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TEACHING THE STORYLINE OF SCRIPTURE  
AT RICH POND BAPTIST CHURCH,  
BOWLING GREEN, KENTUCKY

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Christopher Charles Dendy  
December 2014

**APPROVAL SHEET**

TEACHING THE STORYLINE OF SCRIPTURE  
AT RICH POND BAPTIST CHURCH,  
BOWLING GREEN, KENTUCKY

Christopher Charles Dendy

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James M. Hamilton (Faculty Supervisor)

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Brian J. Vickers

Date \_\_\_\_\_

To Katie,

my lovely wife.

My God has graciously given you as a gift,

more precious than jewels,

I am truly blessed.

(Prov 31:1, 28)

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## PREFACE

It has been an absolute joy to write this work. This project is the product of much study, all of which has been invaluable. The time spent thinking, writing, and teaching about the storyline of Scripture has been a duty of delight. The Lord has opened the Scriptures to me and revealed an exhaustible treasury therein. May Christ be praised and prized because of what he accomplished.

This project would not have come to fruition without the help of many significant people in life. All of them have served me, in ways that cannot be repaid, throughout the course of this work. I am a debtor to you, because of your love for me. To the Hamiltons—Rowe, Alice, John, and Maddie—thank you for the hospitality you have shown me during my studies. May the Lord reward your faithfulness to the church. I also must thank Alex and Melanie Duke. Alex, you are a gifted writer and a great encouragement to me. Thank you for taking the time to read carefully everything I wrote. Thank you for the encouragement along the way; you have no idea how much I value it. Betsy Fredrick, thank you for your assistance in this project. Your keen eye and careful edits have allowed me to focus on writing well, not on minutiae.

This project would not have been possible without Dr. Jim Hamilton. His passion for Scripture coupled with his passion for the church is inspiring. I remember the first time I heard him explain the storyline of Scripture. My eyes were opened and my heart was ablaze. The seed was planted. I devoured his writings, which drove me to the Scriptures, making my delight in them grow. From that point on, I wanted to devote myself to understanding the storyline of Scripture, and to teach it to others.

I also want to thank Rich Pond Baptist Church for all that they do. The church, especially those involved in my class for this project, have been a consistent



encouragement to me through their faithfulness and acts of kindness. Without the support and encouragement from the church, this project would not exist. The ministry staff, particularly Steve Hussung and Bruce Roberts, have been a source of great encouragement to me as I have worked on this project.

Thank you to my parents, Vici and Jack. You have lovingly supported me and my family and your ceaseless kindness is inestimable.

Lastly, to my dear wife. My Love, you have been an endless encouragement to me. Thank you for the way you have lovingly supported and motivated me. You have borne with my idiosyncrasies and foibles in a way that no other could. I would be lost without you. I am blessed beyond measure to have you as my bride and coheir in the kingdom. To our children, my prayer for you is that the Lord would open your eyes to understand the Scriptures, and that in doing so, your hearts would be ablaze. May Christ fill your hearts with faith and joy, as you see him throughout the Scriptures.

Christopher C. Dendy

Bowling Green, Kentucky

December 2014

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to help the members of Rich Pond Baptist Church understand the storyline of Scripture through a twelve-week Bible study.

#### **Goals**

The first goal of this project was to evaluate the understanding of the storyline of Scripture among adult church members. This goal was measured by administering a congregational questionnaire to adult members regarding their understanding of the storyline of Scripture.<sup>1</sup> This goal was considered successfully completed when the congregational questionnaire was analyzed, which yielded a clear picture of the current understanding of the storyline of Scripture among members at Rich Pond Baptist Church (RPBC).

The second goal of this project was to develop an annual Bible reading plan utilizing the order of the Hebrew Bible, along with correlating readings of Jim Hamilton's *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment (GGSTJ)*.<sup>2</sup> This goal was measured using a review process by an expert panel, which provided feedback through an evaluation rubric.<sup>3</sup> The evaluation rubric focused on the logical flow of the Bible reading plan, the successful integration of readings from *GGSTJ*, and whether or not the plan was user-friendly. This goal was successfully accomplished when the feedback and evaluation

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix 1 for congregational questionnaire.

<sup>2</sup>See appendix 2 for a sample of the *GGSTJ Annual Bible Reading Plan*.

<sup>3</sup>See appendix 3 for the evaluation rubric.

from the expert panel demonstrated a competency and proficiency of 95 percent at the sufficient or exemplary level.

The third goal of this project was to develop a study guide with discussion questions in conjunction with the scheduled readings of *GGSTJ*, to be used in a small group study.<sup>4</sup> This goal was measured using a review process by the aforementioned expert panel, which provided feedback through the use of an evaluation rubric.<sup>5</sup> The evaluation rubric for the study guide focused on the usefulness of the study guide, as well as the thought-provoking nature of the discussion questions. This goal was deemed successfully accomplished when the feedback and evaluation from the expert panel demonstrated a competency and proficiency of 95 percent at the sufficient or exemplary level.

The fourth goal of this project was to increase knowledge through the implementation of a twelve-week small group Bible study on understanding the grand storyline of Scripture. The members of the group learned how to understand the interpretive worldview of the biblical authors, because it is through understanding the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors that one understands the storyline of Scripture. This goal was measured by the completion of a pre-course and post-course questionnaire, as well as semi-structured personal interviews for two individuals whose test scores evidenced the greatest change.<sup>6</sup> This goal was successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive significant difference between the pre-course and post-course questionnaire scores, and if the interviewees perceived that the course had a positive effect.

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<sup>4</sup>See appendix 4 for a sample selection of the study guide.

<sup>5</sup>See appendix 5 for the evaluation rubric used in conjunction with the study guide.

<sup>6</sup>See appendix 6 for a sample of the pre-course and post-course questionnaire. See also appendix 7 for the interview protocol.

## **Ministry Context**

Rich Pond Baptist church is taught primarily through expositional preaching and teaching. On Sunday mornings, the senior pastor shepherds the congregation by methodically preaching through various books of Scripture. Sometimes it takes years for the senior pastor to preach through one book. The Sunday school classes at RPBC are another means of discipleship and Bible teaching. Half of the Sunday school classes study books of Scripture in a manner very similar to the Sunday morning preaching: slowly and expositionally. The rest of the Sunday school classes rely on quarterly curriculum. During the Wednesday evening services, the senior pastor leads a Bible study, which is also expositional, but it is more unhurried than Sunday mornings, making his time spent in various books on Wednesday evenings longer than Sunday mornings. Also during the Wednesday evening services various discipleship classes are offered. Typically, a class on biblical studies, family ministry, and biblical counseling are offered to the congregation.

Lastly, because of the slow and steady diet of expositional teaching and preaching, time spent explaining the grand storyline of Scripture is minimal. While always seeking to encourage and equip the members to read through the Bible annually, the ministry staff rarely teach the congregation how to understand redemptive history. Five years ago, the senior pastor encouraged all of the church to read through the Bible in a year. To encourage the church to stick with their Bible reading, he spent Sunday evenings teaching through and summarizing what they had previously read that week. Aside from the Sunday evening services that year, the only instruction the congregation receives in reference to understanding the storyline of Scripture is in passing, usually when it helps set the context for the current book of study.

Because so much time is devoted to the expositional study of various books of Scripture, the congregation knows a few books of Scripture really well. But because so much time is spent focusing on one particular book, the congregation also has an inadequate understanding on the grand storyline of Scripture.

## Rationale for the Project

Understanding the storyline of Scripture is essential for having a robust understanding of the gospel. The congregation of Rich Pond Baptist Church (RPBC) regularly sits under faithful teaching and preaching of the Word of God. This preaching and teaching is primarily through the slow and careful exposition of Scripture, which helps believers understand the depth and richness of the Word of God. It is through slow and careful exposition that men and women in the faith grow into maturity (Eph 4:11-14). However, if a congregation is only engaged in slow in-depth studies, it can fail to understand the breadth of Scripture. Studying Scripture this way could be compared to intently studying blades of grass, and neglecting the rest of the landscape. James Hamilton calls church leaders to “show the connections that are there in the texts from end to end. Tell them the whole story. Give them the whole picture. Paint the whole landscape for them, not just the blade of grass.”<sup>7</sup> Zealous to understand particular books of Scripture, believers can unwittingly neglect “whole council of God” (Acts 20:27). While Christians heartily agree that “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 complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16–17), Christians can neglect large portions of Scripture by rarely immersing in them. Understanding the breadth of Scripture aids believers in rightly understanding the depth of particular passages of Scripture. Understanding the grand storyline of Scripture happens primarily through the frequent reading and studying all of Scripture.

The project benefited the members of RPBC in a number of ways. First, it gave them an annual Bible reading plan. While many Bible reading plans exist, what makes the plan created through this project unique is that it incorporates readings of *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, by biblical theologian James Hamilton. Reading *GGSTJ*

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<sup>7</sup>James M. Hamilton, “Biblical Theology and Preaching,” in *Text Driven Preaching*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Mathews (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 217.

alongside an annual Bible reading plan helped explain, and give context and orientation to those following it. Secondly, the project benefited the members of RPBC by providing a small group resource for understanding the grand storyline of scripture. This small group resource could be used in one-on-one discipleship meetings, Sunday school classes, or individual study. By understanding the grand storyline of Scripture, the congregation of RPBC was able to delight in the gospel, as they more fully understood God's redemptive plan culminating in Christ. The goal was nothing less than understanding the Scriptures in the same way the disciples did on the Emmaus Road. The desire was that people's hearts would burn with joy as the Scriptures are opened to them (Luke 24:32).

### **Definitions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

Technical terms are used throughout this project and are defined below in order to aid the reader's understanding of the subject.

*Biblical theology.* *Biblical theology* refers to the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors. James Hamilton describes the goal of biblical theology as learning the "practice of interpretation from the biblical authors so that we can interpret the Bible and life in this world the way they did."<sup>8</sup>

*Interpretive perspective.* The *interpretive perspective* of the biblical authors refers to, according to Hamilton, "The framework of assumptions and presuppositions, associations and identifications, truths and symbols that are taken for granted as an author or speaker describes the world and the events that take place in it."<sup>9</sup>

*Storyline.* This term refers to the understanding that Scripture presents a coherent story that is progressively revealed through various literary forms. The Bible

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<sup>8</sup>James M. Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 42.

<sup>9</sup>James M Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 15.

has a “narrative arc”<sup>10</sup> that connects the various stories and events in Scripture in order to interpret its grand story.

The first limitation of this project was that it took place over a twelve-week Bible study. The study did not take place in consecutive weeks, because the group took a break during the holidays and when the members of the group could not meet. The second limitation of this project was that it focused on understanding the storyline of Scripture through James Hamilton’s books *The Glory of God in Salvation through Judgment* and *What is Biblical Theology?* Many other resources have been written to explain the storyline of Scripture; however, few are as helpful and clear when it comes to explaining the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors.

The first delimitation of the project was that it focused on adult members of RPBC. While others were welcome to take part in the study, only adult members took part in the pre-test and post-test assessment. A number of adults, who are not members of the church wanted to participate in the study. Their feedback was appreciated, though they were not part of the evaluation process. The second delimitation of the project was that only those with a consistent attendance in the study, 80 percent or higher, were evaluated.

### **Research Methodology**

The research methodology for this project included a congregational questionnaire, a pre-project survey, an evaluation rubric of the various components of small group material, a pre-test assessment, an identical post-test assessment, and semi-structured interviews post-intervention.<sup>11</sup> Four goals determined the effectiveness of the project. The first goal of this project was to assess the current practices of Bible reading,

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>11</sup>All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approval of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

and current understanding of the storyline of Scripture in adult members of the church. The assessment took place via an online congregational questionnaire, which was sent to all active adult members in good standing. Adult members without an email had the option to take a paper version of the congregational questionnaire and the results were included with the online results. The questionnaire evaluated current Bible competencies and reading practices alongside select demographic indicators, which included age, employment status, and number of dependents living in the home. Statistics were used to evaluate whether or not any correlation existed between demographic factors and Bible reading habits and understanding. This questionnaire helped inform the scope of the small group Bible study.

The second goal was to develop an annual Bible reading plan that followed the order of the Hebrew Bible<sup>12</sup> and the canonical order of the New Testament. Alongside the Bible reading were readings from *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*. An evaluation rubric was used by an expert panel to assess the usefulness, logical flow, and aesthetics of the Bible reading plan. Once the feedback and evaluation of the expert panel demonstrated a competency and proficiency of 95 percent at the sufficient or exemplary level, the reading plan was distributed to the congregation. The congregation could use the reading plan to strengthen their own understanding of the storyline of Scripture on an individual basis. The reading plan was also used as the backbone of the ministry project.

The third goal was to develop a twelve-week small group curriculum to be used in conjunction with the scheduled readings of *GGSTJ*. The curriculum included a schedule of when the group met, a detailed outline of *GGSTJ*, and reflection and discussion questions at the end of each section. The group utilized *GGSTJ* in order to see

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<sup>12</sup>The Hebrew Bible falls into three sections: *Torah* (Law), *Neviim* (Prophets), and *Ketuvim* (Writings). The *Torah* consists of the first five books of the Old Testament. The Prophets are divided into the Former Prophets (Joshua-Kings), and the Latter Prophets (Isaiah-Malachi). The Writings are divided into The Book of Truth (Psalms, Proverbs, Job), The Megilloth (Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther), and other Sacred Writings (Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles).



how the interpretive perspective of the biblical author shapes the storyline of Scripture. The same aforementioned expert panel evaluated the competencies and proficiency of the small group guide, using an evaluation rubric. The panel assessed the usefulness of the resource, the execution of the proposed schedule, and whether or not the resource fostered a greater likelihood of completing the reading plan. When the expert panel approved the resource, the third goal was deemed successfully met.

The fourth goal was to increase knowledge through the implementation of the twelve-week small group study on understanding the storyline of Scripture. The group consisted of eight adult members who were committed to the study. The study took place Wednesday evenings at Rich Pond Baptist Church. The first session of the meeting emphasized the significance of understanding the storyline of Scripture and the project sought to promote that end. At the beginning of the first meeting the pre-project survey was administered to each adult member. This survey sought to evaluate the individual's initial understanding of the storyline of Scripture as well the individual's perceived competencies interpreting Scripture.

After the small group had completed its study, the benefit of the project was evaluated in two ways. First, the post-project survey was administered to reevaluate the group members' understanding of the storyline of Scripture. Secondly, the semi-structured personal interview was administered to ascertain the perceived growth in understanding the storyline of Scripture after completing the study. A t-test for dependent samples was used to determine if there was a positive significant difference between the pre-project and post-project scores. A t-test for dependent samples, according to Neil Salkind, "Involves a comparison of means from each group of scores and focuses on the differences between the scores."<sup>13</sup> Once the results from the t-test for dependent samples had been analyzed, the two individuals who exhibited the greatest improvement were

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<sup>13</sup>Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 191.

interviewed. The interview was semi-structured. Its purpose was to ascertain the most beneficial aspects of the project, as well as ways it could be further improved for future use. The third goal was considered successfully accomplished when the t-test for dependent samples and the personal interviews demonstrated a positive significant difference between the pre-project and post-project scores.

CHAPTER 2  
JESUS AS THE FULFILMENT AND TEACHER  
OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

In *As You Like It* Shakespeare pondered, “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players; they have their exits and the entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts.” Innate in the heart of every human is the desire to be a part of something bigger than him or herself. The ability to make sense of the world and its happenings is one of humanity’s deepest longings. It is something poets and bards have mused about; indeed Walt Whitman, the great American poet mused, “That you are here—that life exists and identity, That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse.”<sup>1</sup> Seeing oneself as part of something bigger brings meaning and purpose to individual lives.

Yet questions remain. Which story are Christians to believe? And, whose story is true? While many stories have been presented throughout the annals of history, only one stands strong against the erosive effects of history—the story of the Bible. The story of the Bible is the true story of this world, and by rightly understanding it, Christians are able to understand everything else in its light. As believers seek to understand the Bible’s story, according to James Hamilton, Biblical Theology professor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, “We want to understand the organic development of the Bible’s teaching so that we are interpreting particular parts of the story in light of the whole.”<sup>2</sup> This organic development of the storyline of Scripture, as handed down through the

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<sup>1</sup>Walt Whitman, “O Me! O Life!” in *Walt Whitman: Complete Poetry and Collected Prose* (New York: The Library of America, 1982), 410.

<sup>2</sup>James Hamilton, Jr., *What is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible’s Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 12.

biblical authors, depends upon an underlying and shared interpretive perspective. This interpretive perspective is, according to Hamilton, “The framework of assumptions and presuppositions, association and identifications, truths and symbols that are taken for granted as an author or speaker describes the world and the events that take place in it.”<sup>3</sup> By understanding the storyline of the Bible, one is able to rightly understand his or her place in God’s redemptive plan. At the center of this story stands a man, Jesus Christ. He is keystone of the biblical narrative—he stands at the apex of the biblical story and everything finds its support as it is connected to him. In order to rightly understand the grand storyline of Scripture, one must see how Christ stands at the center of it.

The goal of this chapter is to show that the biblical authors present understanding the storyline of Scripture as a necessary means to rightly knowing Christ, and this produces increased affection for him. One should begin with the most explicit instance of this, namely Jesus Christ explaining to his disciples that the Scriptures point to himself in Luke 24—first on the Emmaus road and second in the room with his disciples. While these passages are explicit, they are also scant—Luke does not record for his readers the various means and ways Jesus expounded the Scriptures in Luke 24. To see how Jesus interpreted the scripture, readers should follow Hamilton’s advice: “If we want to know how he interpreted the Scriptures, we need only examine the way that the Scriptures are interpreted in Luke—Acts and the rest of the New Testament.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, after rightly understanding Jesus’ teaching in its context, attention is given to the larger interpretive framework present in the Gospel of Luke. This work concludes by focusing upon Peter and Stephen’s sermons in Acts. Examining these sermons afford the reader the opportunity to see how Jesus’ disciples understood the biblical connections with Jesus, which they presumably learned from him. Lastly, various implications for the

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>4</sup>James Hamilton, Jr., *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 404.

church and her understanding of the storyline of Scripture are considered.

### Luke 24

According to David Garland, Luke concludes his gospel by weaving three episodes together, all of which appear to occur the day Jesus was resurrected: “The three accounts outline three steps in the process of how one comes to recognize Jesus as the risen Lord.”<sup>5</sup> Each group—the women going to anoint him, the disciples on the road to Emmaus, and the disciples in the room—has four things in common. They have forgotten Jesus’ predictions. Each group is reminded of Jesus’ predictions by a holy agent: the women are reminded by an angel and the disciples by the resurrected Christ himself. When they are shaken from their stupor and realize what is taking place, this realization results in increased affections for Jesus.<sup>6</sup> Lastly, they go and tell others this good news.<sup>7</sup> Luke weaves together these three events to place an exclamation point at the end of his Gospel, to show that Jesus conquers death, and to prepare his readers to see the spread of the Gospel as a continuation of the work of Jesus.

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<sup>5</sup>David E. Garland, *Luke*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 935.

<sup>6</sup>This fourfold pattern occurs elsewhere in Luke. Garland gives a number of examples: Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), the birth of Jesus, the announcement of the angels to, and the shepherds making this known to Mary (Acts 2). According to Garland, Luke uses a fourfold pattern to drive the point home, saying, “The pattern is this: 1) Enigmatic events occur that humans cannot fathom. 2) Divine intervention makes sense of the events. 3) Scripture sheds light on how God works and what God has promised. 4) Humans become interpreters of the events for others.” *Ibid.*, 960. The only element I would add is that the interlocutor leaves with elevated affections.

<sup>7</sup>Certainly more parallels could be noted. For example, Garland points out, “All three scenes include perplexity on the part of his followers. Each mentions some error on their part: seeking the living among the dead (24:5), not recognizing him (24:16), and thinking he was an apparition (24:27). Each contains a rebuke for not remembering what he said when he was with them (24:6-7, 44), or not believing what the prophet have spoken (24:25-26, 44-46). Each scene then mentions the gathering of the community (24:9, 33, 36).” *Ibid.*, 935.

## The Women

The first commonality Luke highlights in chapter 24 is the failure to remember Jesus' words concerning his resurrection (9:22, 44; 18:32). The women—presumably Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, and Salome (Luke 23:55, 24:10; cf. Mark 16:1; Matt 28:1)—carry spices to anoint the body of Jesus according to the mosaic instructions they would have been well familiar with. Yet, they fail to remember Jesus' promises about his own resurrection. Their hope has presumably been extinguished in light of Jesus' death and heretofore entombment. Rather than expecting his resurrection, they expected his burial. When they arrive, they find (εὑρον 24:2) the stone rolled away from the entrance, but they do not find the body (οὐχ εὑρον 24:3), and this causes consternation.<sup>8</sup> Luke highlights their failure to remember Jesus' predictions when he draws attention to fact that they were perplexed.

The second aspect of the three interactions in Luke 24 is understanding who Jesus is by reading about his life and death in light of the promises of God as seen in the Scriptures.<sup>9</sup> Two men stand before the women, and it is through this encounter that they remember Jesus' predictions.<sup>10</sup> However, these men are not ordinary men.<sup>11</sup> According to Garland,

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<sup>8</sup>Luke intentionally brings balance to the women's discoveries—or lack thereof—as he mentions, “They found the stone” and “but they did not find the body.” See I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978), 884; and John Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 3 (Waco, TX: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 1189.

<sup>9</sup>Garland, *Luke*, 935.

<sup>10</sup>While Luke does not explicitly mention that these men are angels in this passage, he does call them angels in 24:23. Matthew does mention that the men are angels (28:2, 4).

<sup>11</sup>Again, Garland writes, “The description of their clothing gleaming in the darkness of the tomb suggests something out of the ordinary and harks back to the description of Jesus' clothing in the transfiguration (ἀστραπτύση) see 9:29, 10:18; Acts 9:3; 22:6). It also corresponds to the apparel of the two men (angels) present at the ascension (Acts 1:10).” Garland, *Luke*, 941.

The angel Gabriel appeared to interpret signs and events to chosen humans at the beginning of the story to explain what God was about to do. Now angels appear at its close to explain what God has done. They come only to impart privileged information about divine workings.<sup>12</sup>

The angel's question carries a mild rebuke. Robert Stein exclaims, "Jesus was not in the tomb because he lives. Tombs are for dead people. The women should not have been looking for the living Jesus here."<sup>13</sup> These women ought to be looking for a living savior, not a corpse. Next, the angels call the women to remember Jesus' predictions, to "remember what he told them" (see 24:6, 24:44). These angels cobble together a collage of Jesus' predictions, which the women ought to have remembered; yet they have not.<sup>14</sup> However, when they do remember—and believe—Jesus' words, they run and report their experience to the disciples.

The third parallel these interactions share is an increased affection when the various parties remember, understand, and believe Jesus' words. While Luke does not highlight the joyful affections the women leave the tombs with, it is nevertheless present. Matthew explicitly mentions that the women left the tomb to tell the disciples "with fear and great joy" (Matt 28:8). Luke hints at the women's affection two ways. First, the women are insistent in their retelling of their story in the midst of disciples who did not believe them (24:11).<sup>15</sup> Second, when Peter visits the tomb—presumably being persuaded by the women—he "marvels" at his findings. Luke uses the verb "θαυμάζω" to describe

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 605.

<sup>14</sup>Again, Stein writes, "This is a collage of such passages as Luke 9:22 ('the Son of Man must . . . and on the third day'); 9:44 ('the Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men'); and 18:32-33 ('he will rise again'). The reference to being 'crucified' is not found until 23:21, but it is essentially a clarification of being 'killed' (9:22; 18:21) and of Jesus' 'exodus.'" Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Commenting on Josephus, Garland writes, "Josephus writes that women were to be disqualified as witnesses on account of their *giddiness* and impetuosity (*Ant.* 4.8.15 §219), and as such a story from women would automatically be viewed with suspicion (see John 4:41-42)." Garland, *Luke*, 943, emphasis added.

positive affections and belief in his letters (Luke 1:21, 63; 2:18, 33; 4:22; 8:25; 11:14; 20:26; Acts 2:7; 4:13). Indeed it is worth noting with the first encounter: the women arrive at the tomb frightened (24:5) and perplexed (24:4) (ἐμφοβῶν and ἀπορεσθαι). Yet, the first encounter closes with Peter marveling (24:12) and telling others (24:24).

### **The Disciples on the Emmaus Road**

Jesus' interaction with his disciples on the road to Emmaus is the second conversation Luke records for his readers in the final chapter of his gospel. As previously noted, this conversation follows a similar pattern<sup>16</sup>: the men failed to remember Jesus' predictions about his resurrection (24:7, 21, 25). A holy agent—Jesus himself—reminds them of Jesus' predictions (24:19, 25). When they rightly understand what is taking place, they gain increased affection (24:32). Lastly, with increased affection the men go and tell others about their resurrected Lord (24:33-35).

These two men, who are part of the “others” referenced in 24:9, are travelling away from Jerusalem to Emmaus which is presumably located about seven miles outside of the city.<sup>17</sup> While the reader is not told the reason for their trip to the village, they are aware that it is in the midst of much confusion. Presumably, the disciples on the Emmaus road were in the room when the woman reported to them what they had witnessed, and they had at least heard of Peter's own visitation to the tomb (24:22, 24). However, these men had yet to believe their report (24:20-21). Garland notes, “Their departure from the city at the first opportunity, when the Sabbath is over, hints that the community of

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<sup>16</sup>Luke summarizes the previous interaction in this section. Noting the summary, Stein writes, “The story is one of the longest in Luke and consists of four parts. . . . The second (24:17-27) concerns (1) the ensuing conversation in which one disciple, Cleopas, explains to the stranger about Jesus' death at the hands of the Jewish leadership; (2) the women's report concerning the empty tomb, which had been confirmed by others; (3) the report of the angelic visit to the women.” Stein, *Luke*, 609.

<sup>17</sup>For more information concerning the location of Emmaus, see Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1907-8; Marshall, *Luke*, 892.



disciples is in danger of collapsing because of bitter disappointment, grief, and confusion.”<sup>18</sup>

These men were not merely on an outing. One can imagine the mental mulling and retelling of events they must have shared as they “were talking<sup>19</sup> with each other about all these things that had happened” (24:15). Yet, in the middle of this conversation, another traveller joins them, and his ministering to them clears the mental fog and restores their confidence in the promises of God. Jesus, incognito, engages them in conversation and draws them out with questioning. His question, and apparent ignorance of recent events, caused them to stop walking and show their emotion.<sup>20</sup>

The disciples are shocked by the question. According to Garland, “Cleopas’s dejection surfaces in his acerbic response as he accuses this traveling companion of being a clueless outsider who missed what has just taken place in Jerusalem.”<sup>21</sup> Cleopas rehearses for their travel companion the recent events that have taken place in Jerusalem. However, this question reveals that they remember much about who Jesus was. He was a powerful prophet of God (24:19).<sup>22</sup> He was delivered up by the chief priests and rulers to be crucified (24:20). In addition to what had happened to Jesus, the disciples retell what

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<sup>18</sup>Garland, *Luke*, 950.

