit: the first is Christocentric but not expository; the second is expository but not Christocentric.

³⁵Walter Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 1.

The recent discussion of genre-awareness has been valuable. However, preachers must recognize a further genre, the genre of the Bible as such, the gospel story.³⁶ True expository preaching exposes the meaning of the text in light of its immediate context and genre but also in light of its canonical context and metagenre. Such sermons are an act of spiritual war because they keep the gospel of Jesus Christ in view, build kingdom community, and are intrinsically evangelistic and eschatological.

The purpose of this dissertation has been to argue for the necessity of a Christocentric, kingdom-focused model of expository preaching. Arguing for necessity is distinct from putting forth a detailed model (concerning which I have already stated some reservations). Nevertheless, if the approach advocated in this dissertation were phrased as questions, it would be these:

1. What is the meaning of the text in its original historical context and epochal context?
2. What is the meaning of the text in light of innercanonical associations (literary structure, plot structure, connections, allusions, analogies, symbols, types)?
3. What is the meaning of the text in light of its relationship to the person and work of Jesus Christ?
4. What is the meaning of the text in light of its relationship to eschatological fulfillment in the kingdom of Christ?
5. What is the best way to proclaim the meaning of the text and apply the text's meaning to my hearers as mediated through the gospel of Christ and his kingdom?

These questions help flesh out the definition of expository preaching provided in chapter 1: preaching that takes a particular text of Scripture as its subject, proclaiming the truth of that text in light of its historical, epochal, and Christocentric, kingdom-focused canonical contexts, thereby exposing the meaning of the human and divine authors for the purpose of gospel-centered application.

³⁶The following are excellent resources on genre-awareness: Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988); and Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984).

This dissertation could be critiqued for taking on too much: it covers homiletics, hermeneutics, both testaments, biblical theology, systematic theology, literary genres, and history. Each of these is a discipline in its own right. Yet this is the task of the preacher. Every biblically responsible sermon is a manifestation of interdisciplinary preparation.

This study concurs with Sidney Greidanus's thoughts in the foreword to *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*: "What encouraged me to carry out this broad inquiry is that preachers cannot be experts in all of these areas and yet they need to be knowledgeable about them in order to preach responsibly."³⁷ Theological education itself exists to serve the church and the proclamation of the gospel in the church. It is the preacher who by necessity utilizes the entire range of his theological education in service of the proclamation of the Gospel. Ideally, every aspect of his theological education will be summed up in Christ, and he will have cultivated a Christocentric instinct that expresses itself in his preaching.

A commitment to the necessity of a Christocentric, kingdom-focused model of expository preaching is not an end but a beginning. The application of this commitment will mean countless hours poring over biblical texts to understand the meaning of every text in light of its relationship to Jesus Christ and his kingdom. The key is not a formula but rather saturation in Christ and his Word. Such preaching follows the apostolic example and unapologetically approaches the text prejudiced by Christ and his kingdom. Anything less than preaching Jesus Christ from all the Scripture is not *Christian* preaching.

³⁷Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, xi.

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ABSTRACT

THE NECESSITY OF A CHRISTOCENTRIC KINGDOM-FOCUSED MODEL OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

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The thesis of this dissertation is that Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching constitutes the core of faithful biblical proclamation. Expository preaching takes a particular text of Scripture as its subject, proclaiming the truth of that text in light of its historical, epochal, and Christocentric, kingdom-focused canonical contexts, thereby exposing the meaning of the human and divine authors for the purpose of gospel-centered application.

Chapter 2 explains the biblical-theological foundations for a Christocentric, kingdom-focused model in contrast to the single-intention-of-the-human-author interpretive methodology, as advocated by Walter C. Kaiser. It identifies Genesis 3:15, Luke 24:25-27, and Luke 25:44-46 as key texts for a Christocentric approach that affirms a canonical *sensus plenior* and identifies the kingdom of Christ as the unifying center of Scripture.

Chapter 3 develops a contemporary model of based on apostolic hermeneutics and proclamation. The chapter contends that contemporary preachers, following the apostles, should be saturated with Scripture, reading and preaching the entire Bible, recognizing the centrality of Christ and the eschatological fulfillment of the kingdom of God through him.

Chapter 4 interacts with and offers a summary evaluation of contemporary models of Christocentric expository preaching as represented by the seminal volumes of four prominent authors: Edmund Clowney, Bryan Chapell, Sidney Greidanus, and Graeme Goldsworthy. Each volume advances the cause of Christocentric expository preaching, but none is the final word.

Chapter 5 explains the importance of Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching for the local church and explores the dangers of non-Christocentric models. The chapter contends that the difference in these preaching models is not a matter of preference but rather one of effectiveness in kingdom warfare. The chapter emphasizes the necessity of conjoining exposition with a Christocentric focus on the kingdom.

Chapter 6 summarizes and concludes the dissertation. Christocentric, kingdom-focused expository preaching is not an optional style but a necessity for faithful proclamation. Practitioners of the approach will of course be prone to error, but to err by preaching the Bible as though it is not all about Christ is a far worse danger.

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