<sup>19</sup>These men were doing more than musing on events, they were “disputing” (συζητεῖν see 1 Cor 1:20) between themselves what had actually gone wrong to cause such a terrible chain of events. According to Bock, “Συζητεῖω (*syzeteo*) suggests emotional dialogue (elsewhere in the NT at Mark 1:27; 9:11; 9:11, 14, 16; 12:28; Luke 22:23; Acts 6:9; 9:29).” Bock, *Luke*, 1909.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Garland, *Luke* 951.

<sup>22</sup>According to Garland, “This acclamation, while true, misses the mark. It is not an adequate christological category for identifying who Jesus is. . . . They recognize that Jesus was mighty in word (which refers to the content of his preaching, not his charismatic delivery), but they do not remember that his words prophesied his rejection, suffering, death, and resurrection.” Ibid. Contra Stein, “This should not be taken negatively as being incorrect but positively in light of 7:16, 39; 9:8, 19. This is also evident from Jesus’ use of this title as a self-designation in 4:24; 13:33” Stein, *Luke*, 610.

had been reported to them by the women, which they dismissed as fantastical.<sup>23</sup> Just like the women, the disciples need someone to cause them to remember what Jesus said concerning his resurrection (cf. 24:6-7).

Just as the angels question and rebuke the women for their failure to remember Jesus' predictions concerning his death and resurrection, here Jesus himself rebukes his disciples.<sup>24</sup> The very death which causes consternation for the disciples is actually the key to understanding God's saving purposes. According to Garland, "That the Christ must suffer becomes the hermeneutical key for understanding all Scripture and all that happened to Jesus."<sup>25</sup>

After Jesus rebukes and questions his disciples, he teaches them how the Scriptures point to himself. While he most certainly showed them why it was necessary "for the Christ to suffer these things," his teaching was not limited to that.<sup>26</sup> As the angels caused the women to rightly understand and remember the unfolding events in 24:5-7, Jesus causes his disciples to rightly understand the events as he opens the Scriptures to them. Noting the expansiveness of Jesus' teaching at this point, Bock writes, "The comprehensiveness of the teachings is underlined in several ways: from 'all' the prophets he explains 'all' the Scriptures, and Jesus starts from Moses and goes to all the

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<sup>23</sup>Commenting on the disciples dismissal of the women's reports, Stein writes, "By magnifying the disciples' incredulity, Luke magnified the miracle. Only the clear and unmistakable appearance of the risen Christ could have overcome such doubt and replaced it with unshakable faith." Stein, *Luke*, 606.

<sup>24</sup>According to Stein, Jesus' chiding of his disciples in 24:25 is "a thematic summary of 24:26-27 and leads to one of the main emphases of the chapter, as the parallels in 24:6-7 and 24:44-46 demonstrate." *Ibid.*, 612.

<sup>25</sup>Garland, *Luke*, 953.

<sup>26</sup>Stein wrongly sees Luke's use of "all" as an exaggeration: "The term 'all' is another example of Luke's fondness for exaggeration, for time would not have permitted Jesus to refer to 'all' the Scriptures that referred to him." Stein, *Luke*, 612. Stein's reading is too narrow here.

prophets.”<sup>27</sup> The reality that all the scriptures point to Jesus is something Luke stresses (24:45; Acts 17:2, 11; 18:24, 28).

Luke does not indulge his readers with details: he neither gives specific passages Jesus pointed to, nor does he tell his readers exactly how long Jesus taught them.<sup>28</sup> What he does tell his readers is enough to understand that the illumination the disciples received from Jesus’ explanation birthed new affection and confidence in Christ. Indeed, Luke notes that they “urged him” (24:29) to stay with them. Jesus does stay with them. Sharing a meal together, Jesus causes their eyes to be opened so that they recognize him, then he departs.<sup>29</sup>

As is the case with the women—who leave with hearts overflowing with affection—the disciples return to Jerusalem and tell others about the resurrected Lord. What starts out as a journey of confusion, frustration, and disappointment ends in a joyous return. They attempted to travel to Emmaus, trying to make sense of the tumult they were in, trying to understand where things went wrong. They return, with hearts ablaze, to Jerusalem proclaiming Jesus’ victory over death and appearing to them (24:32-35). Garland aptly notes, “Their hearts changed from being ‘slow’ (24:25) to ‘burning,’ and they realized that their eyes had been closed, that they were blinded by false hopes, and that Jesus does bring the promised redemption of Israel.”<sup>30</sup>

Their opened eyes and full hearts are accompanied by full mouths when they return to Jerusalem. In proclaiming a resurrected Christ, they also confirm the original

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<sup>27</sup>Bock, *Luke*, 1917.

<sup>28</sup>If Luke had been more specific about when Jesus joined the disciples on the road, or if he had noted when he started teaching them, one would have a better idea how much Jesus could have taught them.

<sup>29</sup>Whether or not this meal is the Lord’s Supper is outside the scope of this study. For a convincing explanation, see Garland, *Luke*, 955. See Bock, *Luke*, 1919-20, for an opposing explanation.

<sup>30</sup>Garland, *Luke*, 956.

reports of the women who had previously visited the empty tombs. However, when they arrive they find that others, namely Peter (cf. 1 Cor 15:5), are gathering and reporting similar appearances (24:34). It is as though testimonies of the resurrected Lord (24:34) are piling up on one another. Faith and affection for the resurrected Christ is growing and the saints are beginning to proclaim these realities—first in Jerusalem, then to the ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1:8).

### **Disciples in the Room**

Even though the disciples in the room heard reports from the women saying that Jesus was alive (24:8-11), Peter saying that the tomb was empty (24:12), Cleopas and another report that they had conversed with Jesus (24:33), and Simon (24:34), they still had doubts. When he appears to them they are frightened<sup>31</sup> and suppose that they are seeing his spirit (24:37). They need someone to help them make sense of what they are experiencing, which was done in the two previous exchanges.

When Jesus enters, he speaks “peace” in the midst of chaos (24:36).<sup>32</sup> Again, because he knows their hearts, his entreaty for peace should also be seen as a mild rebuke. Jesus’ showing them his hands and feet is enough to overcome their disbelief, but only haltingly so (24:41). Here Jesus attempts to quell their fears by showing them that all the reports are true and that his predictions concerning his bodily resurrection are true—he does this by showing them his hands and his feet, and by eating with them.

As with the previous interactions, a proper understanding settles the anxieties of the disciples. Understanding occurs only as they are reminded that Jesus’ death and subsequent resurrection was “necessary” (δεῖ 24:44 cf. 9:22, 13:33, 17:25, 22:37, 24:7).

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<sup>31</sup>Luke uses the same language, “frightened” (ἐμφοβῶν), in 24:5 as he does here (ἐμφοβοῦν).

<sup>32</sup>This peace in the midst of tumult has been spoken before, first by Gabriel to a terrified Zechariah (1:12, 18-20); later it accompanies ambassadors of the gospel as they preach “the good news of peace through Jesus Christ (Acts 10:36).

According to Garland, “When Jesus began his public ministry, he read the Scriptures in the synagogue at Nazareth and announced its fulfillment (4:16-21). He ends his earthly ministry by showing how the Scriptures have been fulfilled.”<sup>33</sup> It is only when one sees Jesus’ death and resurrection as a fulfillment of God’s promises that one is able to rightly understand the gospel, therefore Jesus teaches his disciples.

In this instance Jesus teaches them from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms—previously only Moses and the Prophets are mentioned (24:27). This reference to the “Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms,” is a reference to the tripartite categorization of the Old Testament Scriptures. This would have been tantamount to saying, “He taught them from all of the Scriptures.” According to Bock, “To underline the comprehensiveness of the fulfillment, the three divisions of the OT are noted: law, prophets, and psalms.”<sup>34</sup> Each of these sections of the Old Testament Scriptures would have given the people of God a myriad of patterns, types, and promises that they would have been thinking through when it comes to their redemption. Here, Jesus shows his disciples that when those are rightly understood, they are able to grasp who he is and why he came.

After he teaches the disciples, he commissions them (24:48-49). As in the two previous instances, once the people of God have a right understanding of who he is they have an increased affection for him *and* they go and tell others about him. Indeed, Luke brings affection for Christ and proclamation of Christ to a crescendo at the close of his gospel. Chapter 24 begins with a hint of affection in the women when they realized that Jesus was not dead. The men on the road to Emmaus have “burning hearts” when their eyes are opened. Luke concludes with Jesus’ disciples worshiping him “with great joy” (24:52). It is worth noting that as the expectation escalates in Luke 24, so does the

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<sup>33</sup>Garland, *Luke*, 967.

<sup>34</sup>Bock, *Luke*, 1936.

proclamation. The women go and report to the disciples that Jesus is buried, and Luke notes that one man responded. When the two on the road to Emmaus go and tell, the whole room responds. While their proclamation is delayed until they receive the Holy Spirit (24:49 and Acts 1:4), when they do many respond in worship, repentance and faith.

In similar fashion to the Emmaus road experience, Luke does not record Jesus' interpretive teaching with his disciples. Garland suggests that this silence should "provoke the reader to reread the narrative in Luke for clues and to reread the Scriptures looking for Christ."<sup>35</sup> This helpful suggestion is most appropriate. If Jesus taught that all Scripture is rightly understood when one sees it pointing to them, then the job of every Christian is to seek to interpret the Scriptures just as Jesus did. One would also expect to find the same interpretive clues in Luke's own writing. Therefore, to understand what Jesus taught, and to understand how the Scriptures point to Jesus, one should begin by examining the interpretive perspective of Luke and his disciples.

### **Theological Themes in Luke**

Many often bemoan the fact that Luke failed to record *how* Jesus interpreted the scriptures to his disciples. Many assume that if the church had that set of teaching, she would have an "infallible hermeneutic," and groping for faithful interpretation would be over. However, one must realize that the disciples and biblical authors do give a faithful theological interpretation of the Scriptures. Yes, the biblical authors are divinely inspired, something which ought not be minimized, yet they are also divinely taught. The biblical authors learned how to interpret the Scriptures from their Lord, the previous section made that clear. While no explicit teaching is given in Luke 24, the church looks to the rest of the New Testament. Hamilton's instruction is full of wisdom: "If we want to know how he interpreted the Scriptures, we need only examine the way that the Scriptures are

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<sup>35</sup>Garland, *Luke*, 960.

interpreted in Luke-Acts and the rest of the New Testament.”<sup>36</sup> The next section explains some theological themes Luke emphasized throughout his Gospel.

### **The Work of Salvation**

A notable theological theme that Luke develops throughout his Gospel concerns the salvation of the people of God, which most certainly has deep biblical roots. Beginning with the infancy material, Luke writes about the arrival of a new era, which is signified by he who comes as an Elijah-like prophet—calling for repentance and salvation—this is none other than John the Baptist (Luke 1:17; cf. Mal 3:1, 4:5). Angels announce the dawn of a new age, first to Elizabeth and Zechariah, then Mary. As Gabriel tells Zechariah what his son John will do, he speaks of him in terms of an Elijah-like prophet who is a forerunner of the Messiah, sent to prepare the hearts of the people. The coming of John the Baptist invokes the prophet Isaiah (40:3-5). The announcement of the ministry of John the Baptist is followed by Gabriel speaking to Mary about the birth of Jesus. When he speaks to her he does so in terms of a coming Davidic hope, a Messiah, one who will restore Israel (1:31-35). The promises given to Mary are a fulfillment of 2 Samuel 7:14. However, Luke, through Gabriel, notes that Jesus is not merely the *next* Davidic King, but the *final* king: his reign will last forever.<sup>37</sup>

Jesus, as the final Davidic King, comes to bring salvation and deliverance to the people of God, who are delivered to serve God.<sup>38</sup> According to Hamilton, this deliverance from the enemies of God

is based on his conviction that God has visited his people to redeem them by raising up a horn of salvation from the line of David (1:70-71). Hereby God is keeping his

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<sup>36</sup>Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation*, 404.

<sup>37</sup>Stein, *Luke*, 84.

<sup>38</sup>Darrell L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts: God's Promised Program, Realized for All Nations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 229.

promise to *save his people from their enemies*—and that salvation is going to come through the judgment of those enemies.<sup>39</sup>

Therefore, the salvation Jesus accomplishes is known primarily through God’s promises to His people in the Old Testament: fulfilling His promises to Abraham (1:73), keeping His promise to raise up prophet like Moses, and raising a new Davidic king who will reign forever. The salvation Jesus is going to accomplish is further evidenced by Simeon (2:30), and the salvation he sees is a light for the Gentiles and for Israel.<sup>40</sup>

Authoritative teaching and miraculous healings bolster the salvation Jesus comes to accomplish. With regards to Jesus’ healings, Luke sees a close association of healing with salvation. What Jesus does in physical healing is an illustration—in miniature—of what he will do spiritually.<sup>41</sup> These healings are also best understood against their appropriate Old Testament background, primarily through various expectations in Isaiah (35:5-6, 29:18-19, 61:1). According to Bock, “These OT texts look for God’s deliverance, and the events described in them point to such a decisive time. So this text makes it clear that these event are indicators of the wholeness salvation brings.”<sup>42</sup>

With regards to the teaching ministry of Jesus, he came to preach “peace.” Preaching peace recalls many Old Testament themes (Isa 52:7; Nah 1:15). Jesus’ message is able to bring peace because of who he is: the Son of God and Lord of all. It is because of who he is that his message—a declaration of peace—is given for both the Jew and the Gentile (cf. 1:10-11, 2:32). Lastly, peace is accomplished by what Jesus did on

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<sup>39</sup>Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation*, 395, emphasis original.

<sup>40</sup>According to Bock, “Light is repeated as a characterization of Jesus’ work. Jesus represents glory for Israel, probably in completing the promises of covenant through her. Jesus also is revelation for the Gentiles as they will be included in what Jesus does—an allusion to the Abrahamic promise to bless the world through the seed even as Isa 42:6 and 49:6 are invoked.” Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 229.

<sup>41</sup>To see the close association and overlap between “healing” and “saving,” see Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 230.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 231.



the cross (Col 1:20).

Related to the theological theme of salvation in Luke, is his understanding of Israel and the Gentiles. While references to Israel are rare after the infancy section,<sup>43</sup> they are nevertheless important. The first reference is mentioned in the role of John the Baptist (1:16). John's work is done in the spirit and power of Elijah, which is a hope reflected in Malachi 3:1. Luke understands John's preliminary work in terms of bringing the people of God out of exile; the exile is best understood in terms of a new exodus. According to Hamilton, "In response to John's call to repentance, announcement of the second exodus and return from exile, and warning of the wrath to come."<sup>44</sup> Also Simeon, being full of joy as he meets the infant Jesus, declares him to be "the consolation of Israel" (2:25). "The consolation of Israel" is grounded in the images of comfort for forlorn Israel in Isaiah 40:1, 49:13, 51:3, 61:2, and 63:13.<sup>45</sup> According to Bock, "God was expected to complete his promise, and Simeon was looking forward to the arrival of that day—a day that meant blessing for the world, not just for Israel."<sup>46</sup> Lastly, Anna describes Jesus as the one who would redeem Israel (2:38). Her expectation, along with Simeon's and Joseph of Arimathea—who "was waiting for the kingdom of God" (23:51)—pull together a theological theme of salvation in terms of a new exodus out of Egypt.

However, when one leaves the infancy narratives to see how Luke uses Israel, the message is much more foreboding. The only other references to Israel are in 4:16-30. In this passage, prophets are referenced as an ominous byword for the people. The reference back to these prophets is a warning to the people of God not to be like the Israel of old, who killed their prophets. However, as Bock notes, "Their reaction to the warning

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<sup>43</sup>Of the twelve references to Israel, seven occur in the first two chapters.

<sup>44</sup>Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation*, 281.

<sup>45</sup>Garland, *Luke*, 135.

<sup>46</sup>Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 281.

shows their rejection of Jesus' assessment of their spiritual condition and points to a fissure that his teaching brought to Israel."<sup>47</sup> While Israel sneers, the Gentiles embrace.

This Gentile inclusion Jesus accomplishes is a key theme in Luke, and it is rooted in the Scriptures. The Old Testament gives Luke's readers a template to understand Gentile inclusion: the Queen of the South's search for wisdom (11:30-32) and Nineveh's response to Jonah's preaching (11:29-32). Garland connects these to reference to Jesus:

The queen of the South . . . came from the ends of the earth and recognized Solomon's legitimacy and deferred to his wisdom. The Ninevites . . . repented at Jonah's teaching. Jesus is far greater than Solomon or the prophet Jonah because he brings God's reign, but this generation neither recognizes his authority nor repents.<sup>48</sup>

At the same time, the Gentiles have a hand in the destruction of Jesus (Luke 18:32; Acts 4:24-29). The nations "rage against" Jesus as the Lord's anointed (cf. Psalm 2).

However, in 7:1-10 Luke records for Jesus' interaction with the centurion, whose faith surpasses those in Israel (7:9). This surpassing faith of the centurion is grounded in a recognition of Jesus' authority and the power of the Word. According to Bock, "The centurion recognized that God's power works through Jesus without spatial limitations. Jesus is entrusted with great authority."<sup>49</sup> He also intentionally associated with tax collectors and sinners through the Gospel. Indeed the kingdom Jesus is inaugurating is for all who believe, indiscriminate of ethnicity.

### **Theological Themes in Acts**

It has previously been noted that if one wants to understand how Jesus interpreted the Scripture, one should see how the biblical authors—in this case Luke and Jesus' disciples—interpret the scriptures. Being taught by Jesus, these men would have

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 283.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 282.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 246.

interpreted the scriptures as he did for them. The previous section was a brief look at two theological themes Luke weaves throughout his Gospel. Here brief focus is given to the interpretive framework of the apostles, which is seen primarily through their preaching in Acts 2:14-36 and 3:11-26.

### **Peter's Pentecost Speech (2:14-36)**

Peter's first speech, after receiving the Holy Spirit, is entirely about Old Testament promises and their fulfillment in light of Jesus' resurrection and ascension.<sup>50</sup> Peter preaches the resurrection and vindication of Christ as the summation of Old covenant expectation by drawing together three Old Testament citations: Joel 2:28-32 in verses 17-21, Psalm 16:8-11 in verses 25-28, and Psalm 110:1 in verses 34-35. According to Alan Thompson, Peter's preaching "focuses on God's plan and purposes and culminates in the accomplishments of his saving purposes in the death and resurrection of Christ."<sup>51</sup> These saving purposes in salvation are most visible in the work of Christ.

When Peter cites Joel he is signaling that God is fulfilling his long awaited promise of a new covenant with his people. In citing Joel in the pouring of the Spirit, he is also signaling a fulfillment of Numbers 11:29. Seeing the Spirit being poured out on "all flesh" (2:17) signals the dawn of a new era.<sup>52</sup> This pouring of the Spirit precedes the

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<sup>50</sup>Ekhard Schnabel notes, "From Luke's perspective, Peter's speech on Pentecost, in which he explains the coming of the Holy Spirit with reference to Jesus' position as exalted Lord and Messiah who has the power to grant salvation, answers (1) the hopes that the angel Gabriel expressed when he announced to Mary the birth of Jesus (Luke 1:32-33), (2) the expectation of the coming of 'power from on high' that Jesus announced on the day of his resurrection (Luke 24:46-49) and (3) the promise of the coming of the Spirit's power that Jesus confirmed before his ascension and exaltation (Acts 1:1-11)." Ekhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 126.

<sup>51</sup>Alan Thomson, *The Acts of The Risen Lord Jesus: Luke's Account of God's Unfolding Plan*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 27:95.

<sup>52</sup>Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 113.

day of the Lord (2:20), which will be a time of decisive judgment. In light of this new eschatological era, Peter calls for repentance and faith.

With repentance and faith in view, Peter then turns to consider the definite plan of God in the death of his Son. Peter sees the redeeming work of God in Christ in terms of the fulfillment of a Davidic hope, that the Lord would be faithful to his promises.<sup>53</sup> By connecting the resurrection of Christ with the Psalm, Peter explains why Jesus must have been resurrected, and that Jesus' resurrection is the answer to David's hope in the Messiah.<sup>54</sup>

Peter concludes his Pentecost speech referencing Psalm 110. Peter exclaims that the resurrection indicates Jesus as promised Messiah, who is seated at the right hand of the Father. Bock writes that in having this position, "Jesus mediates the blessing of the Spirit and salvation in accord with the promise of God's plan."<sup>55</sup> This vindication and elevation shows an intimate connection between the Father and Jesus. Seeing Jesus seated at the right hand of the Father shows him as co-authoritative with the Father. However, seeing Jesus' death and resurrections as vindication causes the believer to be mindful of Jesus' humility (cf. Phil 2:6). Each of these fulfillments highlights the work of God in the resurrection of Christ, and because of that work, "all flesh" is able and expected to repent and embrace Christ by Faith.

Peter makes these theological connections because he learned them from his Lord, Jesus. Jesus taught Peter that in order to most fully understand him they should see all of the Scriptures in light of who he is and what he accomplishes. If Jesus taught Peter that in order to fully and clearly understand him, he should see all of scripture pointing to him, then the church today should seek to do the same today.

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 127.

<sup>54</sup>Schnabel, *Luke*, 145.

<sup>55</sup>Bock, *Acts*, 134.

### **Peter's Sermon (3:11-26)**

With a healed man clinging to him, Peter preaches fulfillment of old covenant promises at Solomon's portico. According to David Peterson, Peter's speech builds on his previous Pentecost speech, but "adds important new perspectives on the persona and work of Christ."<sup>56</sup> This happens chiefly by understanding the 'name' of Jesus. Peter explains the work of God in Christ in terms of foretold prophecies (3:18) and promises (3:22-26) that have come to fruition. Peter, by drawing attention to various titles attributed to Christ, find fulfillment of various Old Testament promises in Christ. Jesus is the "servant" (3:13) of God, which is an allusion to a suffering and glorified servant typified in the Old Testament (Isa 42:1, 52:13-53:12). Jesus is also "the Holy and Righteous One," which is also a reference to the Messiah. It is this man that they denied and handed over to be crucified. However, the Lord used their evil plots for good, and for his glory. Lastly, Peter refers to Jesus as "the seed of Abraham" (3:25) and the prophet like Moses (3:22-23). According to Schnabel,

He was the fulfillment of prophecies that spoke about the blessings of God's covenant with Abraham reaching all the other nations, and prophecies that promised a leader of God's people who would again and in a climatic manner reveal the will of God to his people.<sup>57</sup>

Peter ends his sermon with an appeal to repent and receive by faith what God has accomplished in Christ. For Peter, in order to participate in what the Lord is accomplishing through the work of his Son, one must repent and turn so that their sins may be forgiven.<sup>58</sup> According to Bock, "The opportunity to share in the blessing God

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<sup>56</sup>David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 171.

<sup>57</sup>Schnabel, *Luke*, 225.

<sup>58</sup>F. F. Bruce notes, "For all those things that happened to Jesus in his suffering and death happened in fulfillment of the words of the prophets, who foretold that the Messiah must suffer. . . . But Jesus himself accepted and fulfilled his messianic mission in the terms of the prophetic account of the Servant and other righteous suffers, and the apostles' interpretation followed his own." F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B.

gave to Abraham is available only for those who turn to the one whom God sent to them.”<sup>59</sup>

Another way in which the biblical authors explain the person and work of Jesus is through the continuation of various motifs that Christ himself employed in reference to himself. Jesus identifies himself as the temple in two images: the cornerstone (Matt 24: 33-46; cf. Mark 12:1-11, Luke 20:9-18) and the temple (Matt 12:5, 26:61-62, 27:40-43; Mark 14:58-61; Luke 2:46-49). After the resurrection of Jesus, the biblical authors continue this image of the rejected stone, which becomes a rock of offense and stumbling (cf. Rom 9:33, 1 Pet 2:8). According to E. Earle Ellis, “Jesus uses the passage [Ps 118:22] as an ‘eschatological threat,’ but after his resurrection his apostles employ the same motif and text for Jesus’ resurrection victory.”<sup>60</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The biblical authors interpret the person and work of Christ through their understanding of earlier Scriptures, God’s work in redemptive history, and what they have experienced.<sup>61</sup> They seek to explain Christ and the fulfillment of God’s promises in him by bringing together various theological themes, images, types, and patterns. And, most importantly, they learned from Jesus himself. Jesus taught his disciples that in order to most fully understand him they should see all of the scriptures in light of who he is and what he accomplishes. If Jesus taught his disciples that in order to fully and clearly understand him, they should see all of scripture pointing to him, then the church today should seek to do the same. In order to most fully understand Christ, the church must

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Eerdmans, 1988), 83.

<sup>59</sup>Bock, *Acts*, 182.

<sup>60</sup>E. Earle Ellis, *Christ and the Future in New Testament History* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 35.

<sup>61</sup>Hamilton, *What is Biblical Theology?* 16.

seek to understand the storyline of scripture and how it climaxes in Jesus. Lastly, as the people of God grow in their understanding of Christ, so too does their affection for him: and with “great joy” (Luke 24:52) we go and tell others about him.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE TEMPLE, THE BRIDE, THE FAMILY: TRACING THEOLOGICAL THEMES OF THE BIBLICAL AUTHORS

Scripture clearly teaches that the biblical authors intentionally connect various theological themes, patterns, and images, in order that the people of God can rightly understand the Scriptures. The biblical authors seek to explain God’s work in salvation and what they are currently experiencing through an interpretive lens that is shaped by their understanding of Scripture. The goal of those who believe in Christ is to seek to understand the interpretive worldview of the authors, and seek to make it their own.

The previous chapter focused on one of the most explicit examples in Scripture as it pertains to understanding and applying the storyline of Scripture: Jesus teaching his disciples how all of Scripture points to himself (Luke 24-26, 44-47). As Jesus “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45), their hearts burned with affection (Luke 24:32), and they went and told others about him. The chapter concluded with the assertion that this interpretive perspective of the biblical authors is one that would have been learned by their own reading of Scripture, and from Jesus himself as he taught it to them. This interpretive perspective of the authors ought to be the same interpretive perspective of all believers in Christ.

While the goal of the previous chapter was to show that Scripture explicitly presents an understanding of the storyline of Scripture as a necessary means to rightly knowing Christ, the goal of the current chapter is to show how the biblical authors connect and interpret the Scriptures through various types of literary devices—themes, metaphors, images— and in doing so they weave together a robust tapestry of meaning. First, groundwork is established to explain how the authors employ symbolism and other



means to interpret Scripture and convey meaning. Next, three different theological themes, the temple of God, the bride, and the people of God, are examined. The point of this section is to concretely show how the biblical authors explain the storyline of Scripture through these various themes. Finally, brief attention is given to how the church benefits from a rich understanding of the storyline of Scripture.

### **Understanding Scriptures' Symbolism**

Teaching on the art of writing well, Douglas Wilson quipped, “Like Ovid said, it is art to conceal art, and I would add that it is art to half conceal the deep message.”<sup>1</sup> Often communicating meaning through literary symbolism communicates meaning in a more palpable and tangible way than explicit instruction. These various literary devices function as scaffolding by which the author is able to construct an interpretive worldview with which meaning can be communicated and applied. Commenting on what makes *Moby Dick* masterful, R. C. Sproul writes, “Its greatness may be seen not in its sometimes cumbersome literary structure or its excursions into technicalia about the nature and function of whales (cetology). No, its greatness is found in its unparalleled theological symbolism.”<sup>2</sup> As readers seek to understand the robust symbolism in literature they immerse themselves in the worldview of the writer, which allows them to see the robust meaning the writer intends to convey.

This aspect of literary masterpieces, the ability to construct worldview and meaning through symbolism, is mimetic. When authors seek to create a literary world by which truth and beauty can be communicated, be it Middle Earth or Narnia, they are

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<sup>1</sup>Douglas Wilson, *Wordsmithy: Hot Tips for the Writing Life* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 2011), 19.

<sup>2</sup>R. C. Sproul, “The Unholy Pursuit of God in Moby Dick,” August 1, 2011, accessed April 2, 2014, <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/unholy-pursuit-god-moby-dick/>

parroting what the biblical authors of Scriptures do.<sup>3</sup> In the words of James Hamilton, “The use of this symbolism produces what might be referred to as a ‘symbolic universe,’ that is, a set of symbols that explain and interpret the world by representing, or standing for, the world.”<sup>4</sup>

Commenting on the use of symbolism, Hamilton writes,

A symbol, after all, is something used to stand in for a whole set of things. . . . If we want to understand the Bible, we have to consider what its symbols stand for, what story they’re telling, and how they’re interpreting and summarizing what has gone before as they point to what is and will be.<sup>5</sup>

Symbols and icons often communicate more than meets the eye. Understanding what the symbols communicate and how they reinforce the overarching narrative of Scripture is a chief task for those who want to grow in their understanding the storyline of Scripture. As believers seek to grow in their understanding of the storyline of Scripture, they seek to understand how the authors employ images, types, and patterns to reinforce and interpret the biblical narrative.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Commenting on the inherent shortfalls of literature, Tony Reinke writes, “Man-made literature may be inspiring, but it is not divinely inspired—not in the same way Scripture is inspired. . . . Man-made literature may contain truth, goodness, and beauty, but it is also fallible, imperfect, and of temporary value.” Tony Reinke, *Lit! A Christian Guide to Reading Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 26.

<sup>4</sup>James. M Hamilton, *What is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible’s Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 64.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>6</sup>Hamilton writes, “In order to understand the Bible’s symbolic universe, which summarizes and interprets the meaning of the world as it really is, we will look at the images, types, and patterns in the Bible. These images, types, and patterns are often laid on top of each other, and this layering both interprets and communicates. This use of symbolism and imagery adds texture to the story the Bible tells, reinforcing and making it concrete.” *Ibid.*, 70.

Often the biblical authors layer and interweave various patterns within each other. This interpretive layering communicates a particular richness and continuity of Scriptures.<sup>7</sup>

### **Imagery**

In addition to the layering of symbolism throughout Scripture is the use of concrete images to interpret abstract concepts. These images give tangible representation to abstract concepts. For example, the image of “flood” can be traced throughout Scripture. The image of the flood connects God’s acts of judgment and the undoing of creation.<sup>8</sup> The image of the flood also comes to symbolize the judgment of God: Israel went through the waters of judgment when they were led through the Red Sea (Exod 20-21), Jesus speaks of his baptism in terms of entering the waters of God’s judgment (Mark 10:38-39), which Peter connects to the baptism of believers (1 Pet 3:20-21).

The imagery the biblical authors utilize to construct their interpretive universe both summarize and interpret the acts of God in redemptive history. These images also point beyond themselves as the authors foreshadow how God will be understood in relation to his people. They, the biblical images, serve as interpretive touchstones to the readers of Scripture. As believers encounter these biblical images, they conjure up memories of God’s actions—to display his glory through acts of mercy as well as acts of

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<sup>7</sup>For example, oftentimes biblical authors weave together the themes of Bride and Child. Hosea’s marriage to his wife, which represents The Lord’s relationship to Israel, is fraught with marital unfaithfulness and dysfunction. One of the major themes in the book of Hosea is how the Lord woe and wins the heart of his bride (2:14-20). Intermingled within this symbolic marriage are children, “No Mercy” (1:6, 8) and “Not my people” (1:9). As the book progresses the theme of restoring the children and changing their names emerges (cf. 2:21-23).

<sup>8</sup>Commenting on the parallels between Noah and Adam, Hamilton writes, “Moses wants his audience to see the correspondences between Adam and Noah. These correspondences hint that God’s judgment is a kind of de-creation, while redemption is a kind of new creation.” Hamilton, *What is Biblical Theology?* 70.

judgment— within redemptive history, which helps the readers of Scripture rightly connect the storyline of Scripture.

## **Typology**

As Christians seek to grow in their understanding of the storyline of Scripture, one thing they will have to understand is biblical typology. According to Hamilton, “The two key features of biblical typology are historical correspondence and escalation.”<sup>9</sup> Historical correspondence refers to the interpretive practice the biblical authors employ to compare and contrast various individuals, institutions, or events to one another throughout Scripture.<sup>10</sup> Escalation refers to the way that the authors move from what Hamilton describes as “the initial instance, which we might call archetype, through the installments in the pattern that reinforce the significance of archetype.”<sup>11</sup> This escalation continues to grow until the type finds its fulfillment in its ultimate expression.

By understanding and recognizing how the biblical authors utilize typology throughout Scripture, believers grow in their understanding of the storyline of Scripture. The authors utilize the tool of typology as they highlight the various connections the Lord orchestrates throughout Scripture.<sup>12</sup> Seeing typological connections is not a haphazard venture; readers of Scripture seek to discern intentional connections the Lord has formed between the type and its fulfillment.

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 77.

<sup>10</sup>For instance, one of the many things the writer of Heb contrasts is the Levitical priesthood compared to how Christ functions as a high priest (5:1-10).

<sup>11</sup>Hamilton, *What is Biblical Theology?* 77.

<sup>12</sup>On the subject of typology, Hamilton notes, “As people notice the *type* of thing God has done and interpret these patterns in light of the promises God has made, they begin to expect God to act in the future as he has acted in the past.” Ibid., 78, emphasis original.

## **Patterns**

The Lord often communicates meaning through patterns that emerge in the biblical storyline. These patterns maintain continuity across the Scripture, which helps the readers of Scripture understand how God has worked among his people and even expect him to work for his people in the future. Theological patterns are similar to typology in the sense that they both correspond to actual events, individuals, and institutions and in the fact that they escalate. Speaking on the function of theological patterns in Scripture, Hamilton notes, “Biblical symbols are given to us to shape our understanding of how we are to live. . . . The symbols summarize and interpret the story, and they inform who we are in the story and how we are to enact our role in the outworking of its plot.”<sup>13</sup>

Much more has been said and could be said when it comes to understanding biblical symbolism and how the biblical authors employ it to connect and interpret Scripture.<sup>14</sup> It is clear that the Lord orchestrates a story that spans the Scriptures. Using the authors, the Lord gives an interpretive perspective that creates a universe by which his people can see and rightly interpret the world.

## **Exploring Three Theological Themes**

### **The Temple**

The image of the temple, and all that it entails, frames the biblical storyline. Scripture begins with God being known and communed within a primeval temple.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 90.

<sup>14</sup>For further explanation on understanding and interpreting biblical symbolism, see T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: Exploring God’s Plan for Life on Earth* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009); Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1991); idem, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012); Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?*; and Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013).

Scripture concludes with God being worshipped in a city-temple. The theological symbol of temple is intentionally woven throughout the Scriptures, as the biblical authors explain how God relates to His people and how his people are to rightly understand him.

According to Hamilton, “The description of the Garden of Eden is echoed in the descriptions of the tabernacle and the temple, leading to the conclusion that Genesis 2 presents creation as a cosmic temple, a holy dwelling place of God.”<sup>15</sup>

The manner in which the Lord interacts with his people, and how his people interact with the created world in the Garden, set a paradigmatic context that expands throughout the Scriptures. The Lord commissions Adam to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion” (Gen 1:28, 2:15). These dual commands of dominion and fruitfulness are solely used in the Scriptures in relation to the priests’ work in the tabernacle.<sup>16</sup> It is noted by G. K. Beale “It is true that the Hebrew word usually translated ‘cultivate’ can refer to an agricultural task when used by itself (e.g. 2:5; 3:23).”<sup>17</sup> However, Beale goes on to note that whenever the two words—“work and keep”—occur together in the Old Testament, they refer to the priest’s duties in the tabernacle.<sup>18</sup> Noting the parallels between the Garden and tabernacle, Gordon Wenham

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<sup>15</sup>James M. Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 73.

<sup>16</sup>Commenting on the command to work and keep the Garden, Gordon Wenham writes, “The word (עבד ‘to serve, till’) is commonly used in a religious sense of serving God (e.g., Deut 4:19), and in priestly texts, especially of the tabernacle duties of the Levites (Num 3:7-8; 4:23-24, 26, etc.). Similarly, רמש ‘to guard, to keep’ has the simple profane sense of ‘guard’ (4:9; 30:31), but it is even more commonly used in legal texts of observing religious commands and duties (17:9; Lev 18:5) and particularly of the Levitical responsibility for guarding the tabernacle from intruders (Num 1:53, 3:7-8).” Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Bible Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 67.

<sup>17</sup>G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 17:67.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

writes, “It is striking that here and in the priestly law these two terms are juxtaposed (Num 3:7-8; 8:26; 18:5-6), another pointer to the interplay of tabernacle and Eden symbolism.”<sup>19</sup>

As the biblical authors record the words of the Lord, they note that Adam’s role and function has a priestly and kingly element to it.<sup>20</sup> As an image-bearer of God and as king, Adam is called to rule the created world for God. Commenting on the dual role Adam has as a priest king, Stephen Dempster notes,

For human beings to function as the image of God they need a territory, a domain to rule over . . . the kingdom needs a king, the dominion a dynasty. . . . The geographical aspect is limited to the garden of Eden, the throne-room, as it were, of the kingdom.<sup>21</sup>

As Adam ruled in the Garden for glory of God, part of his reign would have meant extending the kingdom of God to encompass the whole earth. The extension of God’s glory would have happened in two ways: by being fruitful and creating more people, who are made in the image of God. Secondly, the expanding of the Garden would have happened as Adam ruled over the created order within it.<sup>22</sup>

The parallels between Adam’s function in the Garden and the Levitical priests are not the only connections between Eden and the temple. The Lord intends, through the way that He instructed the tabernacle and the temple to be constructed, for his people be mindful of the unimpeded relationship mankind previously experienced before the fall.

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<sup>19</sup>Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 67.

<sup>20</sup>Adam is called to exercise dominion as a king. Commenting on Gen 1:28, Wenham notes, “Mankind is here commissioned to rule nature as a benevolent king, acting as God’s representative over them and therefore treating them in the same way as God who created them.” *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>21</sup>Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 15:62.

<sup>22</sup>Commenting on the extension of the kingdom, Beale notes, “Because Adam and Eve were to subdue and rule over ‘all the earth,’ it is plausible to suggest that they were to extend the geographical boundaries of the garden until Eden covered the whole earth.” Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 81-82.

Parallels have been made between the contents of the temple and how they represent various elements of the Garden of Eden. Noting the implication of the correspondences between Eden, the tabernacle, and the temple, Hamilton writes, “The implications of these parallels is that God put man in a place where man was to know, serve, and worship God, a place where God was present. God is known, served, worshiped, and present in his temple, the cosmos.”<sup>23</sup>

It is significant that the tree in the midst of the Garden (Gen 2:9) is matched by a lampstand, which is described as having branches and almond blossoms, in the tabernacle (Exod 25:31-40). Cherubim are both woven into the tapestry of the tabernacle and overshadow the Ark of the Covenant (Exod 25:10-22; 26:1), which remind God’s people of the Cherubim who guard the entrance of the Garden (Gen 3:24). Rivers of life find their headwaters in Eden (Gen 10:14), the prophets connect this image with the temple (Ezek 47:1; Joel 3:18). The Garden would have been entered from the east (Gen 2:8). Adam and Eve were ejected from Eden through an eastern entrance (Gen 3:34). The priests would have entered the tabernacle and the temple through the east (Num 3:38).<sup>24</sup> Precious stones and gold are mentioned in Genesis 2:11-12, and these are used to decorate the sanctuary and adorn the priest’s garments (see Exod 25:7, 11, 17, 31).<sup>25</sup>

Lastly, since numerous conceptual and linguistic connections have been forged between Eden and tabernacle, it is not unexpected to see the biblical authors refer to Eden as the first sanctuary of the God’s people. The prophet Ezekiel refers to “Eden, the garden of God. . . . The holy mountain of God” (Ezek 28:13, 14). Commenting on the

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<sup>23</sup>Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation*, 74.

<sup>24</sup>Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 74.

<sup>25</sup>For a helpful list detailing many of the various parallels between the garden, the tabernacle, and the temple, see Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation*, 74; Alexander, *From Eden to The New Jerusalem*, 21-23; Beale, *The Temple and The Church’s Mission*, 66-99



Ezekiel's references to Eden, Beale writes,

Ezekiel 28:13 pictures Adam dressed in bejewelled [*sic*] clothing like a priest (28:13), which corresponds well to the reference only five verses later to Eden as a holy sanctuary. Ezekiel 28:18 is probably, therefore, the most explicit place anywhere in the canonical literature where the Garden of Eden is called a temple.<sup>26</sup>

In the words of T. Desmond Alexander, it is clear that “God’s original blueprint for the whole earth to become a temple-city filled with people who have a holy or priestly status.”<sup>27</sup> Tragically, when Adam and Eve rebelled, things changed. However, God mercifully works to restore the original fellowship and to reverse the effects of the fall; all the while, he graciously provides ways for his people to fellowship with him as they anticipate the great restoration.

Outside of the Garden of Eden, the construction of the tabernacle (Exod 25-31, 35-40) is the next tangible step towards seeing God’s glory being established on earth.<sup>28</sup> The Lord instructs Moses on how to construct the temple, which is intentionally supposed to remind God’s people of the Garden of Eden, and it is completed just as the Lord instructed.<sup>29</sup> The Lord even gives the Holy Spirit to the craftsmen, so that they can construct the temple exactly as the Lord commanded (28:3, 31:1-6). According to John Durham, the Lord gives his Spirit to these skilled artisans “to be guided by an ideal artist,

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<sup>26</sup>Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 75-76.

<sup>27</sup>Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 30.

<sup>28</sup>Between Eden and the construction of the tabernacle several instances of God revealing himself to his people, and sacrifices being offered on makeshift alters occur. According to Beale, “The patriarchs appear also to have built these worship areas as impermanent, miniature forms of sanctuaries that symbolically represented the notion that their progeny were to spread out to subdue the earth from a divine sanctuary in fulfillment of the commission in Gen 1:26-28.” G. K. Beale, “Eden, The Temple, and The Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no. 1 (2005): 14.

<sup>29</sup>For brevities sake, the parallels enumerated previously are not repeated here. For a concise summary of the parallels, see Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation*, 101; Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 31-33.

one made wise and practical and facile by Yahweh himself.”<sup>30</sup> Lastly, just as in the work of Creation, when the work of constructing the tabernacle is finished, the people and the Lord take up residence.<sup>31</sup> Noting this parallel, Beale writes, “Just as God rested on the seventh day from his work of creation, so when the creation of the tabernacle and, especially, the temple are finished, God takes up a ‘resting place’ therein.”

However, in the tabernacle fellowship is restricted, sacrifices are prerequisite to any communion with the Lord.<sup>32</sup> Another difference is that not everyone is permitted to fellowship with the Lord, only the priests, and more precisely the high priest once a year. And, in order for the Levitical priests to enter the presence of the Lord, they must do so on his terms—just like Adam, if they do not walk in obedience, they will die.<sup>33</sup>

The tabernacle is a representation of the universe, in miniature. It represents the cosmos, and when Israel sees the Lord filling the temple it points to his glory filling the world. The curtains are constructed to look like the starry heavens. The furniture inside the tabernacle is supposed to recall life outside in the world, and inside the Garden of Eden. According to Alexander, “As models of the ideal cosmos, the tabernacle and the temple are designed to remind people of God’s original purpose for the world.”<sup>34</sup> The Psalmist connects the tent and the cosmos in Psalm 104:1b-2: “You are clothed with

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<sup>30</sup>John Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 3 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 411.

<sup>31</sup>Noting this parallel, Beale writes, “Just as God rested on the seventh day from his work of creation, so when the creation of the tabernacle and, especially, the temple are finished, God takes up a ‘resting place’ therein.” Beale, *The Temple and Church’s Mission*, 61.

<sup>32</sup>Commenting on this difference between fellowship in the Garden and in the tabernacle, Hamilton notes, “Unlike the situation in the garden, where no sin offerings were necessary, when Aaron and his sons are consecrated as priests, a bull must be offered as a sin offering (29:14).” Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation*, 101.

<sup>33</sup>Commenting on this connection, Hamilton writes, “As Adam faced death for transgression, so Aaron and his sons must follow Yahweh’s instructions lest they die (28:35, 43).” Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Alexander, *From Eden To The New Jerusalem*, 40-41.

splendor and majesty, covering yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent.”

Each of these theological connections reinforce the reality that the glory of God will, and is, expanding so that one day it will cover the world in totality (Isa 11:9, Hab 2:14). The biblical authors, inspired by the Holy Spirit, weave together a tapestry of symbolic meaning by which God’s people are able to interpret the Scriptures and God’s providence through a biblical lens as they understand the storyline of Scripture.

Israel follows the presence of their Lord throughout their desert wanderings. The Lord eventually leads Israel to the land he had promised them, “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exod 3:8, 17; 13:5; Lev 20:24; Deut 6:3, 11:9, 26:9). When they settle in the land, the tabernacle gives way to the temple, a permanent home for the presence of glory of God to dwell in the midst of his people. The building of the temple is inaugurated by David, but completed by Solomon. The biblical authors connect the building of the temple to God’s prior promises and actions in many ways. First, the people of God are planted in the city, just as Adam was planted in the Garden (2 Sam 7:10). Secondly, they are called to rule and subdue, just as Adam was instructed (Gen 7:9-16). Lastly, the blessing given to Abraham, “I will make you a great name” (Gen 12:2), is reiterated with the Davidic line (2 Sam 7:9).

Noting the correspondence between the tabernacle and temple, Alexander comments, “When the Jerusalem temple replaces the tabernacle as God’s earthly abode, the Edenic and comic features associated with the tent transfer to the permanent building.”<sup>35</sup> As with the tabernacle, the temple is a holy place in which the Lord inhabits. As with the tabernacle, the temple has many different elements within that are symbolic reminders of Eden. As with the tabernacle and the Garden, fellowship with the Lord is only possible through obedience to his instructions, i.e., the priests can only enter into his

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 44.

presence through sacrificial obedience.

By having the temple in the center of Jerusalem, the city itself is made unique. Jerusalem becomes a temple-city wherein the presence of the Lord is anchored in the Holy of Holies, from which his glory will be extended to the four-corners of the globe.<sup>36</sup> Jerusalem was to be the epicenter from which the glory of the Lord would be known, and from which it would spread. This pattern of a temple-city finds its fulfillment in Revelation 21.

However, if his people walk in disobedience, like Adam did, then the Lord will judge his people. Covenant disobedience is something that characterized the people of God after the reign of Solomon. Wicked kings led and mirrored the spiritual adultery of the people of God. Because of Israel's persistent unrepentance, the Lord judges his people by raising up foreign armies to destroy his people. Those who are not destroyed are led into exile. As this unfolds throughout the Scriptures, one of the functions of the prophets is to point to the restoration of the presence of God among his people, to the restoration of the temple. The prophet Ezekiel speaks of the return of the presence of God among his people, to a new temple, even while the Jerusalem temple lies in rubble (Ezek 40-48).<sup>37</sup>The prophet Zechariah records Israel's rebuilding of the temple.<sup>38</sup> Even though

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<sup>36</sup>Again, Alexander notes, "Since God's creation project is to create a temple-city that will fill the whole earth, it is easy to see how Jerusalem is view as partially fulfilling God's plan. Consequently, Jerusalem/Zion becomes a model of God's creation blueprint and reflects in microcosm what God intends for the whole earth." *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>37</sup>Commenting on Ezekiel's depiction of the new temple, Alexander notes, "Although Ezekiel's vision in chapters 40-48 is a highly idealized picture of the future, it communicates powerfully, like the concluding chapters of Isaiah, that God is still committed to making the whole earth his dwelling place, establishing in the process of a temple-city." *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>38</sup>Concerning the modesty of the second temple, Beale notes, "Like Solomon's temple, Israel's second temple did not fulfill the prophecy of Exodus 15:17-18 and 2 Samuel 7:10-16. Therefore, Exodus 15, and 2 Samuel 7 and subsequent prophets foresaw an eschatological temple, the ideal description of which both the first and second temples fell short." Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 110.

the rebuilt temple lacks the former glory of the Solomonic temple, it does point to the reality that the Lord is faithful to his promises, and that things are not yet complete.<sup>39</sup>

The Old Testament closes with a sense of anticipation, with God's promises waiting to be fulfilled. The biblical authors of the Old Testament, led by the Holy Spirit, weave together a vast tapestry of symbolic meaning as they connect God's presence among his people in the Garden, through the wilderness in the tabernacle, and in the midst of them in the temple in Jerusalem. The New Testament opens with the people of God under the rule of a foreign king, Caesar, and with a new temple that is destined to be destroyed (Mark 14:58; Luke 22:53; John 2:19). However, the New Testament begins with the heralding of a new song about a new temple. Jesus, who is none other than God himself, is said to have "tabernacled" among the people (John 1:1-14).<sup>40</sup> Jesus comes and dies on behalf of his people to redeem them, by becoming a curse for them (Gal 3:13).<sup>41</sup>

The church, as the new temple of the living God,<sup>42</sup> carries the gospel from

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<sup>39</sup>Again, Alexander comments, "As the preceding centuries have revealed, the sinfulness of the Jerusalemites prevents God's presence from expanding outward from the city. Since its population continues to be wayward, Jerusalem cannot easily evolve into the final reality. In light of this, the next stage in the biblical meta-story introduces an important transformation that involves the replacement of the Jerusalem temple by a new and very different edifice." Alexander, *From Eden to The New Jerusalem*, 60.

<sup>40</sup>Reflecting on the significance of the incarnation, James Palmer notes, "In the cross we see in the most profound way how the grace, compassion, mercy and love of God are a revelation of the glory of God. John's theology of glory is a theology of the cross, the glory of God is seen in the shame of the cross." James Palmer, "Exodus and the Biblical Theology of the Tabernacle," in *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Simon Gathercole (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2004), 20.

<sup>41</sup>According to Beale, "Not only is Jesus identified with the temple because he is assuming the role of the sacrificial system, but he is also not, instead of the temple, the unique place on earth where God's revelatory presence is located. God is manifesting his glorious presence in Jesus in a greater way than it was ever manifested in a physical temple structure." Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 178.

<sup>42</sup>The church becomes the temple of God by its union with Christ. Indeed Alexander observes, "this transition is bound to the incarnation of Jesus Christ, to whom the concepts of temple and body are united. This association provided and important

Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) and the glory of God expands.<sup>43</sup> The transition from the building to the people is marked by Pentecost, where the presence of God moves into believers by the sending of the Holy Spirit, rather than the building. Hamilton writes, “We are not some barren, uninhabited, trackless waste. Our lives are inhabited by the living God. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>44</sup> The indwelling of the Spirit not only empowers, but it also fulfills old covenant expectations.<sup>45</sup>

The apostle Paul expounds on the concept of the church as temple throughout his writings (1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16-18; Eph 2:19-22).<sup>46</sup> Paul envisions the church, as believers are being added to it, like the building of the temple (Eph 2:20-22). The cornerstone of this new temple is Jesus himself, and its foundation is the apostles and the prophets. Paul connects the rebuilding of the temple, now the people of God, to previous old covenant promises.<sup>47</sup> The church is also considered the new temple of the Lord

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theological basis for understanding how the church, as the body of Christ, is also the temple of God.” Alexander, *From Eden to The New Jerusalem*, 60.

<sup>43</sup>Alexander notes, “In moving from the Old Testament to the New Testament, we discover that the Jerusalem temple is replaced by the church and, with its outward expansion from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth, God’s dwelling place also spreads outward.” Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Hamilton, *What is Biblical Theology?* 103.

<sup>45</sup>Concerning Pentecost, Hamilton notes, “The day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) temporarily reverses the judgment that fell at Babel (Genesis 11) and points to the day when all nations will speak with one voice in praise of ‘the mighty acts of God’ in Christ (Acts 2:5-11). Peter explains this by quoting the prophet Joel (Acts 2:16-21). The prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit in the eschatological days of the messiah is realized on the day of Pentecost.” Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation*, 425.

<sup>46</sup>See also Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 504-11; Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to The Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997) 349-55; Peter O’ Brian, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 210-21; Frank Theilman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 178-85.

<sup>47</sup>Beale notes Paul’s reference to Isa 57, saying, “The background of Isaiah 57 shows that Paul has in mind not merely the temple as a metaphor for the church, but that the church is the initial phase of the building of the final temple that will appear at the

because it is filled with the presence of the Lord (Eph 3:19; 1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16).<sup>48</sup>

The ultimate fulfillment of the temple is pictured in Revelation 21-22. Here John records the New Jerusalem, which is in the dimensions of a golden cube; a new city that also resembles the Holy of Holies. The city is constructed with precious metal and gems, which connect with the Garden, the temple, and the tabernacle. Flowing out of the middle of this new city are rivers of life, just as rivers flowed out of Eden (22:1; cf. Ezek 47:12).<sup>49</sup> The city itself is entirely holy; there is no uncleanness in it (Rev 21:27). In the middle of the city is a fruit bearing tree of life (22:2).<sup>50</sup> Here the presence of the glory of God and the enjoyment of it are fully and finally realized.

### **The Bride**

Oftentimes the biblical authors speak of God's relationship to his people in terms of a covenant marriage. The covenantal relationship reveals the Lord's commitment to his people and it often reveals Israel's infidelity to the Lord, primarily

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end of the age to come." Beale, *The Temple and The Church's Mission*, 262. Contra David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 120.

<sup>48</sup>Concerning the presence of the Lord in the church, Gordon Fee observes, "The Spirit is the key, the crucial reality, for life in the new age. The presence of the Spirit, and that *alone*, marks them off as God's new people, his temple." Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987), 147.

<sup>49</sup>Commenting on the typological fulfillment of this river, Beale notes, "Both Ezekiel and Revelation thus envision an escalated reestablishment of the garden of the first creation in which God's presence openly dwelled." G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 1106; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997), 399-400.

<sup>50</sup>Noting the vast amount of Edenic symbolism, Beale observes, "The Edenic imagery beginning in Revelation 22:1 reflects an intention to show that the building of the Temple that began in Genesis 2 will be completed in Christ and his people and will encompass the whole new creation." G. K. Beale, "The Final Vision of the Apocalypse and Its Implications for a Biblical Theology of the Temple," in *Heaven on Earth*, 192-94.

seen in their giving themselves over to other gods (Isa 1:21, 57:3; Mic 1:7; Jer 2:1-20).<sup>51</sup> The clearest picture is given with the prophet Hosea, who is called to marry the promiscuous Gomer. Hosea and Gomer's marriage symbolizes the Lord's relationship with Israel. Frequently throughout the book of Hosea, Gomer leaves her husband and runs into the arms of other lovers. Frequently Hosea redeems her back, making sacrifices to get her back. While Gomer and Israel remain faithless to their Lord, the Lord remains faithful—he “allures” her and redeems her for himself (Hos 2:14-20).<sup>52</sup> This wooing of the bride happens, intentionally so, in a wilderness. According to Dewayne Garrett, “The return to wilderness here picks up the theme of desolation . . . and transforms it into a way of redemption.”<sup>53</sup>

The concept of marriage is frequently a beautiful picture that represents stark realities in the Old Testament—the Lord calls a people to himself, yet they often run away and commit spiritual adultery. The notable exceptions to this perhaps are the books

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<sup>51</sup>Frequently the affections connoted in the picture of marriage are positive with reference to the Lord: faithfulness, jealousy when spurned; and negative with reference to Israel: whoring after other gods, playing the part of a harlot, etc.

<sup>52</sup>According to Raymond Ortlund, Jr., “When her heart within has been won over, Israel will manifest outward signs of true repentance and restoration to her husband. . . . Israel's renewed love for Yahweh will show itself in worship cleaned of all compromise, so that she clearly affirms him for what he truly is, her lawful husband.” Raymond Ortlund, Jr., *God's Unfaithful Wife*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 2:68.

<sup>53</sup>Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, The New American Commentary, vol. 19a, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997), 88. The biblical author intentionally use the concept of wilderness should cause the readers to think of time in light of Israel in wandering in the wilderness, as well as God with his people in the Garden of Eden. See also J. Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010), 122-33; Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 31 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 52-54.



of Ruth<sup>54</sup> and the Song of Solomon,<sup>55</sup> each of which beautifully display the transformative effects of redeeming love. Commenting on the messianic themes inherent in the Song of Songs, Hamilton notes, “Perhaps the strongest impression one gets from reading the Song as a unified poem in its canonical context is of a shepherd-king rejoicing with his bride in a garden.”<sup>56</sup> Throughout the Old Testament, the biblical authors weave together an image of messianic King who comes to ransom his bride with redeeming love. However, this bride is unlovely and frequently spurns her lover by forsaking their covenant relationship.

Scripture gives a glorious picture of the fulfillment of this marriage covenant in the New Testament. According to the apostle Paul, Christ’s sacrifice purifies his people and presents them as virgin brides (2 Cor 11:2). Commenting on the sanctifying work the church has as it is united with Christ, Ortlund observes,

It is through Christ and his church that God is restoring sinners to purity, and the Corinthians have the privilege of participating in the great restoration. Sinners reunited with the Saviour [*sic*] by a new covenant find their lost virginity re-created and the marriage for ever secure.<sup>57</sup>

The covenant relationship Christ shares with his bride, the church, is one of sacrificial love and loving submission (Eph 5:22-27); unlike the rebellious bride of the old covenant.<sup>58</sup> Christ’s love for the bride has a transformative effect; it cleanses her from

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<sup>54</sup>For a fuller treatment on the book of Ruth, see Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *The Book of Ruth*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B Eerdmans, 1988); Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, The New American Commentary, vol. 6 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999).

<sup>55</sup>For a fuller treatment on the Song of Solomon, see James M. Hamilton, “The Messianic Music of the Song of Songs: A Non-Allegorical Interpretation,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 68 (2006): 331-45; Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*, The New American Commentary, vol. 14 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1993).

<sup>56</sup>Hamilton, “The Messianic Music,” 344.

<sup>57</sup>Ortlund, *God’s Unfaithful Wife*, 152.

<sup>58</sup>Peter O’Brian notes that “the imagery from the Old Testament about God’s relationship to Israel stands behind this use of the marriage analogy. In particular, the

impurity and causes her to become pure and spotless.<sup>59</sup> Christ's exemplary love and the church's submission to her head serves as a model to married couples in the church.<sup>60</sup> Commenting on the depth of Christ's love for the church and how that practically applies to the church, Frank Theilman writes, "Paul's comparison between the husband's love for his wife and Christ's love for the church implies that the husband's love for his wife should be so broad and long and high and deep that it includes the sacrifice . . . for the sake of his wife."<sup>61</sup>

The covenant relationship the Lord enjoys with his people finally sees its fulfillment in Revelation at the wedding supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:6-10). The wedding supper of the Lamb is so glorious and holy that it causes John to buckle at the knees and worship (19:10). Biblical authors have weaved together this vast tapestry of meaning—they want the people of God to understand that their covenant with the Lord is no mere contractual obligation, but a marriage. This symbol of the redeemed people of the Lord being his bride causes the church, in the words of Hamilton, "to think of ourselves in bridal terms. We are not to commit spiritual adultery against the Lord Jesus."<sup>62</sup>

## **The People**

The people of God are a temple (1 Cor 6: 19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21). The people of God are the bride (2 Cor 11:2). The church is also the adopted people of God

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background to Ephesians 5:26-27 is probably Ezekiel 16:1-14, which describes God as caring for, washing, marrying, and adorning his people with splendor." O'Brian, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 420.

<sup>59</sup>See Clint E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 389-90.

<sup>60</sup>Indeed Ortlund notes, "No marriage is or can be a final experience. And every human marriage is truest to itself when it points beyond itself, representing something of Christ and the church in their perfect union." Ortlund, *God's Unfaithful Wife*, 159.

<sup>61</sup>Theilman, *Ephesians*, 382.

<sup>62</sup>Hamilton, *What is Biblical Theology?* 101.

(Eph 1:5, 2:19; Rom 9:4). It is clear that the biblical authors often layer symbolism and imagery on top of another, in order to communicate robust truth—often these symbols mutually interpret each other.

The biblical authors introduce the concept of the Lord adopting Israel as his firstborn son in Exodus (4:22). The Lord set his affection on this one nation in a way that was qualitatively different from any other group of people he had created. He chose them not because they deserved it nor because they were impressive, but to make his name great among them. However, there was an expectation that, in God’s providence, adoption would not be limited to the nation of Israel (Rom 9:4). The prophet Hosea, speaking of God’s electing choice of Israel, combines the pattern of covenant marriage and adoption (Hos 11:1).<sup>63</sup>

The authors often interchange the concept of “son” and “sons” when referring to the people of God. The nation of Israel is collectively referred to as the “son” of God (Hos 11:1); and the nation of Israel is referred to as the children of God (Jer 3:19, 22; Isa 1:2, 30:9). Burke notes that when the biblical authors refer to the nation of Israel as “sons,” plural, it often designates rebuke and being on the receiving end of God’s anger.<sup>64</sup> However, the biblical authors also speak of leaders, particularly King David, with adoption connotations (2 Sam 7:11-16). This would mean that the leader of Israel serve as representatives on behalf of the whole of the people.

This corollary is picked up in the New Testament by the biblical authors with reference to Christ (Matt 2:15). Jesus serves as a representative son on behalf of the people of God. He is reliving what Israel, the “son of God” endured, yet he does it in

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<sup>63</sup>Commenting on this filial love, Burke observes, “This filial relationship was founded upon Yahweh’s covenant love for his people, an intimacy seen most graphically in Hosea, where God is described as a father who teaches Israel his infant son to take the first faltering steps.” Trevor J. Burke, *Adopted into God’s Family*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 22 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 51.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 55.

perfect submission to his father's will.

The apostle Paul uses the image of adoption to speak of how Gentiles, those who were formally outsiders and not part of the household of God, become sons of God (cf. Eph 1:4; Gal 4:1-7; Rom 8). The adoption Gentiles receive is one that was planned before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4). According to Burke, "Careful note should be taken of how Paul stresses that this divine selection is pretemporal, in that it took place in eternity and prior to the existence of the cosmos and everything in it."<sup>65</sup> Gentiles are not included in the family of God because they are worthy, or because they deserve to be in the family of God, but because God "predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will" (Eph 1:5). Observing God's sovereign choice in adoption, Theilman observes, "God took pleasure in his primordial decision to adopt believers as his children, and he did this so that they might praise him for the significance of his grace."<sup>66</sup>

Paul explains adoption in Colossians 1 in terms of transfer from one kingdom to another, through the messianic Son (Col 1:12-14). The transfer also involves redemption, which happens through the death of the Son. This redemption that the Son accomplished is reminiscent of the exodus. According to David Pao, "In evoking the exodus/new exodus traditions, the concern for the salvation and eternal destiny of an individual is situated within God's larger drama of salvation."<sup>67</sup> In a similar vein, Paul speaks of Gentile adoption in Romans 8 and 9 with Israel and Pharaoh in view. The

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 76.

<sup>66</sup>Theilman, *Ephesians*, 53.

<sup>67</sup>David W. Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 81.

gentiles can see that they are heirs with Christ and adopted into the family of God by their inheritance, which is the indwelling Holy Spirit.<sup>68</sup>

### **The Importance of Understanding the Storyline for the Local Church**

The task of understanding the storyline of Scripture is not meant to be relegated to the academy, though biblical scholarship does serve the church in this task.<sup>69</sup> Seeking to understand how the biblical authors interpret the Scriptures to create a biblical worldview should serve the church in a myriad of ways. Perhaps the most beneficial implication of understanding the storyline of Scripture is that it causes the church to see the grandeur and glory of God as he works throughout history to display his mercy and holiness. As one devotes himself or herself to understanding this grand tapestry, he or she soon sees that the Lord is sovereign, working throughout the annals of history to bring glory to himself. Jesus promises to his disciples, “I *will* build my church” (Matt 16:18 emphasis added) and part of understanding the storyline of Scripture is seeing Jesus’ faithfulness to this promise—to see the church growing and expanding until it consists of believers from every people group.

In a related matter, understanding the storyline of the Scripture aids the church in its evangelism and mission. The good news the church proclaims is the fulfillment of long-awaited promises, promises given under the old covenant but fulfilled in the church. Understanding the storyline of Scripture also serves the church as it fosters careful and

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<sup>68</sup>For a fuller treatment, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 387-431; Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B Eerdmans, 2012), 336-41.

<sup>69</sup>Hamilton comments, “The biblical theologian who writes in the service of the church does so to elucidate the biblical worldview, not merely so that it can be studied but so that it can be adopted.” Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation*, 45. See also James M. Hamilton, *God’s Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in The Old & New Testaments*, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology, vol. 1 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 102-07, 183-203.

critical thinking when it comes to the task of missions.<sup>70</sup> Rightly seeing how God has worked among and through his people to bring glory to himself throughout the ages will help believers as they seek to engage their community and the nations with the gospel.

Lastly, as the church seeks to understand the storyline of Scripture, it also understands the importance of church discipline. While this connection is not immediately obvious, it is clear in light of the previous themes examined in this chapter. If the church is the temple of God (1 Cor 3:16, 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21)<sup>71</sup> and the temple is holy, then the church should seek to be holy. When members of the church deny the transforming effects of the gospel by persisting in unrepentant sin, then the church is obligated to discipline that brother or sister. The church is obligated because it is loving to confront someone in their sin and call them to repentance. But the church is also obligated because as a temple it is sanctified and a testament of God's presence on earth. The church, as the bride of Christ (Eph 5:22), has been cleansed—in the same way that the tabernacle and the temple were cleansed—and is therefore holy. Biblical theology reminds the church that the covenant of marriage is important because it is a retelling of the ultimate marriage between Christ, the faithful bridegroom, and the church, the redeemed bride. As the church seeks to understand the rich meaning of the holiness of

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<sup>70</sup>Michael Lawrence offers a helpful critique when it comes to, what he calls, “missional theologies.” He notes, “To begin with, a biblical theology of the church and its mission includes themes that the missional advocates leave out or downplay, themes like the church’s call to be separate and distinct from the world in order to display wisdom and the holiness of God.” Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 206.

<sup>71</sup>Commenting on the cosmic implications of the church as the temple of God in Eph 2:22, Frank Theilman writes, “Perhaps in 2:19-22 Paul develops the metaphor of God’s people as members of God’s household and as the building or dwelling place of God in order to remind his readers that the church has played an important role in God’s administration of the entire universe.” Theilman, *Ephesians*, 150. Concerning the eschatological element of this verse, O’Brian notes, “Believers, because of their union with the risen and ascended Lord, are already seated with Christ in the heavenly realm (2:4-6). . . . The apostle will assert here in the parallel statement of Ephesians 2:22 that membership of this holy temple signifies being indwelt by God’s Spirit here and now.” O’Brian, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 221-20.

the church and how it testifies to the glory of God, the church will become more involved in the task of discipline and restoration.

### **Conclusion**

It is clear that the biblical authors connect and interpret the Scriptures through various types of literary devices—themes, metaphors, images—and in doing so create a coherent interpretive framework. The authors use various literary devices to weave together a grand tapestry of meaning by which God is more fully known and his people are able to trace His workings throughout redemptive history. Tracing these stories not only causes individuals to better understand the grand storyline of Scripture, but it also enables them to carefully think through how the church is situated within this grand story. Understanding and embracing the storyline of Scripture as seen through the interpretive framework gives the church an anchor point by which it understands Scripture and the world around it.

CHAPTER 4  
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES: FOSTERING ONE’S  
UNDERSTANDING OF THE STORYLINE  
OF SCRIPTURE

Thus far it has been observed that Jesus intends for his people to understand who he is in light of all the Scriptures. It was also observed that the biblical authors interpret the Scriptures in light of who Jesus is and what he has accomplished—they weave together a vast tapestry of meaning through various references and allusions to the panoply of Scripture. Scripture is robust and replete with themes, symbols, and patterns that form an amazing tapestry to the glory of God. Since Scripture is so multifaceted and nuanced, a full-orbed understanding is something that takes time and discipline to obtain. The focus of this chapter is to explain how personal spiritual disciplines foster and support believers as they grow in their understanding of the storyline of Scripture.

Understanding the storyline of Scripture is a life-long pursuit. As believers study and meditate on Scripture they begin to have their mind shaped by Scripture; they begin to see various themes and patterns emerge. However, the more one studies and ruminates on Scripture, the more these connections emerge. At the same time, for the Christian, studying the Scriptures is primarily a spiritual pursuit. While, because of the common grace of gracious God, everyone is able to comprehend something in the Scriptures, Christians stand at the unique vantage of rightly understanding the Word is granted by the Holy Spirit. As Christians approach the Bible—in reading, memorization, and meditation—they ought to do it with the prayer of the Psalmist on their lips, saying, “Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things in your law” (Ps 119:18).

Growing in one’s sanctification does not happen haphazardly. One does not accidentally grow in Christlikeness, nor do they accidentally grow in their understanding of



Scripture. In order to grow in godliness, which would entail a growth in their understanding of Scripture, Christians must be disciplined. Indeed Paul urged Timothy to “train<sup>1</sup> yourself for Godliness” (1 Tim 4:7). Throughout the history of the church many believers have recognized certain indispensable tools in the Christian’s life, especially when it comes to the topic of understanding Scripture and having one’s mind shaped by it, these are the spiritual disciplines.

Spiritual disciplines are a theological construct; much like the theological concept of the “Trinity,” though the words are never explicitly found in Scripture, the term can help foster meaningful discussions on the subject. The primary difference is, generally speaking, everyone understands what the Trinity is, while spirituality remains a vague concept. Carson writes, “[The Trinity] may be believed or denied, articulated in a number of ways, set into the fabric of Christian theology and life in quite different arrays. But the subject of the doctrine . . . is not under dispute.”<sup>2</sup> In the court of public opinion, the Trinity is not up for redefinition: one either embraces it or does not. However, the concept of biblical spirituality and the disciplines associated therein must be clearly explained before they are applied. The purpose of this chapter is to clearly explain, through a biblical and systematic vantage point, what spiritual disciplines are and the vital role they have in the lives of every believer, with particular focus on growing in one’s understanding of the storyline of Scripture.<sup>3</sup> Once the disciplines are understood in

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<sup>1</sup>“Train” in the ESV, RSV, and HCSB (Γύμαζε) is rendered “discipline” in the NASB.

<sup>2</sup>D. A. Carson, “When Is Spirituality Spiritual? Reflections on Some Problems of Definition,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37, no. 3 (September 1994): 387.

<sup>3</sup>While other disciplines certainly are important when it comes to growing in Christlikeness, they are outside the purview of this chapter. This chapter is specifically focused on the disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, journaling, and fellowship, which directly effects one’s ability to grow in his or her understanding of Scripture. Though other disciplines, such as evangelism and fasting relate to these aforementioned disciplines, they will not be considered here.

their biblical context, this chapter turns to consider how these disciplines can be employed, fostered, and strengthened in the church.

### **Understanding Spirituality**

From the outset, one must distinguish between practices the world defines as “spiritual,” versus that which is from the Spirit. This is a truth Christians fundamentally understand. Carson writes, “The only ‘spiritual’ person is the person who has the Holy Spirit, poured out on individuals in regeneration.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, all other so-called forms of spirituality, from their genesis, are false. The most important thing a Christian can understand about their spiritual disciplines is that they are rooted in one’s sanctification, which is further grounded in the regenerating work of the Spirit, through the justifying work of the gospel in his or her life. To avoid the mentality of works-based righteousness, believers must see their sanctification rooted in their justification.<sup>5</sup> Justification, says author and pastor Brian Hedges, is “the basis of our acceptance with God, the motivation for change, and the nature of our obedience.”<sup>6</sup>

However, Christians throughout church history have frequently misunderstood the role of the Spirit with respect to the spiritual disciplines. The result is an anchorless spirituality that devolves into the pursuit of some kind of experience. Ultimately, the anchor that has been jettisoned is Scripture. For example, the Christian Mystics of church history—Julian of Norwich, François Fénelon, Teresa of Avila, etc.—lived lives of devotion to Christ and were extremely rigorous in their daily practices. However, because the foundation of their piety was not rooted in the gospel, oftentimes the result of their

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<sup>4</sup>D. A. Carson, “Spiritual Disciplines,” *Themelios Journal* 36, no. 3 (2011): 5.

<sup>5</sup>See Jerry Bridges, *Who Am I? Identity in Christ* (Adelphi, MD: Cruciform, 2012), 17-21.

<sup>6</sup>Brian Hedges, *Christ Formed in You: The Power of the Gospel for Personal Change* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherds, 2010), 71.

efforts led them away from the gospel rather than towards it. While these saints are long departed, the thrust of their theology is not. Contemporary writers on the subject of personal spiritual disciplines have harkened to them as exemplars of piety and discipline. Concerning the practice of meditation, Richard Foster, whose books on spirituality have been widely read, writes, “What happens in meditation is that we create the emotional and spiritual space which allows Christ to construct an inner sanctuary in the heart.”<sup>7</sup> One must remember the words of Christ, “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17). Christians who train themselves for godliness must find their anchor in Scripture and in application of the gospel—nowhere else. As believers seek to work out their sanctification and grow in Christlikeness, they must ask the “How?” question. By what means, specifically, are Christians to grow in godliness?

### **The Spiritual Disciplines**

The practice of personal spiritual disciplines are the primary means that the Lord has given believers to grow in deeper affection for Christ, to understand His Word, and to be conformed to the image of Christ.<sup>8</sup> God intends to use them to grow in holiness. In the words of Timothy Lane and Paul David Tipp, “Making us holy is God’s unwavering agenda until we are taken home to be with him. He will do whatever he need to do to produce holiness in us.”<sup>9</sup> In general, spiritual disciplines are firmly rooted in

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<sup>7</sup>Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 25<sup>th</sup> anniv. ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 1998), 20. While Foster has many helpful things to say in relation to personal spiritual disciplines, since he follows the teachings of more mystical predecessors, it unfortunately means that readers must exercise discernment when reading his work, rooting everything in Scripture. Similar things could be said of Dallas Willard.

<sup>8</sup>Whitney writes, “God uses three primary catalysts for changing us and conforming us to Christlikeness, but only one is largely under our control.” Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 17. The catalysts are people, circumstance, and spiritual disciplines.

<sup>9</sup>Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2006), 6.

Scripture—either by explicit command, implicit expectation, or a wise application of Scripture. In addition, spiritual disciplines seek to magnify Christ and reveal sin, in order that one may become “mature in Christ” (Col 1:28). Many books have been written about personal spiritual disciplines in general and even more ink has been spilled on each of these practices in particular.

### **Bible Intake**

Bible intake is the foundational discipline for growing in godliness. Christians embrace Bible intake through reading, studying, and memorizing Scripture. Scripture is “utterly unique in its nature as God-breathed revelation (nothing else is God-breathed); it is unparalleled and absolute in its authority; and it is the sole infallible rule of faith for the church.”<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, the centrality and authority of Scripture has not always been the prevailing notion in the church. Prior to the Reformation, the predominate position asserted the authority of the Roman Catholic Church as equal to Scripture.<sup>11</sup> It was not until the Reformation’s recovery of the sufficiency of Scripture, i.e. their doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*, that believers reclaimed a biblical understanding of the veracity of the Word. Christians, therefore, must realize that they are recipients of a heritage that includes saints who have labored and died for the opportunity to have their lives transformed by the “God-breathed” Word.

The appropriation of Scripture into the lives of believers is the most important discipline that one can give oneself to; all other disciplines are subsidiary to this. The apostle Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, “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 complete, equipped for every good work.” Commenting on

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<sup>10</sup>James R. White, *Scripture Alone* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany, 2004), 14.

<sup>11</sup>Greg Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 142.

this verse Wayne Grudem writes, “If there is any ‘good work’ that God wants a Christian to do, this passage indicates that God has made provision in his Word for training the Christian in it.”<sup>12</sup> Therefore, believers are to look to Scripture in order to grow in Christlikeness. Any discipline that does not flow out of or bolster one’s understanding of Scripture is misleading and dangerous. Carson states,

If spirituality becomes an end in itself, detached from the core and largely without Biblical or theological norms to define it and anchor it in the objective gospel, then pursuit of spirituality, however nebulously defined, will degenerate into nothing more than the pursuit of certain kinds of experience.<sup>13</sup>

Spiritual pursuits that bypass the gospel ultimately undercut and obliterate the need for the gospel. If it is possible for a person to pursue godliness without the gospel, the work of Christ is unnecessary. These disciplines must be rooted in Scripture, and must drive believers to Scripture. It is in Scripture that believers see God most clearly and understand their sin and rebellion. Through the study of the Bible believers realize the depths of the saving work of Christ fully; therefore, Christians must devote themselves to the study of Scripture if they are going to be conformed to the image of Christ. If Christians are to grow in godliness (1 Tim 4:7) they must cultivate the daily practice of studying, meditating, and memorizing Scripture. It is only through Scripture that minds are renewed (Rom 12:1-2) and that Christians become equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3:16-17).

### **Studying Scripture**

How does the Christian, seeking to grow in their understanding of Scripture, study? Perhaps one of the most helpful things a Christian can do, as they seek to saturate their understanding with the Scriptures, is to read with two different intents. A Christian

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<sup>12</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 128.

<sup>13</sup>Carson “When Is Spirituality Spiritual? 391.

ought to read with breadth and depth. Understanding the depth of Scripture is commonly referred to as exegetical theology. The task of understanding the breadth of Scripture, or the storyline of Scripture, is biblical theology.<sup>14</sup> Donald Whitney compares the two different approaches: “If reading the Bible can be compared to cruising the width of a clear, sparkling lake in a motorboat, studying the Bible is like slowly crossing the same lake in a glass-bottomed boat.”<sup>15</sup> The amount of time spent in these two different pursuits varies; one should not be dogmatic, trying to hold to any strict rule about how often one should be reading widely versus reading deeply. This combination of reading widely and reading deeply fosters in the believer a greater understanding of the storyline of Scripture. It also aids the believer in understanding the depths of connection and meaning the Biblical authors are making.

Christians commit to studying Scripture deeply because they want to understand it rightly. Indeed, the pursuit of engaging Scripture deeply implies that believers can misunderstand and thereby misinterpret Scripture. Robert Plummer, professor of New Testament at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, writes, “To interpret a document is to express its meaning through speaking of writing. To engage in interpretation assumes that there is, in fact, a proper and improper meaning of a text and that care must be taken to not misrepresent the meaning.”<sup>16</sup> By reading Scripture closely,

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<sup>14</sup>It ought to be stated that biblical theology and exegetical theology are cooperative pursuits in understanding Scripture, and they are not alone, biblical and exegetical theology works alongside systematic theology and is informed by historical theology. Gregg Allison explains how each of the roles serve each other in his book *Historical Theology*: “Exegetical theology seeks to determine the meaning of the biblical texts. Biblical theology describes the progressive revelation found in Scripture by examining the theology of its various groupings. . . . It also traces the many themes in these biblical groupings and notes their development over time. Systematic theology expresses what Christians and churches are to believe, do, and be today in accordance with all the teaching of Scripture. . . . The important role that historical theology plays in this interpretive and organizing process is to inform each of the three disciplines with wisdom from the past.” Allison, *Historical Theology*, 32-33.

<sup>15</sup>Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 35.

<sup>16</sup>Robert Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids:

believers grow in their understanding of what the Biblical authors want to communicate; and by understanding the authorial intent of a passage, believers are able to comprehend the meaning of a passage.

Scripture bears witness to the reader's ability to both understand and misunderstand Scripture.<sup>17</sup> Paul instructs Timothy 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). Implicit in Timothy's ability to rightly handling (or "rightly interpreting" *ὀρθοτιμουντα*) is the potential to *wrongly* handle and *wrongly* interpret "the Word of Truth," that is, the Scriptures.<sup>18</sup> Paul goes on to council Timothy to "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching" (2 Tim 4:2). Timothy is to model godliness to his congregation, which includes patiently helping them understand Scripture. The patient shepherding is an act of spiritual warfare. Those that twist the Scriptures do so in an attempt to lead the church astray. Lastly, the apostle Peter, commenting on Paul's letters says, "There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to

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Kregel, 2010), 79.

<sup>17</sup>It is worth noting that one's ability to misunderstand and misinterpret Scripture does not undercut the doctrine of the clarity of Scripture. The Bible itself testifies to its ability to be studied, understood, and applied by all, including "the simple" (cf. Deut 6:6-7; Pss 19:7, 119:130; Matt 21:42, 12:3, 22:29). According to Grudem, "The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are *able* to be understood by all who will read it seeking God's help and being willing to follow it." Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 108. It does not mean that all Scripture is as accessible, nor does it mean that all Scripture is equally understood. For more reading on the doctrine of the clarity of Scripture. *Ibid.*, 110-15.

<sup>18</sup>Commenting on a 2 Tim 2:15, William Mounce notes two basic interpretations of *ὀρθοτιμουντα*, saying, "'Right interpretations of the gospel.' Here the primary contrast is between the rightness of the gospel as interpreted by Paul and Timothy and the wrongness of what is taught by the opponents arguing about words. . . . 'Right behavior in line with the gospel.' Here the emphasis is on Timothy's behavior, that it be in line with the gospel and that it be in contrast to the opponents." William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 525.

their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures” (2 Pet 3:16b). There are a number of important things to see in this passage. First, some of the issues Paul writes are difficult to understand. Second, distorting or twisting Scriptures—what the author is communicating—is destructive and inexcusable.<sup>19</sup>

When encountering difficult passages of Scripture, readers should follow the hermeneutical guideline of “Scripture interpreting Scripture.” Commenting on this interpretive tool, Plummer writes, “If we believe that all the Bible is inspired by God and thus non-contradictory, passages of Scripture that are less clear should be interpreted with reference to those that are more transparent in meaning.”<sup>20</sup> Inherent in this interpretive practice is the ability of the reader to know and recall a vast amount of Scripture, which further bolsters the need for reading broadly.

As Christians approach the text, seeking a proper understanding of it, they seek to understand the author’s original meaning. Biblical authors communicate through a number of different literary mediums throughout Scripture. Each medium is used by the authors to convey truth through their interpretive worldview. When believers study deeply, one of the first things they must determine is the literary genre they are reading, for it is possible to misinterpret Scripture because of a misunderstanding of the genre.<sup>21</sup> Once the literary genre the Biblical authors are writing within is ascertained, understanding is much easier.<sup>22</sup> According to Robert Stein, “Knowing that the writers of Scripture willingly submitted themselves to the norms of language governing those

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<sup>19</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 396.

<sup>20</sup>Plummer, *40 Questions*, 97.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 187-89.

<sup>22</sup>Since different literary genre are understood and studied differently, one would be well-served in reading Plummer’s *40 Questions*, and Robert Stein’s *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*. Both of these works are accessible to all readers and helpful when it comes to understanding the various interpretive rules in Scripture.



literary forms, we will be better able to understand what they wrote, if we know what those norms are.”<sup>23</sup>

After the genre has been identified, the next step in reading Scripture deeply is to delve into the text itself. A myriad of tools are at the disposal of any serious student of the Bible: study Bibles, word studies, Bible dictionaries, concordances, commentaries, and much more. The primary aim is to mine for truth in the text; to seek to understand its original context, the meaning the author intends to convey, and the various implications and application of that meaning.<sup>24</sup>

Christians, in order to have a robust understanding of the Scriptures, should pursue reading Scripture with depth and breadth. Believers are able to read the Scriptures as a coherent story, because it is a story “breathed out” (cf. 2 Tim 3:16) by God.<sup>25</sup> As believers seek to understand the storyline of Scripture, they seek to understand how the Biblical authors “have presented their understanding of earlier Scripture, redemptive history, and the events they are describing, recounting, celebrating, or addressing in narratives, poems, proverbs, letters, and apocalypses.”<sup>26</sup> The authors, who were inspired

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<sup>23</sup>Robert Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 78.

<sup>24</sup>It must be acknowledged that interpretive guidelines for the various genres of biblical literature are, sadly, outside the scope of this work. For helpful resources on this subject see Plummer, *40 Questions*; Jonathan T. Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker e, 2012); and Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011).

<sup>25</sup>Individuals would greatly benefit by turning to many great works in biblical theology. Perhaps some of the most beneficial works are: Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012); idem, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible: An Introductory Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1991); James M. Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010); and Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King In His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013).

<sup>26</sup>James M. Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway,

by the Holy Spirit and guided by God, interpreted what they were experiencing through a shared perspective, namely their understanding of Scripture. The job of believers is to seek to learn and embrace that interpretive perspective, making it their own. The Biblical authors weave together, often implicitly and subtlety, various biblical themes, images, patterns, and symbols to tell a coherent story.<sup>27</sup>

### **Meditating on Scripture**

Perhaps one of the most practical tools a believer has when it comes to mulling over Scripture is the ability to mark up his or her own Bible. It is very difficult, if not impossible, for the human mind to maintain a complex coherent thought without an aid. When it comes to studying Scripture, one of the helpful things a believer can do is to establish some sort of notation system that helps him see things in Scripture. Practically speaking, this could include a myriad of colored pencils, pens, and highlighters. It could also include numerous symbols. It could be simple, or complex. The primary goal when marking up a Bible is to be able to look at sections of Scripture and have mental markers that aid in understanding what one is looking at. For example, a city map gives travelers a comprehensive view of a city from a helpful vantage point. So too, when it comes to marking up a Bible, the goal is to help give a comprehensive view of Scripture through personalized markers.<sup>28</sup>

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2013), 16.

<sup>27</sup>Commenting on the continuity in Scripture, Hamilton writes, “One of the key tasks of biblical theology is to trace the connections between themes and show the relationships between them. There is an important point of application in connections with this weighing and sorting of scriptural themes: biblical theology is concerned with what the Bible meant for the purpose of understanding what the Bible means.” Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation*, 45.

<sup>28</sup>Many different “systems” for marking up Bibles exist. The goal is not to adopt one particular systems of markings, but rather to have an individualized system that is doable, memorable, and helpful.

When meditating on Scripture, one should seek to apply it. The goal of studying Scripture is not merely to understand what is communicated in its meanings and implications, but to understand its applications. In meditating on Scriptures, believers seek to have their worldview formed by the Scripture—that their living, values, and morality is shaped by the Scriptures and not the world. James Hamilton writes that believers seek to cross from the story of this world, into the thought-world of the Biblical authors.<sup>29</sup> As one sits under faithful teaching and interpretation, and pours over the Scriptures in personal study, one should seek to have one’s mind transformed by the Scriptures.<sup>30</sup> The person who reads Scripture and does not apply it is self-deceived (Jas 1:22).

Another way for the believer to meditate on Scripture is to talk about it in the context of Christian community. Conversing with brothers and sisters about the meaning and implications of biblical texts tends to clarify the thrust of Scripture. No one individual has an exhaustive knowledge of Scripture. No one person has thought out every implication of Scripture. One of the means of grace that the Lord has given his people is the church. One of the functions of the church is to edify one another (Heb 10:25).<sup>31</sup> Mutual edification certainly includes helping one another think more clearly and

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<sup>29</sup>Concerning the intention in his book, *What Is Biblical Theology?*, Hamilton says, “If biblical theology is a way to get into another world, the world inhabited by the biblical authors, you have a right to understand my intentions. My hope is that you cross the bridge into their thought-world and never come back. I hope you will breathe the air of the Bible’s world, recognize it as the real Narnia, and never want to leave.” Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?* 22.

<sup>30</sup>Commenting on the task of application of Scripture, Pennington writes, “An active reader listening to the test of Holy Scripture with a right posture is inevitably and rightly already applying the text to himself or herself, as least at the heart level of asking probing questions. This is the Spirit’s work; the sense of conviction and openness to be convicted, corrected, guided, and consoled are Spirit-wrought applications of the text even while the reader is in the midst of identifying the climax of tension or considering doctrinal points of revelation.” Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely*, 216.

<sup>31</sup>In order to have a better understanding of the role of the church with respect to understanding and applying the gospel to individuals see Robert Cheong, *God Redeeming His Bride: A Handbook for Church Discipline* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian

carefully about Scripture—indeed the Lord gifts certain people in the church to have a better understanding of Scripture, as well as a greater ability to convey that to others (cf. Eph 4:11-13).<sup>32</sup> The church also encourages believer to be mindful of the deceitfulness of sin, which clouds a person’s ability to understand Scripture truly.

Lastly, as believers grow together in their understanding of Scripture, the whole of it becomes more applicable to their everyday lives. As believers grow in their understanding of what the Biblical authors are communicating, the Scriptures in their entirety become more applicable to everyday living. Commenting on the role of biblical theology in interpersonal ministry, Michael Lawrence notes, “Biblical theology is practical theology, because it gives us the whole Bible to use as God intended it: gospel-centered, Christ-exalting, life-transforming Scripture. It doesn’t get any more practical, and more useful, than that.”<sup>33</sup>

### **Prayer**

Like Bible intake, prayer is a foundational<sup>34</sup> spiritual discipline. According to Whitney, prayer is the second most important discipline Christians can devote themselves to next to Bible intake.<sup>35</sup> Prayer is, in its truest sense, a uniquely Christian activity because Christ is the only mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5). The person of Christ and work of Christ as a mediator on behalf of his people is the reason why believers can confidently draw near to God in prayer. Grudem writes, “Since Christ has

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Focus, 2012).

<sup>32</sup>Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church: Participating Fully in the Body of Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 182-183.

<sup>33</sup>Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 83.

<sup>34</sup>Hedges, *Christ Formed in You*, 197.

<sup>35</sup>Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 66.

died as our mediational [*sic*] High Priest (Heb. 7:26-27), he has gained for us boldness and access to the very presence of God.”<sup>36</sup> The other unique aspect of prayer is that it is *the* God-given means for “personal communication with God.”<sup>37</sup>

In prayer, Christians confidently come to God as Christ intercedes on their behalf. Scripture also teaches his believers that a practice of persistent prayer is expected for all Christians (Col 4:2, 1 Thess 5:17). The way Christians are to pray was modeled and taught by Christ (Matt 6:15; John 17) and the apostle Paul (2 Thess 1:3-12; Eph 1:15-23; Phil 1:3-11). Prayer is also one of the first marks of the church (Acts 2:42). Lastly, prayer is one of the activities that both the Holy Spirit and Christ are engaged in order to preserve and sustain the people of God (Rom 8:26-27; John 17). Speaking to Peter, Jesus said, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but *I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail*. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:31-32 emphasis added). Prayer is the means by which Peter was ultimately spared.

In the pursuit of Christlikeness through prayer, believers gain an increased understanding of Scripture. This happens in two ways. First, the Lord grants illumination (Ps 119:18) of the text and through meditation and prayer on a specific text, one gains increased understanding of divine realities. Believers also should be disciplined to pray with one another and for one another. Concerning this practice, Whitney states,

Let’s not forget that the words ‘Lord, teach us to pray’ didn’t just come as a random idea. This request followed a time when the disciples accompanied Jesus in prayer (Luke 11:1). In a similar way, we can learn to pray by praying with other people who can model true prayer for us.<sup>38</sup>

Praying for one another is an exercise, done in faith, with the expectation that only God is able to preserve, protect, and bring believers into conformity to His son. One of the most

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<sup>36</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 378.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 376.

<sup>38</sup>Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for The Christian Life*, 77.

visible fruits of the gospel having its full effects on a believer is prayerfulness. Therefore, giving oneself to the discipline of prayer is not a duty; it is a delight. In prayer, individuals grow in an increased affection for God as they seek to become more conformed in Christlikeness.

### **Journaling**

The practice of journaling is a wise application of biblical truth and invaluable tool in cultivating a delight in God. Though this practice is never spelled out in Scripture, journaling aids believers in the understanding of Scripture, as well as understanding their own sin and weaknesses. Whitney writes, “The simple discipline of recording the events of the day and noting my reaction to them causes me to examine myself much more thoroughly than I would otherwise.”<sup>39</sup> Journaling assists believers in extended meditation and prayer by promoting extended linear thoughts. Believers can utilize journaling for Scripture memory, prayer requests, and for discerning how God is working in their life. One of the great benefits of journaling is seen in meditating on the attributes of God. This is a great practice for cultivating joy and a deeper affection for God, but without a tool to rein in thoughts, individual thoughts tend to be short-lived and nebulous. While meditating through journaling, a person is able to develop, as well as review, his thoughts. It is vital for a believer’s growth in godliness, because without some form of journaling he will have a more difficult time dwelling deeply on the things of God and would instead have a shallow understanding of who He is.

### **Fellowship**

If an individual is to be more like Christ, he or she must cultivate the discipline of Fellowship. In Acts 2:42-47, Luke records that the early church devoted themselves to the Apostles’ teachings, prayer, and fellowship. The necessity of Bible intake has already

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 206.

been seen, as well as prayer. While fellowship may be modeled in Acts, it is expected in Hebrews. The writer of Hebrews says, “Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (3:12-13; 10:24-25). What Christians must see is that fellowship is not only expected, but is also one of the means God uses for perseverance in sanctification. Commenting on Hebrews 3:12-13, Richard D. Phillips writes, “Christian fellowship, including prayer, Bible study, and meaningful friendship, is a great bulwark against sin’s deception; in such company the arguments of sin lose their force, and we are strengthened in faith and obedience.”<sup>40</sup>

Scripture portrays how believers relate to one another in various ways: as a body (1 Cor 12), a family (1 Tim 5:1-2, 2 Cor 6:18), a bride (Eph 5:32), and a building and priesthood (1 Pet 2:5). As such, Christians are to serve one another through mutual edification by various gifting. While all Christians possess the “fruits of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22), each has received varied gifts from God (1 Pet 4:10), which make each Christian a vital member of the body. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 12, teaches believers that each one has been gifted for a particular function in the one body.<sup>41</sup>

One discipline that is included under the umbrella of fellowship is silence and solitude. While it may be unusual to include a discipline that is, in its very essence, solitary, one should understand the primary effect of silence and solitude as complementary<sup>42</sup> to fellowship. Whitney defines silence and solitude as “the voluntary

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<sup>40</sup>Richard D. Phillips, *Hebrews*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2006), 112.

<sup>41</sup>Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 891.

<sup>42</sup>Whitney writes, “Think of silence and solitude as complementary Disciplines to fellowship. Without silence and solitude we’re shallow. Without fellowship we’re stagnant. Balance requires them all.” Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian*

and temporary abstention from speaking so that certain spiritual goals might be sought.”<sup>43</sup> Though the practice is never explicitly commanded in Scripture, Christ exercised this practice and it was recorded for believers (Matt 4:1, 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 4:42). By intentionally withdrawing from the frenetic pace of life, whether it as short as one’s commute home from work or as long as a weekend retreat, believers are to intentionally seek direction, restoration, and reorientation. It is also a time when individuals can spend a focused amount meditating on who God is and what He is teaching them.

The concentrated time believers spend in silence and solitude fortifies them for the purpose of fellowship and service. While believers may have the example of Jesus withdrawing to a quiet place (Mark 6:31-32), Christians also have examples of him forgoing these spiritual retreats because the needs of his people were so great (Mark 6:33-34).

### **Employing and Fostering Spiritual Disciplines**

The foundational issue in fostering and applying spiritual disciplines is a proper biblical foundation of the doctrine of salvation, so that believers would know that their sanctification is an outworking of their prior justification, not an attempt to be justified before God. Before a person can begin implementing spiritual disciplines, they must first be accepted by God through the cross. Whitney writes, “The Spiritual Disciplines are the God-given means we are to use in the Spirit-filled pursuit of Godliness.”<sup>44</sup> It is only after Christians understand that Christ’s righteousness has been credited to them that they are free to pursue godliness.

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*Life*, 184.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 17.



## **Bible Intake**

If a believer is going to grow in their understanding of Scripture they must be intentional. One of the most beneficial things any individual Christian can do is to commit to a daily Bible reading plan that takes him through the Scriptures in a year. Christians do not have a shortage of Bible reading plans. Individuals should pick a plan that interests them; no one is going to enjoy reading something they are not interested in. The Bible reading plan should be simultaneously aggressive and realistic. Having a plan that is aggressive keeps momentum going forward. However, one must wisely evaluate how much he is able to handle, otherwise the aggressive soon morphs into the overwhelming.

## **Prayer**

On the subject of prayer, John Piper wisely writes, “In prayer we admit our bankruptcy and His bounty, our misery and His mercy. Therefore, prayer highly exalts and glorifies God precisely by pursuing everything we long for in Him, and not in ourselves.”<sup>45</sup> As explained previously, prayer is the second most important discipline a believer can give him or herself to. But how can the practice of prayer be practically developed in the life of a believer?

One of the most practical ways a Christian can pray is by meditating on Scripture. If Christians anchor their thoughts in Scripture by meditating, studying, and memorizing, then the best thing they can do for fostering a praying life is to pray Scripture. Whitney states, “We learn to pray by meditating on Scripture, for meditation is the missing link between Bible intake and prayer.” One of the most helpful resources in this respect is D. A. Carson’s book *A Call to Spiritual Reformation*. In this book, Carson examines how to meditate on Paul’s prayers “in such a way that we hear God speak to us

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<sup>45</sup>John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditation of a Christian Hedonist*, 25<sup>th</sup> anniv. reference ed. (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2011), 182.

today, and to find strength and direction to improve our praying, both for God’s glory and for our good.”<sup>46</sup>

Secondly, individuals can pray for others. The list of people that they could be praying for is extensive and could easily become overwhelming, which is why having a prayer list is so important. Again, a biblical understanding of sanctification is key to perseverance.

### **Journaling**

As stated previously, journaling is not explicitly commanded in Scripture. It is not a prescribed practice that is obligatory for all Christians. However, it is extremely helpful and a discipline that ought to be cultivated in the lives of believers in order to bolster other disciplines, specifically prayer and Bible intake. Concerning the role in journaling Whitney writes, “Your journal is a place to record the works and ways of God in your life. . . . A journal is one of the best places for charting your progress in the other Spiritual Disciplines and for holding yourself accountable to your goals.”<sup>47</sup> Journaling, whether it be with pen and paper, or on an iPad, is a tool to be utilized by Christians so that they can see how God is working in their lives and maintain a consistent train of thought as they pray and reflect on Scripture. It is difficult to have a sustained thought, especially a complex one, without having an aid to keep on track. Journaling frees believers to have meaningful meditations and prayer without getting distracted or derailed by wandering thoughts. It can even be a place to have Scripture they are memorizing readily accessible. For example, Timmy Brister has been a blessing to the church by creating the “memory moleskine,”<sup>48</sup> which is a way to paste portions of

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<sup>46</sup>D. A. Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and His Prayers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 10.

<sup>47</sup>Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 205-6.

<sup>48</sup>Tim Brister, “Partnering to Remember: The 2011 Philippians Memory Moleskine,” December 20, 2010, accessed March 4, 2014, <http://timmybrister.com/>

Scripture throughout one's journal in order to meditate and memorize a book of Scripture.

Perhaps the biggest difficulty when it comes to journaling is the lack of perceived value it has in a person's life. If a person cannot see the value in a practice, much less a discipline, the potential for implementing it into their life is curtailed. However, like many disciplines, one must be reminded that the overall benefit is not immediately evident. The way to push through this obstacle is to be reminded of the goal of spiritual disciplines and even to see how the practice of journaling has benefited other believers. Whitney gives some moving examples by pillars of the faith on the role journaling played in their own life, and it would be helpful to read those.<sup>49</sup> Encouraging examples are not a cure-all; what believers need to see more than anything is the Lord's working in their life through journaling.

### **Conclusion**

Hedges rightly concludes his chapter on spiritual disciplines saying, "Remember that the purpose of spiritual disciplines is to form you more and more into the image of Christ so that you will reflect his worth and glory to others through a life of love."<sup>50</sup> Because of the finished work of Christ accomplished on the behalf of believers, and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, believers are slowly "being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor 3:18). It is God's work in believers that empowers them to work out their own "salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12). This work that believers commit themselves to is their personal spiritual discipline, so that through an increased understanding of Scripture they may grow in an increased affection for their Lord and Savior. Through a deeper prayer life and

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<sup>49</sup>Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 207-20.

<sup>50</sup>Hedges, *Christ Formed in You*, 208.

a greater reliance on the Holy Spirit, propensity to sin is slowly mortified and the desire to be with Christ grows larger. By fellowship and service Christians are more able to resemble their Savior who came “to serve and not to be served” (Matt 20:28). The goal for the believer is to live—whether it is through journaling, fasting, eating or drinking or whatever one does— to the glory of God (1 Cor 10:13).

CHAPTER 5  
METHODOLOGY USED TO UNDERSTAND  
THE STORYLINE OF SCRIPTURE

**Project Methodology**

This ministry project consisted of four goals. First, this project sought to evaluate the understanding of the storyline of Scripture among adult church members. This goal was accomplished by utilizing a congregational survey. The second goal of this ministry project was to develop an annual Bible reading plan, which utilized the order of the Hebrew Bible for readings in the Old Testament and the canonical order of the New Testament. Alongside the scheduled Bible readings, this plan also included readings from *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*.<sup>1</sup> The third goal of the ministry project was to create a supplementary study guide on *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*. The first three goals served the fourth goal: to increase knowledge through the implementation of a twelve-week small group study on the storyline of Scripture. The goal of increasing knowledge was measured by a pre-project and post-project survey. A t-test for dependent samples was employed to ascertain whether or not a positive significant difference existed between the pre-project and post-project results. Each component of this project was first subject to the scrutiny and approval of an expert panel. What follows is an overview of each goal and its usefulness.

**Congregational Survey**

The congregational survey was needed in order to understand the general climate, as it related to Bible reading practices, among adults at Rich Pond Baptist

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<sup>1</sup>James M. Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

Church. Since the ministry project was to increase a person's understanding of the storyline of Scripture, knowing where to start was essential. The congregational survey was administered online and through hard copies. Completing the survey online was the preferred method, but paper versions were provided for adults in the congregation who felt less than comfortable using computers and the Internet.

The congregational survey attempted to evaluate a number of different factors. The survey asked demographic questions in order to have a basic understanding the participants, including, how old an individual was, whether or not he or she was married, whether or not the individual had children, and if so whether or not the children lived in the home. The survey also asked questions concerning employment status: was he or she employed—full time or part time, or were they retired? These questions gave insight into the potential hindrances when it came to Bible reading practices.

Secondly, the congregational survey asked questions about Bible reading habits, and subjective understanding of the Scriptures. The survey intended to capture how frequently a person reads the Scriptures and for how long. Also, whether or not an individual has ever intentionally read through the Bible in a year, and if so, did they have a guide to help them do so? And, if they had a guide, where did they obtain it?

Since the goal of the ministry project was to increase understanding of the storyline of Scripture, this congregational survey gave insight into the current state of affairs and practices among the adults at Rich Pond Baptist Church. The results yielded by the survey helped inform the development of the various tools used to serve the end for which the ministry project was created.

### ***GGSTJ* Annual Bible Reading Plan**

The *GGSTJ* annual Bible reading plan was intended to serve as a tool to foster an individual's Bible reading and comprehension. The plan has two unique characteristics that separated itself from other popular reading plans today. First, the plan follows the Hebrew Bible for the Old Testament readings. While reading the Old Testament in the

order of the of the Hebrew is not inherently more beneficial than reading it in the order presented in most modern Bible's it does offer a new perspective, which can be helpful. Reading the Old Testament in the order of the Hebrew Bible can help believers see new connections and different themes that the biblical authors weave together based on how they organize the Scriptures.

A second facet unique to this particular reading plan is the scheduled reading in *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*. Each time a person begins a new section of Scripture, the correlating readings from *GGSTJ* is referenced alongside the readings. The readings from *GGSTJ* serve readers in a number of ways: first, it gives explanation and insight. James Hamilton is a brilliant scholar and his writings give helpful insight as one studies the Scriptures. Many Christians become bogged down in portions of Scripture that appear arcane—for instance, food laws seem irrelevant and genealogies seem to be obscure, as does Old Testament prophecy. Hamilton's writings help the reader understand the meaning behind these passages. An additional benefit of the *GGSTJ* readings concern understanding the storyline of Scripture. *GGSTJ* has a singular focus—to explain the center of the storyline of Scripture—every explanation Hamilton offers serves that end. For both of these reasons, with regards to growing in one's understanding of the storyline of Scripture, the *GGSTJ* annual Bible reading plan is a useful tool.

### ***GGSTJ* Study Guide:**

The *GGSTJ* study guide is a helpful tool for anyone who wants to grow in his or her understanding of the Storyline of Scripture. In *GGSTJ*, Hamilton works his way through each book of Scripture showing how all the biblical authors point to one central theme that serves as the gravitational center for all of Scripture. The *GGSTJ* study guide serves readers by allowing them to see the overall structure, not only of Hamilton's reasoning but also of the Scriptures since it is the Scriptures that Hamilton is explaining. The study serves the reader by summarizing large sections of Scripture, which again helps a reader understand how the storyline of Scripture is developed. Lastly, the study

guide provides open-ended discussion questions. These questions are intended to stir and challenge one's thinking, as well as solidify it.

### **Small Group Study**

The ministry project culminated with a twelve-week small group study on the storyline of Scripture. The class began by completing the pre-project survey, and the results of the survey served as a baseline concerning their understanding of the Scriptures and its storyline. After the survey was administered, the schedule for the time together was explained, as was the content of the small group study. What follows is an explanation of each session.

#### **Session 1**

The primary objective of the first session was to get to know one another and to administer the pre-project survey. The pre-project survey was administered before any teaching was given concerning the nature of understanding and learning the storyline of Scripture. A couple of the participants in the small group asked clarifying questions concerning the survey, for example, they wanted to know what I meant by the question, "Can you explain the storyline of Scripture?" However, I wanted to avoid giving much clarification because I did not want to lead them in their answers. The goal was to get as much personalized answers from the individual participants as possible.

Once the surveys had been completed, the rest of the session was dedicated to discussing the rest of later sessions. The content of the first half of the small group study focused on rightly approaching, studying, and interpreting Scripture. The content of the second half of the small group study consisted of understanding what the storyline of Scripture is; understanding how the biblical authors employ and connect various theological themes, devices, images, and metaphors; and then we looked at various theological themes in the Scriptures. For the final session, participants would complete the post-project survey, learn more about other helpful resources for cultivating a deeper



understanding of the storyline of Scripture, and receive an encouragement to persevere in fostering this discipline.

## **Session 2**

The second session of the small group study focused on how a believer should rightly approach the Scriptures. The session centered around seven different principles that a Christian ought to keep in mind as they approach Scripture. First, believers ought to come to Scripture humbly and prayerfully. While the Bible certainly is a book, it is not merely a book. The Bible is a book that is “breathed out by God” (2 Tim 3:16) and is without error. Believers should approach the Bible prayerfully because they realize that without the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit, one cannot rightly know what Scripture intends to communicate. One should pray that the Lord would teach his Word as the Scriptures are studied (Ps 119:5, 17-20). A person seeking to honor the Lord in their approach to Scripture must approach it in faith (1 Thess 1:8), which is demonstrated through prayerfulness.

Secondly, a person needs to know what type of Scripture they are reading and how to read that section of Scripture. Different genres of literature implicitly have interpretive guidelines that must be kept in mind if a person is going to understand it correctly. A person cannot interpret poetry in the same way that he or she interprets prose, and vice versa. A key to rightly interpreting Scripture is understanding which literary genre the biblical writers are using. Biblical authors, inspired by the Holy Spirit, intentionally write utilizing various literary genres in order to communicate truth and meaning. For example, when someone begins, “Once upon a time . . .” that is an interpretive clue that the person is telling a fairy-tale or fable. When Jesus says, “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up” (Matt 13:44a), Jesus is not being literal; he is employing a particular literary device in order to conjure a particular thought. In order to properly understand a text, one must understand the genre of that text.

Thirdly, a person must wrestle with the text, waiting for the illumination of the Holy Spirit, rather than assuming he or she understands what the text is about. Oftentimes, especially if a person feels relatively familiar with a portion of Scripture, they can run through it and assume that they know what it means. However, because Scripture is deep and multifaceted, it would be foolish to assume that it has only one surface-level meaning. A believer must take the time to mine and unearth meaning from Scripture. Fourthly, and slightly different than the third, a person must meditate on the text, seeking to understand the details and context of the Scriptures. Much of the meaning of Scripture is bound up in its context, construction, and logic, which means that a person must take time to study how the authors reason, as well as how the biblical authors weave together their story.

Fifthly, as a person studies the text, he or she must seek to understand how the text points to Jesus. Rightly understanding this fifth practice is exceedingly important when understanding the storyline of Scripture. Scripture can point to Jesus in a myriad of ways: as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, as the greater fulfillment of something in the past, as the only hope for his people, or in seeing him as exceedingly more desirable than what this world holds out for people. Seeing all of Scripture as pointing to Jesus is to understand the climax of the storyline of Scripture.

Sixthly, when approaching Scripture one must also seek to apply it, realizing that the heart “is deceitful above all things” (Jer 17:9). Believers must vigilantly seek to understand how the Scriptures can be applied to their own lives. Believers must rest in the dual reality of 2 Timothy 3:16-17, namely that the Scriptures are “God-breathed” and profitable for “training in righteousness.” Merely understanding what Scripture intends to communicate is only one part of what students of Scripture must be searching for; they must also seek to understand how the Scriptures apply to their lives. Believers ought to approach the Scriptures with both faith, understanding that it is God who speaks to his people, and obedience that the message delivered to his people intends to evoke a

particular response.

Lastly, a person must intentionally develop these practices rather than allowing them to atrophy and slip into lethargic practices. This final instruction served as a reminder and an encouragement to pursue growing in understanding and holiness. It is easy for believers to fall into ruts of routine. However, believers must always approach Scripture with an eye eager to learn something new, for Scripture's wisdom is unfathomable.

### **Session 3**

Having previously taught on how Christians should rightly approach Scripture, the next session dealt with developing practical tools for studying a particular passage of Scripture. For this session, participants studied the book of Jude. Jude was an ideal book to study because it is short enough to cover the book in its entirety, and many in the class had not previously studied the book.

The goal of the session was to teach the participants in class some practical tools and practices for studying the Bible, which included reading the passage multiple times, trying to emphasize particular words or phrases each time that would stand out. I also encouraged the participants to pay attention to repeated themes, ideas, or images, and any references the biblical author makes to other portions of Scripture. Understanding how the biblical authors utilize language is also necessary in studying Scripture. For example, Jude tends to pile up imagery throughout his letter in sets of three, these three mutually interpret one another and knowing this helps believers understand what Jude intends to communicate.

Lastly, I wanted to encourage the participants to develop a notation system that would be helpful, yet not burdensome. I shared with them many different methods for marking up a passage of Scripture: using various colored markers or pens, utilizing symbols, using various marginal notations. The goal was not to indoctrinate any particular method, rather the goal was to show the importance of the practice: having

some sort of notation system will help a reader visually recall and summarize what a portion of Scripture teaches. Alongside the notation system, writing down thoughts in a journal was also encouraged. Writing down one's thoughts helps individuals solidify their thinking, and also serves them when they return to a previously studied section of Scripture.

#### **Session 4**

The primary focus of the fourth session was to teach the course participants general principles for interpreting Scripture. While some of the content of this session coincides with session 2, it was content different enough in goal to be its own session. The first point to be conveyed was the principle of letting Scripture interrupt Scripture. "All Scripture is breathed out by God" (2 Tim 3:16), and since God is noncontradictory in his character, so too is his Word. While, *prima facie*, some passages of Scripture may *appear* to be mutually contradictory, Christians believe that when Scripture is rightly understood, these appearances wane. Allowing the clearer passages of Scripture to interpret the more difficult portions of Scripture causes believers to see the intertextual relationship Scripture shares, causes believers to understand more of the breadth of Scripture, and instills a deeper commitment to the authority of the Scriptures.

A second principle taught during this session was the importance of understanding the context of a text. Context exists on multiple horizons, and people who take time to learn the context of a passage will understand it more accurately. The immediate context is the most important context for understanding any passage of Scripture. A passage of Scripture divorced from its original context can be twisted and misinterpreted to mean many things, all of which could be entirely unintended by the biblical author. It is also helpful to understand where a passage of Scripture falls in the corpus of a particular biblical author. Perhaps the most obvious example would be knowing the content of 1 Corinthians when studying 2 Corinthians. Knowing the problems that persisted in the church at Corinth, which Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians,

help a reader understand what is written in 2 Corinthians. Also, knowing the cultural and historical context in which books of Scripture were written help give a more informed reading of Scripture. For example, if a book was written before or after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. A caveat here is critical: the point of understanding the context in which Scripture is written is secondary, and subservient, to understanding Scripture itself. Many invert the priorities and use Scripture to gain an understanding of the background context, this practice is ultimately unhelpful, instead a person should allow the context to inform their understanding of the Scriptures.

Mulling over Scripture was the final general principle taught during this session. Individuals can gain some true understanding of Scripture by superficial reading, however, the Lord oftentimes yields deeper insight into Scripture as one meditates on it, memorizes it, and discusses it with others. These three practices, meditation, memorization, and conversation, are commended in Scripture (Deut 6, Josh 1:8).

Participants were encouraged to utilize a variety of technologies and opportunities to meditate on and memorize Scripture. One suggestion was to post a passage of Scripture somewhere where they spend “idle” time—getting ready in the morning for example. Individuals could post an index card on the mirror or write out the passage in dry erase marker. Participants were also encouraged to utilize smart phones apps that aid in Scripture memory, or to make a passage of Scripture the image seen on their lock screen. The purpose was not to advocate one particular type of tool. Rather, the intent was to encourage group participants to utilize their time, find a practice that is doable, and implement a new habit into their daily life.

## **Session 5**

The fifth session addressed understanding literary genres, as well as understanding how to interpret narratives, epistles, and parables. Understanding literary genre is important, especially as one grows in their understanding of the storyline of Scripture, because it is possible to misunderstand what the biblical authors are

communicating simply by failing to understand the genre of literature in which they are writing.

One pitfall that Christians can unfortunately fall into is mislabeling biblical literature. For example, some may be tempted to think of the book of Jonah as a myth. After all, the man is swallowed by a fish, miraculously survives a three-day stint in the alimentary canal of the fish, regurgitated seaside, and experiences a revival in Whitfield-sized proportions. If a Christian labeled the book of Jonah as myth or fairy tale, belief in it would be far less embarrassing. At the same time, labeling Jonah as myth makes it far easier to dismiss and ignore. The major issue in designating the book of Jonah as myth is that it contradicts the Scriptures. Jesus, teaching on his eschatological judgment, refers to Jonah—his figural death, burial, and resurrection—as though it is something that actually happened. Commenting on Jesus’ use of the book of Jonah in Matthew 12, Kevin DeYoung writes,

It’s hard to justify Jesus’s language about the men of Nineveh rising up to judge Capernaum on the last day if most or all of the Jonah story is not to be taken literally. It would be like making the that literary allusion to the men of Gondor and then issuing a very serious warning to your audience that the orcs of Mordor will rise up to judge and condemn them. It doesn’t make a lot of sense.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, if one wants to grow in their understanding of the storyline of Scripture they must grow in their understanding of the various literary genres of Scripture.

A second pitfall avoided as one understands literary genre is misinterpretation. While it is readily admitted that understanding genre does not guarantee a flawless interpretation of Scripture, it does mitigate and minimize against it. Understanding literary symbolism is very important in understanding the meaning of Scripture. For example, in Revelation 21 John refers to the New Jerusalem,

The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel’s

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<sup>2</sup>Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God at His Word: Why the Bible Is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and What that Means for You and Me* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 103.

measurement. The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

While it is certainly possible that the city is in the shape of the giant cube, it is more likely that John is employing a myriad of symbolism to cause readers to think of the Temple and the Holy of Holies, which is the only other space that is distinctly cube-shaped in the Scriptures. While the jewels and precious stones that compose the city's construction can certainly be literal, John is also likely using these to reference the very same jewels and precious stone mentioned in Eden and on the priest's vestments. Understanding how biblical authors employ literary genre helps readers more accurately understand the Scriptures.

Participants in the small group were encouraged to utilize study tools that would help them understand the literary genre of whatever book of Scripture they were reading. A helpful study Bible typically gives a sufficient amount of introductory material to help readers have an adequate understanding of the genre the book belongs in, as well as any other important literary forms—genealogies, or fulfillment quotes, for example. Another helpful resource for understanding these interpretive issues are books like *40 Questions about Interpreting The Bible* by Robert L. Plummer,<sup>3</sup> or Robert H. Stein's *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules*.<sup>4</sup>

The second half of the session was spent explaining how to understand biblical narrative, epistles, and parables. Biblical narrative composes a vast amount of the biblical corpus, so it is very important to have a basic understanding on how to interpret it. First, students were encouraged to understand the context in which a particular book was

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<sup>3</sup>Robert L. Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010).

<sup>4</sup>Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994).

written. While this was previously mentioned, understanding context is key when understanding the climate in which a book was penned. The biblical author did not write in a vacuum, but in a very specific socio-political context. He also wrote to a particular audience and intended his writings to be understood in a particular way. Learning the context from which these books arise helps one understand the meaning of the book.

Secondly, one must look for particular interpretive cues given by the author in order to trace the flow and logic of the book. Thematic statements, editorial comments, repetition, and intertextual or intratextual references are all interpretive cues that biblical authors employ to help communicate the meaning of their writings. For example, in the book of Judges the writer repeats the phrase, “In those days, there was no king in Israel” (Judg 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25) in order to communicate the depravity and lawlessness of God’s people.

When it comes to interpreting epistles in the New Testament, one of the most helpful issues to remember is that the letters are occasional. The epistolary authors in the New Testament write their letters to specific churches for or because of a particular occasion. The book of Hebrews, for example, is a letter of exhortation (13:22) to a church that is suffering in the midst of persecution (10:32-35), to the degree that believers in the church are tempted to forsake the faith (3:12). To give another example, the book of Jude states the occasion for the letter, “Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (v. 3). Ascertaining the occasion of the letter, which is admittedly debatable in some instances, helps believers be more faithful to the authors intended meaning.

Another helpful guideline when interpreting epistles is to seek to understand the traditional form of a letter during this time. The biblical authors frequently subsume traditional form when writing a letter. When they deviate from this form, they do so for a particular reason. Paul’s letters traditionally begin with an introduction, greeting, and



prayer of thanksgiving. However, the book Galatians omits this prayer of thanksgiving and proceeds quickly to an open rebuke (Gal 1:6). Understanding that Paul is deviating from typical practice serves to highlight the seriousness and heinousness of what is happening in the church at Galatia.

After understanding the literary form, readers should seek to dissect the letter into literary units. A literary unit is a smaller unit of reasoning that a biblical author uses to develop his point. He could do this by logical inference or by applying other parts of Scripture to further his argument. Students of Scripture must grapple with these self-contained bits of reasoning, seek to understand how they develop what the author intended to communicate, and then read the larger context in light of its literary units. Studying Scripture this way, though intensive, maximizes the authority and clarity of Scripture.

When studying parables, a person should ask four questions (1) who are the main characters? (2) what occurs at the end? (3) what occurs in direct discourse? and (4) who or what gets the most space?<sup>5</sup> Each of these questions help the reader to develop a better understanding as to what the author intended to communicate. Another general rule when interpreting parable is to pay attention to the extreme. Jesus' parables are predictably pedestrian—he uses images, comparisons, stories that his people can visualize, and they are commonplace. However, his parables frequently have an extreme at the climax, for example, the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt 25:1-12). In this parable foolish virgins do not bring enough oil for their lamps to last the full extent of the events, when they leave to go buy more oil they return to find that they have been barred from attending the festival. The bridegroom responds, “Truly, I say to you, I do not know you” (25:12). Of course the bridegroom knew these virgins, they were with him previously that

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<sup>5</sup>These questions are taken from Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 273.

very night. However, the point reaches beyond their relationship to something more important: being prepared and anticipatory for the return of the Lord.

## **Session 6**

Understanding poetry, proverbs, and prophecy was the primary goal for this class session. The previous session focused on rightly interpreting specific genres of literature prominent in Scripture. Before this previous session the class focused on general approaches to interpreting Scripture. This sixth session is the final foundational session and a turning point in the small group study. After this session, attention to biblical theology, studying the storyline of Scripture, was the primary emphasis.

The small group participants were encouraged to remember that poetry is intended to be evocative. Poetry is inherently different than prose in the way that it communicates—by nature it is intended to stir particular thoughts and feelings. Poetry is also quite illustrative and metaphorical. To approach a psalm in the same way that one would approach a passage in Leviticus is a failure to realize that these are two different types of literature. Another helpful reminder is that Scripture has many different types of Psalms and these types tend to follow a particular pattern; therefore, when studying the Psalms it would benefit an individual to understand what type of Psalm they are reading.

Proverbs are, in the words of Plummer, “pithy observations on the normal workings of life.”<sup>6</sup> While proverbial wisdom exists in the world, what separates the proverbial wisdom of the world from the proverbs in Scripture is that Scripture (and the proverbs contained therein) is divinely inspired (2 Tim 3:16) and without error.

When interpreting biblical proverbs one must remember that they are not promises. Proverbs hold true because the wisdom articulated in them follows how things typically work in the world. Proverbs intend to instill wisdom and action. The goal of proverbs is not merely to impress with wit. Rather the goal of proverbs in Scripture is to

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 235.

point readers to a life consumed by the fear of the Lord, and understanding how that works its way out into all aspects of life.

Finally, when it comes to interpreting prophecy, the small group was encouraged to first remember the other guidelines given for interpreting Scripture. They must remember that the biblical authors, including the prophets, were writing in a particular context and to a particular people. Seeking to understand the author's original context is necessary before one seeks to apply a prophecy to his or her own contemporary context. Prophets intend to communicate something, however, with prophecy, Scripture frequently shows that the way in which the prophecy is fulfilled sometimes eclipses the original prophecy. Discerning how the Lord fulfills these prophecies is key understanding how the fulfillment works itself out in the storyline of Scripture. As such, readers should seek to determine whether or not a particular prophecy has been fulfilled yet or not. If a prophecy has been fulfilled, what does that mean for the church today?

### **Session 7**

The seventh session served as a transitional session for the small group study. Previously, the content of the small group study focused on the foundations: basics Bible study guidelines and interpretation to focusing on the task of understanding the storyline of the Scripture. The seventh session introduced the theological discipline of examining the Scripture in order to understand its overarching storyline: biblical theology. The goal of this session was for the small group participants to understand how Christians engage Scripture as they seek to discern its storyline, as well as understanding the benefits of studying Scripture in this way.

Before the class began they were encouraged to read chapter 1 of *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*. Discussing Hamilton's chapter allowed the small group to accomplish a number of things during the time together. First, the group was able to discuss whether or not the Bible had, or should have, one central theme that served as the gravitational center. Hamilton, with passion and vigor, suggests that God's glory, which

is displayed in his saving acts through judgment, is *the* center of the storyline of Scripture. While the participants were not expected to adopt Hamilton's thesis, they were encouraged to see that Hamilton is pointing to something of tremendous significance.

Whether or not the Bible has one central theme around which all others revolve is something that could be a perennial debate. What is not in question is the reality that the Scriptures do have various themes, often which are layered on top of one another, that form a robust storyline in the Scriptures.

Our time together concluded with an illustration from Scripture—Jesus calling his disciples to follow him in Matthew 4:

While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. (4:18-20)

Typically, when people read this passage the focus is on the authority of Jesus and the obedience of his disciples, which is something truly worth nothing. Those reading this passage imagine what it must have been like for Jesus to be walking along the shore, see some men catching fish, and then to call them to forsake the only vocation and begin something anew. Amazingly, these men, without reluctance, abandon the only vocation they would have known and unquestioningly follow Jesus. However, when one understands this passage in light of the panoply of Scripture, deeper insight is given.

When Jesus called these fishermen to be fishers of men he was not trying to be catchy, he was causing these soon-to-be disciples to understand who Jesus is and what he intends to accomplish. He caused them to recall Jeremiah's promise of a new Exodus in Jeremiah 16, there the prophet says, "Behold, I am sending for many fishers, declares the LORD, and they shall catch them. And afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the clefts of the rocks" (Jer 16:16) Jesus calls these men to follow him; he does so in a way that causes them to recall this prophetic promise and realize that they *are* the fishers that are going to be a part of the new Exodus.

Without question, Jesus is authoritative. When he instructs and commands people, unclean spirits, sickness, even death itself obeys him. Seeing Jesus' authority and his disciple's obedience in Matthew 4 certainly should be seen and delighted in, but this passage must also be understood in light of the storyline of Scripture. When one recognizes what Jesus is doing in Matthew in light of Jeremiah 16, the passage becomes fuller and more glorious.

### **Session 8**

Examining the theme of Temple and the dwelling place of God was the primary focus of the eighth session. In order to understand how the Scriptures develop the theme of Temple, the small group participants were encouraged to read specific portions of the Bible: Genesis 2-3, Exodus 25, Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 23, Ephesians 5, First Peter 2:1-10, and Revelation 21. In conjunction with their Bible reading, participants were encouraged to read the coordinating passages in *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment* (pp. 73-74, 97-111, 548-49). Each of these respective passages in *GGSTJ* address specific instances wherein the biblical authors connect and develop the theme of the temple as the dwelling place of God.

This theme of temple as the meeting place of God is something that is established in Genesis 1 as Adam and Eve experience uninhibited fellowship with the Lord. However, because of their transgression and rebellion they are removed from the garden. Yet the biblical authors, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, utilize symbolism, imagery, and metaphor that cause God's people to recall their edenic fellowship with the Lord in the tabernacle and later in the temple.

However, as effective as the tabernacle and the temple were with causing God's people to understand him in light of the storyline of the Scripture, one thing is glaringly obvious: His people do not worship him in a temple any longer. After observing the way in which the biblical authors weave together the theme of temple and God interacting with his people in relation to it in the Old Testament, the class focused on the

apparent disjunction in the New Testament.

After examining how the biblical authors in the New Testament utilize the theme of temple and God's meeting with his people in the Old Testament, time was spent applying these realities to our own thinking. How should these realities effect the way that we understand: God's relationship to his people? The work of Christ on behalf of his people? How does this theme of Temple address practical concerns the church faces today? Does the theme of temple help believers understand the inherent holiness of the church as well as church discipline?

### **Session 9**

The primary purpose of this session was to focus on the theological theme of the people of God being the family of God. The biblical authors introduce the concept of the Lord adopting Israel as his firstborn son in Exodus (4:22). The Lord focuses his affection on Israel in a way that was qualitatively different from any other group of people. However, there was an expectation that, in God's providence, adoption would not be limited to the nation of Israel (Rom 9:4). The prophet Hosea, speaking of God's electing choice of Israel, combines the pattern of covenant marriage and adoption (Hos 11:1).

Class participants were encouraged to read and meditate on specific passages of Scripture. First, the class was encouraged to study God's providently choosing Abraham in Genesis 12; they were also encouraged to read *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment* (pp. 80-82). Next they were encouraged to focus on God adopting the nation of Israel as his firstborn son in Exodus 4. Thirdly, small group participants were encouraged to focus on how the promises given to Abraham—to be the father of many nations—continue to develop, how they are fulfilled in Christ, and how the apostle Paul brings all of this together in Galatians 3-4. Finally, the small group concluded their time together by studying the fulfillment of these promises in the book of Revelation.

As believers grown in their understanding of the storyline of the Scripture and the many themes that the biblical authors weave throughout it to present a rich

tapestry of meaning, readers of Scripture should seek to have their thinking informed by and conformed to this storyline. The class ended with conversation concerning how studying this particular theme, the people of God as the family of God, changes the way we think about God. For instance, how does this reality affect the way that we think about God's love for his people? And, how does this theological theme help us understand what Christ accomplished on the cross for his people?

### **Session 10**

The tenth session addressed the theological theme of the people of God as his bride. This theological theme gives a rich explanation of God's covenant love for his people. Allusions to God's covenant relationship with his people is implicit in the way that he lovingly pursues them and preserves them in their wanderings. The biblical authors utilize the concept of marriage to display the richness of God's love for his people, as well as the vileness of idolatry.

The clearest picture of this theological theme is the prophet Hosea, who is called to marry a woman named Gomer. Hosea and Gomer's marriage symbolizes the Lord's relationship with Israel. Throughout the book of Hosea, Gomer frequently leaves her husband and runs into the arms of other lovers. Hosea redeems her back and makes sacrifices to get her back. While Gomer and Israel remain faithless to their Lord, the Lord remains faithful—he “allures” her and redeems her for himself (Hos 2:14-20). The primary focus of the class session was spent looking at the book of Hosea in order to understand how the concept of covenant marriage affects how God's people view their relationship to him.

While Hosea paints a negative picture, God's people are redeemed and restored from serial spiritual adultery. Other passage of Scripture display the purity and the affection rightly displayed in marriage. The class continued the study by examining Ephesians 5 where Paul speaks of Christ's union with the church. Many view Ephesians 5 as a section of practical application of Paul's previous theological foundation, however,

when Paul uses the concept of covenant marriage to explain how Christ cares for the church, he is importing theological freight that has been woven together across the Scriptures.

### **Session 11**

In this final session of instruction the class traced the theme of the Holy Seed that would triumph over the serpent. This theological theme has its roots in Eden—the Lord promises that someone from the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. This theme of victory over evil and death, and the restoring of all things to their former order, is something that the biblical authors reference with great frequency and anticipation.

The structure of session 11 was much different than other sessions. Instead of the traditional teaching format that the small group study had become accustomed to, this session was primarily dialogical. Having spent ten weeks together studying the Scriptures and growing in their understanding of the storyline of Scripture, the participants were encouraged to make this session more interactive. Before the session began they were asked to read Hamilton’s article “The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15.”<sup>7</sup> When the session began we reviewed the article and looked to the Scriptures. Time was spent examining how the biblical authors interpret and apply the promise given in Genesis 3:15 across Scripture. We sought to understand how this theological theme develops across the canon of Scripture, and how it finds its ultimate fulfillment in Christ.

### **Session 12**

In this final session small group participants were given the post-project survey.

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<sup>7</sup>James M. Hamilton, “The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 2 (2006): 30-54.



Sufficient time was allowed for the participants to take the survey; I did not want them to feel rushed in giving their answers. The goal of the final session was to encourage the participants to persevere in the practices that had been promoted throughout the course of time together. A number of helpful resources were suggested for the further development of their understanding of the storyline of Scripture.<sup>8</sup> Along with this admonition, I reminded those who have persevered in the small group study the reason why we seek to grow in our understanding of the storyline of Scripture, namely because it exalts God. Above all things, one needs to be reminded that studying Scripture and understanding it with greater depth is not an end in itself. Believers approach Scripture with the expectation that the Lord will reveal himself through his Word for his glory and our joy. Christians persevere and strive to understand the storyline not to have greater Bible literacy, but to see the glory of God as he reveals himself to his people. Believers study Scripture seeking to understand the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors in order to revel in the glory of God, which culminates in the gospel of Christ (cf. 2 Cor 4:6).

### **Post-Project Interview**

Based on the individual t-test results, an interview with the most improved male and female in the small group intended to assess the effectiveness of the ministry project. While the post-project survey provided concrete, quantifiable data, the interview allowed an opportunity for clarification, as well as an opportunity to dialogue with these two individuals concerning the effectiveness of the small group study.

The interview proved to be tremendously beneficial. Both respondents had very thoughtful answers, which the post-project survey would not have addressed. Both

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<sup>8</sup>T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: Exploring God's Plan for Life on Earth* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009); G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004); Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003); Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013).

of the interviewees believed that the class was beneficial, and said that the class had changed the way that they had approached the Bible. Both of those interviewed also said that that they were now better able to recognize themes in the storyline of Scripture. Previously, both agreed that Scripture had a unifying storyline and it had many themes that could be traced throughout it. However, neither of the participants felt as though they could confidently identify these themes on their own. After our time together, both participants were much more comfortable at explaining biblical themes, and felt as though they could recognize them in their personal devotions.

### **Conclusion**

Developing a greater understanding and appreciation for the storyline of Scripture is a lifetime pursuit. Ransacking the Scripture seeking to understand how the whole of it tells a unified, magnificent story is something that brings glory to Christ, the centerpiece of the story, and joy to his people. At the same time, cultivating this practice also means cultivating particular disciplines and habits necessary for rightly studying and interpreting the Scriptures. Yet, these disciplines and duties are not burdensome, they fuel our ultimate delight: seeing and reveling in the gospel.

## CHAPTER 6

### EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECT'S EFFECTIVENESS

After working with the participants in the small group for twelve weeks, as well as being able to gain some sort of insight into the congregation's understanding of the storyline of Scripture, I can confidently conclude that this project was beneficial and needed. The participants in the small group grew in their understanding of the storyline of Scripture, and the small group is capable of being reproduced in order to teach others how to understand and delight in the storyline of the Scripture. In this chapter I seek to evaluate the ministry project. First, the project's purpose is evaluated. Secondly, I evaluate the various goals of the ministry. Thirdly, the project's methodology is examined and evaluated. The fourth and fifth sections examine the various strengths and weaknesses of the project. The sixth section consists of various theological insights I gained during this project. Finally, I conclude by noting some personal observations on how this project has affected me.

#### **Evaluating the Project's Purpose**

The purpose of the ministry project was to teach individuals at Rich Pond Baptist Church to understand the storyline of the Scripture; this is a good and worthy goal.

In order to serve the individuals in the small group, various tools were created to resource them while they were in the class, as well as to foster continued study afterwards. The *GGSTJ* annual Bible Reading Plan gave them a resource that could be used for years to come and gave them a more in-depth study of the storyline of Scripture. The *GGSTJ* Study Guide served as a resource to them, not only while they were in the

class but also as a tool for navigating the breadth of Scripture. Lastly, the curriculum produced for the small group is something that could be used in various other groups for continued study.

### **Evaluating the Project's Goals**

The first goal of the project was to evaluate the understanding of the storyline of Scripture among adult church members at Rich Pond Baptist Church. Once the expert panel approved the congregational survey, it was announced and distributed to the congregation. The adult members at Rich Pond Baptist Church were evaluated by a congregation survey that was distributed in two different forms: paper and digital. The paper format of the survey, by suggestion of the expert panel, was an attempt to acquiesce to an older generation—a generation unfamiliar or otherwise uncomfortable with online surveys. Once individuals had access to the surveys, ample time was given to complete and return the surveys. This goal was beneficial for the project because the results of the survey communicated the general climate at Rich Pond Baptist Church with regard to the members' spiritual disciplines, and their understanding and comprehension in Bible reading.

The second goal of the ministry project was to develop an annual Bible reading plan that followed the order of the Hebrew Bible and the canonical order of the New Testament. This Bible reading plan also consisted of correlating readings from James M. Hamilton's book, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment (GGSTJ)*. The *GGSTJ* annual Bible reading plan served and will continue to serve the church in general, and individuals at Rich Pond Baptist Church in particular, in a number of ways. First, reading the Old Testament, as arranged in the Hebrew Bible, shed new light on Scripture by approaching it from a different angle. For individuals who have read through Scripture in the past, this plan helped them see how biblical authors connect various theological themes across the canon in a new light.

The second benefit of the *GGSTJ* readings is that they serve as a handmaiden

in cultivating a robust understanding of the storyline of the Scripture. One of the biggest hindrances when attempting to read through Scriptures systematically over the course of the year is encountering the unfamiliar. Many individuals simply do not understand what they read. The *GGSTJ* reading plan supports an individual's Bible reading through providing in depth biblical insight, which is specifically intended to expound the overarching storyline of Scripture. Hamilton recounts the benefit of following a similar practice earlier in his life in his book:

One of the most profitable and enjoyable experiences I have had reading a book was when I let Paul House take me on a 'guided tour' of the Old Testament. I would read a section of the Old Testament, then read House's discussion of that part of the Bible. . . . Along these lines this book is best read with an open Bible. . . . So I encourage you to read this book alongside the Bible, and if you have time for only one and not the other, read the Bible.<sup>1</sup>

If reading *GGSTJ* alongside the Bible is like going on a "guided tour" of the Bible, then the *GGSTJ* Annual Bible Reading Plan is the tour map.

The third goal of this ministry project was to develop a twelve-week small group curriculum to be used in conjunction with the scheduled readings of *GGSTJ*. This small group curriculum began at the foundational level, teaching helpful tools and practices when studying the Bible, and ended with the examination of various theological themes that could be traced through the Scriptures. The curriculum was created with the intent to take a person with no requisite understanding of biblical theology, and show them how to study the Bible and understand various theological themes in the Scriptures.

The curriculum was intended to be balanced—I wanted to push people in their own thinking and study of the Scriptures, yet at the same time I had to make sure that preparing for the time together was also possible. While most of the participants in the small group were college students, who tended to have fewer obligations and demands, resulting in more free time, not all of the participants were. One of the individuals was a

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<sup>1</sup>James M. Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 29-30.

stay-at-home mother of two—she was very busy and had little free time. It was immediately obvious that if I did not consider her current obligations in life when giving them their work for outside of class, she would grow frustrated and the class would discourage rather than benefit her. I adjusted the class expectations so everyone would be able to push themselves in the class without growing frustrated.

### **Evaluating the Project’s Methodology**

The congregational survey attempted to aggregate information about personal life, church attendance, personal spiritual disciplines, and overall understanding and familiarity with the Scriptures. One of the goals in administering the survey was to see whether or not a person’s life drastically affected their spiritual disciplines, and thus, their understanding and familiarity with various parts of Scripture. Admittedly, multiple factors affect the spiritual climate of an individual’s home and their spiritual disciplines, and this short survey did not give a definitive answer, its goal was to see whether or not a correlation existed.

The congregational survey revealed that most of the adults at Rich Pond Baptist Church read their Bibles five or more days a week (58.8 percent), and that when they do they tend to spend fifteen minutes or longer reading their Bible’s (65 percent). However, when asked what keeps them from reading the Bible more than they would like to, 65 percent said that they do not take the time. This reveals that those who completed the congregational survey read their Bible’s most days of the week for a significant amount of time, yet they wish they had more time to read and study. These results are certainly encouraging!

Of the possible responses to the question, “What keeps you from reading your Bible?” the “lack of time” response was the only factor that was external to a person, all other response options had to do with inward heart-realities. The congregational survey would have yielded a more accurate picture if external and internal hindrances were separate questions. It is conceivable that individuals opted for the lack of time response

because it was the only response that did not indicate anything about the spiritual climate of their own heart.

Another piece of information I attempted to quantify in the congregational survey was the frequency with which adults in the church read all of the Scriptures in their Bible reading, and whether or not they used a plan to serve their Bible reading. The survey revealed that most (72.7 percent) have read through their Bibles—27.3 percent have never read through the Bible's, 18.9 percent have read through it once, 27.3 percent have read through it two to four times, and the remaining 25 percent have read through their Bible's five or more times. Most (53.6 percent) read through it every couple of years, and 38.9 percent read through it every year. Lastly, most use a Bible reading plan that they have either received from the church (40 percent)—the ministers at Rich Pond Baptist Church tend to draw attention to annual Bible reading plans near the beginning of a new year—or they follow a plan from another church or ministry (27.3 percent).

An additional question, “When was the last time you completed reading through the Bible?” would have brought needed clarity to the results. In 2008, the Senior Pastor at Rich Pond Baptist Church strongly encouraged the whole congregation to read through the Bible in a year together. He spent his time during the Sunday evening services overviewing the portions of Scripture that were scheduled have been read the previous week. Lastly, he frequently encouraged and exhorted the church to persevere in this beneficial discipline. That year, many read their Bibles for the very first time, and since then, some have continued reading through their Bibles. However, the previously mentioned clarifying questions would have revealed whether or not the annual Bible reading practice has taken root in the life of the church or not.

As far as their understanding of Scripture, and their ability to articulate and explain of the storyline of Scripture, most of the respondents believed they were

“average” in their understanding and ability articulate the storyline of Scripture.<sup>2</sup>

While the congregational survey sought to ascertain a considerable amount of general information, the pre and post-project survey for those in the small group was much more focused and therefore more beneficial. The congregational survey was beneficial, it did give some helpful information about the congregation, but it was too broad. I believe that since the pre and post-project survey for the small group class was focused on a much more narrow set of questions, it was therefore more revealing. Also, the personal interview with those exhibiting the greatest improvement was invaluable. The interview allowed me to ask particular questions about the course, as well as to hear a more articulated understanding on how the course benefitted individually.

The small group study on the storyline of Scripture provided a forum that was frequent, we met every week, and conducive to studying this sort of theological subject. Participants were able to interact with me, both during class as well as outside of class, so that they could grow in their thinking by having questions answered, quandaries clarified, and curiosities satisfied. Teaching this material through a small group allowed for dialogue, which was very beneficial.

Finally, the pre-project and post-project assessment, along with the post-project interview provided concrete, observable, results to evaluate the effectiveness of the ministry project. While the congregational survey was more general in examining the understanding of various parts of the Scriptures, the pre and post-project assessment was much more focused. In order to trace the storyline of the Scripture throughout the Bible, one must also know how to approach and interpret various genres of Scripture. So, one

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<sup>2</sup>The congregational survey revealed that respondents believe their devotional life is slightly above average (2.9 out of 5), and their understanding of Scripture is slightly above average: Old Testament (3.1), New Testament (3.3), and their understanding of the storyline of Scripture (3.3).



aspect of the ministry project was to teach class participants how to understand these different sections of Scripture.

### **Strengths of the Project**

One of the greatest benefits of this ministry project was the various resources produced for individual use. The *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment* annual Bible reading plan, as well as the *GGSTJ* study guide was beneficial for any personal use outside of this ministry project. While a myriad of Bible reading plans exist, few have coordinating readings that serve to explain biblical passages being read. While many devotionals, which expound and apply a particular part of Scripture, do have readings in the Bible, finding a Bible reading plan that focuses on the exposition of Scripture is rare. Now, as individuals begin to consider which Bible reading plan that may use at the beginning of the year, they have a plan that not only leads them through Scripture in a new and fresh way, but they also have that opportunity to further study through the *GGSTJ* readings.

Another strength of the ministry project was the *GGSTJ* study guide, which was a result of the small group curriculum. The *GGSTJ* study guide will continue to serve the church as individual believers grow in their understanding of the storyline of the Scripture. The study guide will serve someone by helping them see the overall flow of the storyline of Scripture, as present in *GGSTJ*, and it will serve as a helpful reference guide as they seek to remember pertinent parts of the book. It will also serve as a guide as people in the church disciple one another. A more mature Christian could utilize this resource to help another believer grow in their overall approach to reading and studying the Bible, how to understand and interpret various genres of Scripture, and seeing how different theological themes in Scripture connect with each other.

Another strength of the project was the size of the class. The class consisted of eight individuals, most of whom were college students. A small class meant that more time could be dedicated to answering particular questions individuals had during a

session, and also allowed for more flexibility concerning the content to be covered during the time together. Having a smaller class also allowed me to give greater attention to individual participants outside of class. Follow up and personal contact with each of the participants in the class was also possible because of the modest size of the class. In follow-up conversations with class participants outside of class I was able to encourage them in their reading, as well as to clarify any questions. One other aspect of follow-up that occurred outside of class was encouraging them in their individual Bible reading. I was able to show them how various theological themes, one's that we had been wrestling through, relate to their current Bible reading.

Teaching believers how to approach the Bible was something that benefited everyone in the class. They found it helpful to be reminded that Scripture, because of its inherent spiritual nature, is something that must be approached through prayer. They also benefitted from discussing general interpretive tools helpful for understanding the storyline of Scripture, as well as discussing how to understand and interpret various specific genres of Scripture. One participant noted, "The techniques I learned in the class are letting me see the gospel in texts that I didn't really see before. It reminds me that the Word of God is rich, and I need to continually ask The Lord to give me a better understanding of him through his word."<sup>3</sup>

Another benefit of the class, according to one of the participants, was the use of literary tools to understand the various connections in Scripture. One thing that continued to be emphasized during the time together was the reality that the authors of Scripture intentionally use various themes, metaphors, and other literary devices in order to paint an interpretive framework in the biblical text; and this interpretive framework is a shared framework across the storyline of Scripture. I wanted to show the participants that the biblical authors, having their mind shaped by the Holy Spirit and their understanding

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<sup>3</sup>Justin Felts, interview by author, July 23, 2014.

of Scriptures, intentionally make these connections. And, I wanted to reinforce the reality that as we sought to understand the interpretive framework of the Biblical authors, that their thinking would become ours. The result, again, according to one of the most improved participants in the small group study, was a deeper commitment to understand the storyline of Scripture. He said, “I am more deliberately looking for references to past texts when I’m reading. Also I find myself looking harder for themes interwoven through Scripture.”<sup>4</sup> Another participants noted a similar benefit from having participated in the class: “I read more frequently because I can make better connections with Old Testament writings to New Testament and see how it all fits. I also read more in depth because I can see references in the New Testament to the Old Testament and vice versa.”<sup>5</sup>

Finally, the class itself had a positive significant impact on the participants. A t-test for dependent samples was utilized to determine that the small group study had a positive significant impact on those in the class. Teaching these individuals to understand the storyline of Scripture made a statistically significant difference resulting in the increase of their understanding ( $p=.00146$ . Or,  $p < .01$ ).

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

The administration of the congregational survey would have been improved if a dedicated time for completing the survey had been arranged beforehand. When the survey was administered, individuals had the option of taking time to complete a paper version of the survey, or taking one’s personal time to go to the church’s website to complete the survey. Administering the survey this way meant that a person had to find time, and place a priority in completing the survey, in their already busy schedules. As such, it is possible that if time was allotted for people to take the surveys, the sample size would have been greater which would have, in turn, yielded better results.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Kayleigh Coffey, interview by author, July 23, 2014.

An issue that would have made the survey more accurate is if more congregants completed the survey. Out of the surveys collected, none of the participants had been widowed, only five were single, and the rest were married. While Rich Pond Baptist Church has a high percentage of married members, it also has a sizable population of widows and widowers, as well as single people, and few from these latter demographics completed the survey. Also, even though the results of the congregational survey were strictly anonymous, because it dealt with issues relating to an individual's spiritual maturity, immature believers could have simply chosen to not take the survey rather than reveal unhealthy practices.

A final weakness of the congregational survey was that it was too broad. The survey attempted to aggregate too much information. The primary aim of the congregational survey was to evaluate the devotional habits of individuals and whether or not they understood what they were reading in the Scriptures. When the survey attempted to delve into whether or not participants benefitted from attending a Sunday school class, or a Wednesday night Bible study, the survey became decreasingly clear and helpful.

Another weakness that could be addressed to improve the project would be a handbook for the participants in the small group. I gave them a considerable amount of information, which was usually distributed at the beginning of each session. If I had prepared all of the information beforehand, it would have given them a comprehensive resource for their study.

Finally, another observable weakness inherent in the ministry project was the method for implementation. The goal was to teach Rich Pond Baptist Church to understand the storyline of Scripture, however, the small group consisted of only eight individuals. While I do not want to minimize the number of participants in the small group, they do not in any comprehensive sense comprise the whole of the church. Reaching the goal of teaching the church to understand the storyline of Scripture could be improved by two possible options: change the venue, or enlist more teachers. If the venue

were larger than a small group, a Sunday evening sermon series for example, then more people would receive the teaching. Or, if more competent Bible teachers were trained and employed to teach this study, more groups would receive the training.

### **Theological Reflection**

Jesus, on two separate occasions after his resurrection, teaches his disciples to understand who he is by interpreting the storyline of Scripture for them (Luke 24:27, 24:45). He shows them that all of the Scriptures anticipate and reach their full meaning in light of who he is and what he has accomplished. When one reads the book of Acts, one observes the disciples teaching and preaching empowered by the Holy Spirit, and they are teaching and preaching just as Jesus did. The disciples preach the gospel, explaining who Jesus is by expounding the storyline of Scripture. The biblical authors seek to explain who Jesus is and what he has accomplished through the storyline of Scripture. As believers grow in their understanding of Scripture, they grow in their understanding of the storyline of Scripture. As this occurs, the Spirit causes his people to understand a biblical worldview, an interpretive universe, that not only effects how one understands Scripture, but also how one understands the world lived in.

As the small group came together to study the storyline of Scripture, we observed that Scripture does not accidentally have various theological themes that begin to emerge. Rather, the Lord intends for his people to understand him by seeing and embracing the interpretive perspective of biblical authors. Understanding who Jesus is in light of the Scriptures is something he taught his disciples. They embraced this practice and taught it to the church. The church devoted themselves to this practice, as did other biblical authors. Finally, this practice ought to continue to be practiced and embraced today by the church. God intends to be known through the storyline of Scripture.

Secondly, the Lord sanctifies his people through his Word (cf. Eph 5:26). While growing in holiness is something that happens from “one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor 3:18), it was encouraging to come together and hear how people in the

group were growing in their affections for the Lord. Participants in the small group grew in their love of Scripture and in their desire to know and study more, in part because of what they gained from the class. The Lord will use his Word to grow his people in holiness, and it appear as though this class had a part in making that more of a reality in the lives of those who participated.

The most important theological insight I gained through this ministry project was that God's people love his Word. My own affection for the Scriptures has increased as I have poured over them in study and preparation for this ministry project. However, it was clear that those participating in the small group study grew in their affection for the Scriptures as they grew in their understanding of them. God loves bringing glory to himself as his people seek to know him through his Word, and this was obvious during the time together. Individuals in the class gained a new insight and they became insatiable for more. As their insight grew so did their understanding of the Scriptures. We reveled in newly discovered theological connections people made in their Bible reading. We were also excited to learn more.

### **Personal Reflection**

One of the greatest benefits I received during the course of this ministry project was time spent in preparation. The primary benefit gained in preparation was through meditating on Scripture. I know that the Lord intends for Scripture to be known and interpreted as a cohesive story and I had a good idea as to how that was done. However, each time I thought about these truths, the Lord shed new light and greater insight into these realities. Secondly, I benefited as I thought through how to systemically teach this to others. I wanted to serve them, not merely amaze them by pointing to interesting connections in Scripture; above all, I wanted them to see how Scripture fits together and to give them tools to make connections on their own. Lastly, I benefitted through teaching. While personal study is of some value, teaching is exceedingly valuable. Through teaching I was able to solidify some of my own thinking on this subject, which

must be done in order to communicate effectively to others.

I enjoyed being able to see how people at Rich Pond Baptist Church love the Lord and love his Word. I observed their desire to know it in greater depth and was a part of actually making it happen. It was a delight to know that useful tools have been created, for their benefit, so that they can grow in their understanding and affection for Christ. I also enjoyed being able to facilitate a group of people in the church as they learn more about the Scripture. Being able to lead the small group was simultaneously challenging and delightful. I greatly enjoyed spending much time thinking about how to teach this group with direction and clarity. I wanted them, rather than being impressed with me as a Bible teacher, to revel in the Scriptures—and we did. It was a delight to open the Scriptures with them week after week, and to draw attention to how the Lord has organized the Scripture so as to bring glory to himself as much as possible.

Another personal benefit I received in the course of this ministry project was seeing the value of evaluating the state the congregation. It was challenging to think through measuring growth in the congregation. Previously I would have merely assumed that if a person comes consistently and expresses benefit from the teaching they received, that the church is growing. This ministry project and the evaluations pertaining to it revealed that measurable data has its place in the life a church. Part of serving the congregation, which I care for deeply, is taking them time to evaluate where they are, were, and how what we are doing is serving them.

Finally, the greatest delight I have received in the course of this ministry project is in observing the Lord as he brings glory to himself. It was an absolute joy to watch the Lord open the eyes of his people to see him for who he is (i.e. Luke 24:31a). On a weekly basis, I had the opportunity to have a front row seat and watch the Lord, through the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit, give insight into the Word. I was able to watch as people grew in their affection for Scripture, and I was able to watch their understanding of the Lord grow. It was a delight to see the Lord bring glory to himself

during our time together.

### **Conclusion**

It is my sincere hope that this ministry project is something that the Lord would continue to use to stir in his people a deeper understanding and delight for his Word. This project has been personally beneficial. I have grown immeasurably—in my understanding of the Scriptures, in my desire to communicate these truths to others I serve, and in thinking how to teach more effectively. I believe that this project has been beneficial to a select group of individuals, namely those participating in the small group, at Rich Pond Baptist Church. However, I hope that this small group study is something that could continue to be used by the church. It is my prayer that the Lord would continue to open the eyes of his people to understand the storyline of Scripture, which would result in hearts that burn with affection for Christ (Luke 24: 32, 45).



## APPENDIX 1

### BIBLE READING QUESTIONNAIRE

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed as an instrument to identify comprehension of the Bible's storyline and personal Bible reading practices. This research is being conducted by Chris Dendy for the purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this Bible reading questionnaire, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

#### **Background Information:**

Please circle your response to each question. This information will be held in strict confidence.

1. How old are you?
  - a. 18-24
  - b. 25-34
  - c. 35-44
  - d. 45-54
  - e. 55-64
  - f. 65 and over
  
2. What is your gender?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  
3. What is your marital status?
  - a. Single
  - b. Married
  - c. Widowed
  
4. How many children do you have?
  - a. None
  - b. One
  - c. Two
  - d. Three
  - e. More than three

5. How old are your children? (circle all that apply)
  - a. 0-2
  - b. 3-6
  - c. 7-12
  - d. 13-17
  - e. 18-above
  
6. Do you have children living in the home?
  - a. Yes, **all** of my children live in the home
  - b. Yes, **some** of my children live in the home
  - c. **None** of my children live in the home
  
7. Are you employed?
  - a. Yes, full time.
  - b. Yes, part time.
  - c. No.
  
8. Which worship service do you attend?
  - a. 9:00 worship service
  - b. 10:30 worship service

### **Internal Analysis**

Directions: Answer the following questions: (1) Circle your answer with the multiple-choice questions. Space is provided for any comments or clarifications you wish to make.

1. How frequently do you read the Bible?
  - a. Infrequently, less than once a week.
  - b. At least twice a week.
  - c. More than twice a week.
  - d. I read my bible every weekday, but not on the weekends.
  - e. I read my bible every day of the week.

Comment:

2. On average, how long do you spend reading your Bible?
  - a. 0-5 minutes
  - b. 6-10 minutes
  - c. 10-15 minutes
  - d. 15-20 minutes
  - e. 20-30 minutes
  - f. More than 30 minutes

Comment:

3. What keeps you from reading your Bible?
- a. I don't have time
  - b. I don't know what/where to read
  - c. I don't understand what I read
  - d. I don't enjoy what I read
  - e. I don't learn anything when I read

Comment:

4. Have you ever read through the entire Bible?
- a. No. I have **never attempted it.**
  - b. No. I have attempted but never successfully read through the entire Bible.
  - c. Yes.

Comment:

5. How many times have you read through the Bible?
- a. 0
  - b. 1
  - c. 2-4
  - d. 5-7
  - e. 8-10
  - f. 10-12
  - g. more than 12 times

Comment:

6. How frequently do you read through the Bible?
- a. Every couple years.
  - b. Every year.
  - c. Multiple times a year.

Comment:

7. When you read the Bible, do you follow a plan?
- a. No
  - b. Yes, I follow readings in a devotional book
  - c. Yes, I follow a bible reading plan
  - d. I follow another plan. If so, please briefly explain: \_\_\_\_\_

8. If you use a Bible reading plan, did you
- a. I don't use a plan.
  - b. Make it up on your own
  - c. Get it from someone in the church
  - d. Get it from an outside organization, church, or ministry

Comment:

9. When I am reading my Bible, I understand what I'm reading.
- a. Strongly disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Somewhat agree
  - e. Agree
  - f. Strongly agree

Comment:

10. The quality of my devotional life is
- a. Poor
  - b. Below average
  - c. Average
  - d. Above average
  - e. Exceptional

Comment:

11. My understanding of the Old Testament is
- a. Poor
  - b. Below average
  - c. Average
  - d. Above average
  - e. Exceptional

Comment:

12. My understanding of the New Testament is
- a. Poor
  - b. Below average
  - c. Average
  - d. Above average
  - e. Exceptional

Comment:

13. My understanding of the storyline of Scripture is
- a. Poor
  - b. Below average
  - c. Average
  - d. Above average
  - e. Exceptional

Comment:

14. In my opinion, the Old Testament has little to do with the New Testament.
- a. Strongly disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Somewhat agree
  - e. Agree
  - f. Strongly agree

Comment:

15. I wish my understanding of the Bible were better.
- a. Strongly disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Somewhat agree
  - e. Agree
  - f. Strongly agree

Comment:

16. How would you explain the storyline of Scripture?

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17. What are the most important reasons for you to read your Bible?

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18. I have a better sense of the storyline of the Bible because of the preaching at Rich Pond Baptist Church.

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Somewhat disagree
- d. Somewhat agree
- e. Agree
- f. Strongly agree

Comment:

19. I learn about the storyline of the Bible in my Sunday school class.

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Somewhat disagree
- d. Somewhat agree
- e. Agree
- f. Strongly agree

Comment:

20. I learn about the storyline of the Bible in the Wednesday night Bible study.

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Somewhat disagree
- d. Somewhat agree
- e. Agree
- f. Strongly agree

Comment:

APPENDIX 2

GGSTJ ANNUAL BIBLE READING PLAN

| January |            |       | February |            |         | March |             |         |
|---------|------------|-------|----------|------------|---------|-------|-------------|---------|
| Date    | Scripture  | GGSTJ | Date     | Scripture  | GGSTJ   | Date  | Scripture   | GGSTJ   |
| 1       | Gen. 1-3   | 25-30 | 1        | Lev. 1-4   | 107-111 | 1     | Deut. 5-7   | 123-125 |
| 2       | Gen. 4-7   | 37-47 | 2        | Lev. 5-7   | 111-113 | 2     | Deut. 8-10  | 125-127 |
| 3       | Gen. 8-11  | 47-59 | 3        | Lev. 8-10  |         | 3     | Deut. 11-13 | 127-129 |
| 4       | Gen. 12-15 | 59-65 | 4        | Lev. 11-13 |         | 4     | Deut. 14-16 |         |
| 5       | Gen. 16-18 | 67-74 | 5        | Lev. 14-15 |         | 5     | Deut. 17-20 |         |
| 6       | Gen. 19-21 | 75-82 | 6        | Lev. 16-18 |         | 6     | Deut. 21-23 |         |
| 7       | Gen. 22-24 | 82-89 | 7        | Lev. 19-21 |         | 7     | Deut. 24-27 |         |
| 8       | Gen. 25-26 |       | 8        | Lev. 22-23 |         | 8     | Deut. 28-29 | 129-132 |
| 9       | Gen. 27-29 |       | 9        | Lev. 24-25 |         | 9     | Deut. 30-31 | 132-137 |
| 10      | Gen. 30-31 |       | 10       | Lev. 26-27 | 114     | 10    | Deut. 32-34 |         |
| 11      | Gen. 32-34 |       | 11       | Num. 1-2   | 114-118 | 11    | Josh. 1-4   | 139-143 |
| 12      | Gen. 35-37 |       | 12       | Num. 3-4   |         | 12    | Josh. 5-8   | 144-149 |
| 13      | Gen. 38-40 |       | 13       | Num. 5-6   |         | 13    | Josh. 9-11  | 149-152 |
| 14      | Gen. 41-42 |       | 14       | Num. 7     |         | 14    | Josh. 12-15 | 152-153 |
| 15      | Gen. 43-45 |       | 15       | Num. 8-10  |         | 15    | Josh. 16-18 |         |
| 16      | Gen. 46-47 |       | 16       | Num. 11-13 |         | 16    | Josh. 19-21 |         |
| 17      | Gen. 48-50 |       | 17       | Num. 14-15 |         | 17    | Josh. 22-24 | 153-154 |
| 18      | Exo. 1-3   | 90-96 | 18       | Num. 16-17 |         | 18    | Jud. 1-2    | 154-157 |
| 19      | Exo. 4-6   | 96-97 | 19       | Num. 18-20 |         | 19    | Jud. 3-5    | 157-158 |
| 20      | Exo. 7-9   |       | 20       | Num. 21-22 |         | 20    | Jud. 6-7    |         |
| 21      | Exo. 10-12 |       | 21       | Num. 23-25 |         | 21    | Jud. 8-9    |         |
| 22      | Exo. 13-15 | 96-97 | 22       | Num. 26-27 |         | 22    | Jud. 10-12  |         |
| 23      | Exo. 16-18 |       | 23       | Num. 28-30 |         | 23    | Jud. 13-15  |         |

|    |            |         |    |            |         |    |              |         |
|----|------------|---------|----|------------|---------|----|--------------|---------|
| 24 | Exo. 19-21 | 97-101  | 24 | Num. 31-32 |         | 24 | Jud. 16-18   |         |
| 25 | Exo. 22-24 |         | 25 | Num. 33-34 |         | 25 | Jud. 19-21   | 158     |
| 26 | Exo. 25-27 |         | 26 | Num. 35-36 | 119     | 26 | 1 Sam. 1-3   | 158-164 |
| 27 | Exo. 28-29 |         | 27 | Deut.1-2   | 119-122 | 27 | 1 Sam. 4-8   |         |
| 28 | Exo. 30-32 |         | 28 | Deut. 3-4  | 122-123 | 28 | 1 Sam. 9-12  | 164-168 |
| 29 | Exo. 33-35 | 101-106 |    |            |         | 29 | 1 Sam. 13-14 |         |
| 30 | Exo. 36-38 |         |    |            |         | 30 | 1 Sam. 15-17 | 168-169 |
| 31 | Exo. 39-40 | 106-107 |    |            |         | 31 | 1 Sam. 18-20 |         |



### APPENDIX 3

#### EVALUATION RUBRIC FOR *GGSTJ* ANNUAL BIBLE READING PLAN

1. An individual who has no previous understanding of annual Bible reading plans could pick this up and know how to use it.
  - a. Insufficient
  - b. Requires Attention
  - c. Sufficient
  - d. Exemplary
2. This reading plan clearly explains how a person ought to use it for their maximum personal benefit.
  - a. Insufficient
  - b. Requires Attention
  - c. Sufficient
  - d. Exemplary
3. The preliminary instructions in the reading plan make the plan appealing to the reader.
  - a. Insufficient
  - b. Requires Attention
  - c. Sufficient
  - d. Exemplary
4. The comments about how the reading follows the order of the Hebrew Old Testament are clear and succinct.
  - a. Insufficient
  - b. Requires Attention
  - c. Sufficient
  - d. Exemplary
5. This plan serves as a great alternative for people who have failed to complete an annual Bible reading plan because their increased frustrations with not understanding what they are reading.
  - a. Insufficient
  - b. Requires Attention
  - c. Sufficient
  - d. Exemplary

6. This plan is beneficial even for people who have a thorough knowledge of the Bible.
  - a. Insufficient
  - b. Requires Attention
  - c. Sufficient
  - d. Exemplary
  
7. The plan is intuitive.
  - a. Insufficient
  - b. Requires Attention
  - c. Sufficient
  - d. Exemplary
  
8. This is a plan I would use for my own personal Bible reading practices.
  - a. Insufficient
  - b. Requires Attention
  - c. Sufficient
  - d. Exemplary
  
9. This is a plan I would recommend to others.
  - a. Insufficient
  - b. Requires Attention
  - c. Sufficient
  - d. Exemplary
  
10. The supplemental readings from *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment* are not overly burdensome.
  - a. Insufficient
  - b. Requires Attention
  - c. Sufficient
  - d. Exemplary
  
11. The supplemental readings coordinate well with the particular Biblical texts they are connected with.
  - a. Insufficient
  - b. Requires Attention
  - c. Sufficient
  - d. Exemplary
  
12. This document has a clean aesthetic, in others it is not difficult to see what ought to be read on any particular day.
  - a. Insufficient
  - b. Requires Attention
  - c. Sufficient
  - d. Exemplary

Feedback:

What can be done to improve this Bible reading plan?

## APPENDIX 4

### SAMPLE SELECTION OF *GGSTJ* STUDY GUIDE

#### Week 3: Leviticus- Deuteronomy

##### I. Leviticus:

- a. Leviticus sets forth the terms of the covenant as it relates to sacrifice, the status of clean and unclean, and daily life.
  - i. This system only works by faith.
    1. The Levitical system only works if the worship believe that Yahweh is in the midst of the people, believes that he is holy, believe that sacrifices must be offered for cleansing, and lives in a way that corresponds with these believes (15:31)
    2. God's presence among Israel is so significant that the elaborate rituals and requirements are a small thing compared to the weight of the one who resides in their midst. As noted above, the elaborate system is also a judgment.
- b. The center of the Theology of Leviticus
  - i. Leviticus adds that Israel herself is sinful and must seek atonement for sin through substitutionary sacrifice that appeases the wrath of God.
  - ii. In Leviticus, God is glorified in salvation through judgment.

##### II. Numbers:

- a. Two census taken in Numbers 1, and in Numbers 26
  - i. Through judgment on one generation, the next gets an opportunity to enter and take the land.
- b. The continual presence of Yahweh in the pillar of fire and cloud leads and protect, but it also observes and condemns.
- c. Yahweh's reaction to these complaints, in Numbers 11, is based on the fact that Israel owes Yahweh gratitude for the liberation and provision she enjoys.
  - i. The complaints come not only from the people but also from Aaron and Miriam

- d. Granting Moses' request... This is an explicit declaration of what has been implicit all along, which is that Yahweh's glory will cover the land as the waters cover the sea. It also becomes explicit at this point that Yahweh's demonstration of mercy will neither detract from his justice nor keep him from his purpose...
- e. The point being made in all these episodes of grumbling is that Israel is in the presence of Yahweh, and they owe him praise and thanks for what he has done and how he has provided. Grumbling without circumstances, the kind of food, or who is in charge directly attacks the one who sovereignly orchestrated the circumstances, chose *this* food not *that*, and appointed the leaders who are in place.
  - i. The importance of obeying Yahweh's word is seen in the judgment against Moses, and the same is brought into focus when the people are saved from fiery serpents.
    - 1. After they again speak against God and Moses (21:5) Yahweh sends fiery serpents whose bite is deadly—**judgment**...Yahweh instructs Moses to make a bronze serpent and set it on a pole, and all who look to it will live when they see it—**salvation**.
- f. The center of the Theology of Numbers:
  - i. In the wilderness Yahweh judges Israel's sin, and after judgment falls on a whole generation, the nation arrives on the plains of Moab. Judgment even falls on Moses, who is not permitted to enter the Promised Land because he failed to uphold Yahweh as holy in the eyes of Israel. These **Judgments** but Israel is **saved through** them...Through these judgments Yahweh's justice shines forth with a severe and painful brightness, but through them all Yahweh mercifully perseveres with his persnickety people.
  - ii. In Numbers, then, Israel is saved though the judgments that fall on them, and the promise of the conquering seed of the woman is reaffirmed.

### III. Deuteronomy

- a. The first mention of loving God in the Bible came in Exodus 20:6, which referred to "those who love" Yahweh and keep his commandments. But the idea of loving God is not elaborated upon until Deuteronomy.
  - i. In Deut. Moses prepare the people to enter the land.
    - 1. Chapters 1-3 review Israel's history from Sinai to the plains of Moab.
    - 2. 4-11: seek to motivate Israel to keep the law.
    - 3. 12-28 set forth stipulations of the covenant.
    - 4. 29-34 Moses gives his last will and testament.

- b. Yahweh’s authority to give Israel the land he has promised is stressed when he tells them not to contend with those whose land he is not giving them... (121)
  - i. The rejected repentance of the wilderness generation (Deut. 1:41-45) teaches Israel to obey the first time Yahweh commands, and Moses’ failed attempt to gain permission to enter the land functions the same way.
- c. Motivations to obey
  - i. Chapter 4, Israel is urged to obey because of the way Yahweh has judged their disobedience at Baal Peor, because of the good effects and matchless quality of the laws Yahweh has given, because of their frightful experience of Yahweh at Sinai, because of what Yahweh will do to them if they disobey, and because of the unique love Yahweh has shown them.
    - 1. All of these reasons connote both judgment and mercy.
- d. Israel agrees to covenant obedience
  - i. Yahweh agrees to this arrangement (5:28), and his response to the willingness of the people to obey picks up a key theme in biblical theology. Readers of the Bible see that something is wrong with the human heart as early as Genesis 6:5, where Yahweh, who knows the hearts of men, sees that “every inclination of the reckoning of [man’s] heart is only evil all the time.” Knowing this, Yahweh responds to Israel’s professed willingness to obey the words, “Who will give that their hearts might be like this, to fear me and to keep all my commandments always?” (5:29)
  - ii. The problem comes up again in 10:16, when Moses calls on Israel, “Circumcise the foreskin of your heart and stiffen your neck no more.” The second phrase expositis the first—the call to circumcise one’s heart is a call to cease resisting the authority of Yahweh.
    - 1. Those who do not have circumcised ears *are not able* to listen, but they do hear—enough for the word to be a reproach to them. In other words, they hear the word physically, but “they do not delight in it.” They cannot hear it in the sense that they do not perceive its beauty: it is a reproach to them
      - a. These observations lead me to the conclusion that the ability provided by *heart circumcision* is equivalent to the ability provided by the *new birth*.
        - i. This means that Deut. 30:6, Jer. 32:29, and Ez. 36:26 all point to a day in the future. Nevertheless, there is evidence that there were people under the old covenant who did delight in the law of the Lord (Ps. 119), which indicates that there has always been “a remnant according to the election of grace.”

2. A new direction is opened up when Moses begin to appeal to love as a motivation for obedience in his address to the nation on the plains of Moab.
  - a. Obedience to Yahweh will result in blessing (Deut. 6:1-3), and Israel is to love Yahweh alone, with his word on their hearts (6:4).
    - i. Disobedience will result in curses.
  - b. What he requires is summarized in 10:12-13.
  - c. Very helpful table showing how Deuteronomy expounds the Ten Commandments 2.16 (128)
- e. Moses' last will and testament
  - i. Moses reminds Israel of what Yahweh has done for them (29: 4-8), informs them that they are entering into a sworn covenant with Yahweh (29:10-15), and reminds them of how they lived in Egypt and the idols they have seen on the way to the land (29:18-20).
    1. As Moses commences to tell Israel what will happen *if* they break the covenant, it is almost as though he is prophesying what will happen *when* they break the covenant.
    2. Remarkably, 29:29, seems to acknowledge both the mysterious purpose of Yahweh with which the people are being confronted and the opportunity to avoid the fate being promised to them if they disobey.
      - a. In other words, the prophecy of what will happen if/when Israel transgresses the covenant is given in order to motivate Israel to keep the covenant.
  - ii. The song of Moses calls heaven and earth to witness (32:1) and proclaims the name of Yahweh. He is the Rock who is faithful, just, perfect, and upright, but the people have dealt corruptly against him.
    1. Yahweh raises his hand and swears that he will judge (32:40-42), but after the promise of judgment is a promise to avenge the blood of his children and atone for their land (32:43). Through judgment comes salvation.
- f. The center of the theology of Deuteronomy
  - i. Yahweh's glory is the central reality of Deuteronomy.
    1. It is Yahweh who has saved Israel through the judgment of their enemies (Chapters 1-3).
    2. It is ultimately Yahweh whose compelling existence is to motivate obedience (chapter 4) to the law he revealed when Israel heard his voice out of the midst of the first on the mountaintop (ch. 5). Israel will break Yahweh's covenant (30:1, 31:16-32), but Yahweh will restore them through the judgment he visits upon them.
    3. There is none like Yahweh, God of Jeshurun, who is glorified in salvation through judgment in the manifestation of his justice and his mercy.

- IV. The center of the theology of the Torah
- a. The Torah is a story of the glory of God in salvation through judgment. He will save his people by judging their enemies, and he will judge the sin of his people, saving them through the purifying judgment of exile.
- V. Appendix: Exodus 34:6-7 in the Law, Prophets, and Writings
- a. No notes taken on this section.

### **Discussion Questions**

- How has Hamilton's writing helped you in understanding these scripture books of Scripture?
- What are the most significant insights you have taken away from the reading so far?
- What do you think about his center of theology?
- Is he forcing his reading on the text, or does it naturally flow from Scripture?
- What do you think about Hamilton's understanding of Deuteronomy and how it relates to the way Solomon instructs his son in Proverbs?

## APPENDIX 5

### EVALUATION RUBRIC FOR *GGSTJ* STUDY GUIDE

1. This study guide is helpful.
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
2. The study guide is thorough.
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
3. The study guide would help someone who fell behind in the reading.
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
4. The study guide questions are beneficial.
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
5. The study guide could be used on an individual basis.
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree



6. The study guide could be used by one believer to disciple another.
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
  
7. The study could works well in a small group setting.
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
  
8. The study guide is useful.
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
  
9. A person is more likely to stick with the reading by having this study guide than without it.
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
  
10. The study guide helps individuals understand the storyline of Scripture.
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree

Feedback:

What can be done to make this study guide more user-friendly, and more beneficial to the individual?

## APPENDIX 6

### PRE-PROJECT AND POST-PROJECT SURVEY

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed as an instrument to identify comprehension of the Bible's storyline and personal Bible reading practices. This research is being conducted by Chris Dendy for the purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this Bible reading questionnaire, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Personal "code" number \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following multiple-choice questions: (circle the correct answer). Space is provided for any comments or clarifications you wish to make.

1. How frequently do you read the Bible?
  - a. Infrequently, less than once a week.
  - b. At least twice a week.
  - c. More than twice a week.
  - d. I read my bible every weekday, but not on the weekends.
  - e. I read my bible every day of the week.

Comment:

2. On average, how long do you spend reading your Bible?
  - a. 0-5 minutes
  - b. 6-10 minutes
  - c. 10-15 minutes
  - d. 15-20 minutes
  - e. 20-30 minutes
  - f. More than 30 minutes

Comment:

3. What keeps you from reading your Bible?
- a. I don't have time
  - b. I don't know what/where to read
  - c. I don't understand what I read
  - d. I don't enjoy what I read
  - e. I don't learn anything when I read

Comment:

4. Have you ever read through the entire Bible?
- a. No. I have **never attempted it.**
  - b. No. I have attempted but never successfully read through the entire Bible.
  - c. Yes.

Comment:

5. How many times have you read through the Bible?
- a. 0
  - b. 1
  - c. 2-4
  - d. 5-7
  - e. 8-10
  - f. 10-12
  - g. more than 12 times

Comment:

6. How frequently do you read through the Bible?
- a. Every couple years.
  - b. Every year.
  - c. Multiple times a year.

Comment:

7. When you read the Bible, do you follow a plan?
- a. No
  - b. Yes, I follow readings in a devotional book
  - c. Yes, I follow a bible reading plan
  - d. I follow another plan. If so, please briefly explain: \_\_\_\_\_

8. If you use a Bible reading plan, did you
- a. I don't use a plan.
  - b. Make it up on your own
  - c. Get it from someone in the church
  - d. Get it from an outside organization, church, or ministry

Comment:

9. When I am reading my Bible, I understand what I'm reading.
- a. Strongly disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Somewhat agree
  - e. Agree
  - f. Strongly agree

Comment:

10. The quality of my devotional life is
- a. Poor
  - b. Below average
  - c. Average
  - d. Above average
  - e. Exceptional

Comment:

11. My understanding of the Old Testament is
- a. Poor
  - b. Below average
  - c. Average
  - d. Above average
  - e. Exceptional

Comment:

12. I know how to interpret the various genres of biblical literature.
- a. Poor
  - b. Below average
  - c. Average
  - d. Above average
  - e. Exceptional

Comment:

13. I can explain various theological themes throughout scripture.
- a. Poor
  - b. Below average
  - c. Average
  - d. Above average
  - e. Exceptional

Comment:

14. My understanding of how to interpret the Psalms is

- a. Poor
- b. Below average
- c. Average
- d. Above average
- e. Exceptional

Comment:

15. My understanding of how to interpret the Major Prophets is

- a. Poor
- b. Below average
- c. Average
- d. Above average
- e. Exceptional

Comment:

16. My understanding of how to interpret the Minor Prophets is

- a. Poor
- b. Below average
- c. Average
- d. Above average
- e. Exceptional

Comment:

17. My understanding of the wisdom literature is

- a. Poor
- b. Below average
- c. Average
- d. Above average
- e. Exceptional

Comment:

18. My understanding of the New Testament is

- a. Poor
- b. Below average
- c. Average
- d. Above average
- e. Exceptional

Comment:

19. My understanding of the storyline of Scripture is

- a. Poor
- b. Below average
- c. Average
- d. Above average
- e. Exceptional

Comment:

20. My understanding of the importance of the various Gospel's is

- a. Poor
- b. Below average
- c. Average
- d. Above average
- e. Exceptional

Comment:

21. My understanding of Paul's epistles is

- a. Poor
- b. Below average
- c. Average
- d. Above average
- e. Exceptional

Comment:

22. My understanding of Apocalyptic literature is

- a. Poor
- b. Below average
- c. Average
- d. Above average
- e. Exceptional

Comment:

23. In my opinion, the Old Testament has little to do with the New Testament.

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Somewhat disagree
- d. Somewhat agree
- e. Agree
- f. Strongly agree

Comment:

24. I wish my understanding of the Bible were better.

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Somewhat disagree
- d. Somewhat agree
- e. Agree
- f. Strongly agree

Comment:

25. Scripture has an overarching storyline from beginning to end.

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Somewhat disagree
- d. Somewhat agree
- e. Agree
- f. Strongly agree

Comment:

26. I can trace that storyline as I study the Bible.

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Somewhat disagree
- d. Somewhat agree
- e. Agree
- f. Strongly agree

Comment:

27. I can explain the storyline of Scripture.

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Somewhat disagree
- d. Somewhat agree
- e. Agree
- f. Strongly agree

Comment:

28. What is the storyline of Scripture?

## APPENDIX 7

### POST-PROJECT INTERVIEW

These interviews will come from the two adult church members in the Bible study who exhibit the greatest change in the pre-project and post-project surveys.

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed as an interview to determine the overall benefit in the small group Bible study you just completed. This research is being conducted by Chris Dendy for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By participating in this interview, you are giving informed consent for use of your responses in this project.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Interview Question 1 | How has this Bible study helped you understand the storyline of Scripture?                      |
| Interview Question 2 | How has this Bible study effected your current Bible reading practices?                         |
| Interview Question 3 | What is the most beneficial thing you learned from the Bible study?                             |
| Interview Question 4 | What was the greatest strength of the Bible study?  |
| Interview Question 5 | What can we do to improve the learning experience for future participants?                      |
| Interview Question 6 | How has this Bible study changed the way that you think about: The Bible, the gospel, yourself? |



## APPENDIX 8

### SESSION 2: MARK UP YOUR BIBLE!

**Main Point:** It is incredibly difficult to follow a complex train of thought, either in prayer, reading in general, or studying the Bible in particular, without some sort of notation system.

- I. Marking up The Bible is important:
  - a. The Bible is a big book!
  - b. It is comprised of 66 smaller books, all of which are written by Spirit-inspired authors, and are intended to communicate truth.
  - c. While the main point may be readily observed in many parts of Scripture, in many instances it can be cumbersome to follow the train of thought of the biblical authors.
  - d. Marking up, or making notations in Scripture help believers, as they read Scripture, to see various themes, lines of reasoning, and explanation in Scripture.
    - i. A small caveat: many people feel that Scripture, because it is the Word of God, is a sacred book and as such, it should not be defaced or defiled with random markings. For those who have an aversion to marking up their Bible's, printing off copies of digital copies of Scripture may be a helpful alternative.
  
- II. Ten Reasons why we should mark up our Bibles.
  - a. Adapted from Tony Reinke's chapter, "Marginalia" in *Lit!: A Christian Guide to Reading Books*.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter Reinke gives ten reasons why he thinks people should mark up books.
    - i. To Claim it—
      1. Putting your name in your Bible makes it your own. It is a sign of ownership.
    - ii. To acknowledge their temporary value—
      1. Our Bible's will wear out. Reinke says, "Every physical book I own is in the process of returning to dust—'For you are paper pulp and to paper pulp you shall return.'"
      2. While many Bible's are created to have a certain aesthetic value to them—gilded paper, supple leather, etc.—at the end of the day our goal is to know and understand the

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<sup>1</sup>Tony Reinke, *Lit!: A Christian Guide to Reading Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 147-54.

words of Scripture and to have our minds shaped by Scripture, not to have a museum piece.

- iii. To highlight what we find meaningful—
  1. One thing we seek to do when we mark up Scripture is to mark it in such a way that meaningful passages draw our attention.
- iv. To Trace the skeleton of a book of Scripture
  1. The Bible was written to intentionally communicate truth: truth about who God is, about mankind, about the cost, etc. One thing we must do when we are studying Scripture is to seek to understand the logical thought flow of a book of Scripture.
  2. When studying Scripture mark up your Bible so that the structure and flow of a picture book becomes clearer as you work through it.
- v. To mark out what is initially puzzling
  1. Scripture often makes very radical claims that do not set well with modern sensibilities. While we always want to stand with Scripture, rather than standing with culture. Drawing attention to these puzzling statements allow for increased reflection as well an opportunity for one’s mind to be conformed to Scripture.
- vi. To understand the larger context and the grand storyline of Scripture.
  1. Many biblical authors wrote multiple books of Scripture: Moses, the Torah; Luke, Luke and Acts; Paul, his epistles; John, his Gospel, epistles and Revelation. Mark up the margins with parallel references concerning particular themes. This will help personal study by giving individuals a fuller understanding of how a biblical author develops particular theological themes.
  2. Marking up margins can also give intertextual cross-references. In studying the Gospels, for example, marginal markings can help an individual connect other references to a particular pericope cross the gospels.
    - a. Jonathan T. Pennington, in *Reading the Gospels Wisely*, advocates something he calls “inter-textual” readings and “intra-textual” readings.<sup>2</sup>
    - b. By “interatextuality,” Pennington means, “how a literary piece picks up and reuses themes, motifs, and phrases in other parts of the same book.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Jonathan T. Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.,113

- c. By “intertextuality” Pennington means, “how an earlier text is taken up, transplanted, and transformed in a later text.”<sup>4</sup>
      - 3. Lastly, making notations concerning various themes, images, and metaphors the biblical authors intentionally connect helps a person understand how they understand the storyline of Scripture.
        - a. By noting these connections we can understand their interpretive perspective.
      - vii. To express emotion
        - 1. It is entirely appropriate to feel a myriad of emotions, to be moved, while reading Scriptures. Make mention of them in the margins. According Reinke, “The raw thoughts of a reader are best written in the margin.”<sup>5</sup>
      - viii. To Capture thoughts
        - 1. Writing in the margins helps a reader clarify what they are thinking and feeling when they read Scripture.
      - ix. To interact with the Scriptures
- III. What to Mark and How to Mark it
- a. Highlight or Underline it.
    - i. The most initiative reason to highlight is to bring attention to something you want to remember.
    - ii. Run a single line under a sentence or a vertical line down the outside of a paragraph.
  - b. Structure or Development
    - i. Draw attention to transitional words or phrase that the biblical authors use to shape their writings.
    - ii. Draw attention to a series of numbers, or repetitions
      - 1. For example, highlight John’s use of the seven: “I Am,” Signs, and Festivals in the Gospel of John. The use of seven is not accidental.
  - c. Find a system that works for you
    - i. Symbols, Colors, Markings
      - 1. Each of these have been advocated by different godly individuals. I am not advocating on set of notation practices over another. I am advocating something that makes sense to the individual and is repeatable. If you tend to be a minimalist, carrying a handful of colored pens with you when you study Scripture can be cumbersome. The goal is to find a system that will help a person study and understand the Scriptures, and that in understanding them will have their thinking and affections transformed by them.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 116.

<sup>5</sup>Reinke, *Lit!*, 149.

## APPENDIX 9

### SESSION 7: CAN THE CENTER HOLD?

#### Teaching Outline and Discussion Questions

##### Chapter 1: Can The Center Hold?

###### I. Introduction:

- a. The purpose of this book... is to seek to do for biblical theology what Kevin Vanhoozer has done for hermeneutics and David Wells has done for evangelical theology. The goal is not a return to an imaginary golden age but to help people know God.
  - i. Though I am pursuing *the* center, I celebrate the fact that “each of the various approaches and perspectives can cast a different light upon the NT, and in that sense having a number of different approaches is helpful.”
- b. The glory of God is a saving and judging glory—an aroma of life to those being saved and death to those perishing ( 2Cor. 2:15-16), and this saving and judging glory is at the center of biblical theology. If there is to be a renewal, it will be a renewal that grows out of the blazing center that is the glory of God in the face of Christ. This saving and judging glory, I contend, is the center of biblical theology.
  - i. There are many who do not embrace the idea of a center for biblical theology and yet maintain that the Bible is coherent, but if the Bible tells a coherent story, it is valid to explore what that story’s main point is. That leads us to ask whether the Bible shows us what God’s ultimate purpose is.

Questions: Hamilton is right that the Bible is coherent, which would make exploring the storyline of the Bible a valid and noble pursuit. But, does that necessitate the claim that

there is one storyline that stands above the rest, which we would call *the* storyline of scripture?

If we are going to claim that there are many equally valid storylines of Scripture, what holds them together? Is there a common reality in the various storylines?

- ii. Evangelicals have lost the “theological center,” and this theological center is the Bible’s center. Without center, of course things fall apart. The problem however, is not that the gravitational center of the Bible’s theology cannot hold. The problem is more along the lines of what Yeats described as the falcon not hearing the Falconer. That is to say, if we will listen carefully to the Bible, it will proclaim to us the Glory of God. If we do not hear this, the problem is with us, not the Bible.

## II. Do Things Fall Apart? (Is There a Unity in the Bible’s Diversity?)

- a. In this book, I am putting forth the theory that the glory of God in salvation through judgment is the center of biblical theology. This theory will be tested against the “grammar” of the biblical evidence, with special attention given to any evidence in the Bible that might falsify it.
- b. The remainder of this book will seek to show that this is “a theory that adequately explains a grammatical phenomenon without being falsified by the relevant body of empirical data.”
  - i. Meaning: Hamilton’s goal is to show that Scripture speaks in the terms he is using. He wants to “do” biblical theology in a way that lets scripture speak for itself, and if it speaks otherwise then he ought to adjust or abandon his thesis.

## III. Finding Our Way in the Widening Gyre: The History and purpose of Biblical Theology

- a. We can think of the practice of biblical theology in two ways.
  - i. We have the practice of the believing community across the ages.
    - 1. Hamilton believes this is as old as Moses.

- a. Moses presented a biblical-theological interpretation of the traditions he received regarding Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, and his own experience with his kinsmen.
  - b. The biblical authors used biblical theology to interpret the Scripture available to them and the events they experienced.
  - c. **For the believing community, the goal of biblical theology is simply to learn this practice of interpretation from the biblical authors so that we can interpret the Bible and life in this world the way they did.**
  - d. The history of biblical interpretation in the church is a history of more and less success in accurately understanding the interpretive strategies used by the Biblical authors.
    - ii. We have a label that describes an academic discipline.
      - 1. This way of thinking about biblical theology relegates its study and success to the academy. It isn't helpful.
- b. **In this study, I will pursue a biblical theology that highlights the central theme of God's glory in salvation through judgment by describing the literary contours of individual books in canonical context with sensitivity to the unfolding metanarrative.**
- i. In my view this metanarrative presents a unified story with a discernable point, or center.
    - 1. He will be using the "Protestant Canon"
    - 2. He will be interpreting Scripture in light of the ordering of the books in the Hebrew Bible...more to follow.
- c. *One of the key tasks of biblical theology is to trace the connections between themes and show the relationships between them.*

- i. *There is an important point of application in connection with this weighing and sorting of scriptural themes; biblical theology is concerned with what the Bible meant for the purpose of understanding what the Bible means.*
  - 1. *The biblical theologian who writes in the service of the church does so to elucidate the biblical worldview, not merely so that it can be studied but so that it can be adopted.*
    - a. **\*\*Application\*\*** understanding the biblical worldview of the biblical authors (i.e. “biblical theology”), helps to have a more biblical worldview.
  - 2. Placing oneself under the authority of the text in this way seems to be the best way to avoid “impositions on the biblical materials.”
- ii. The purpose of biblical theology is inductively to understand the canonical form of the Bible’s theology as it is progressively revealed in its own literary forms and salvation-historical development, and this sharpens our systematic and dogmatic theology.
  - 1. i.e. Biblical theology enhances systematic theology.
  - 2. We should view Biblical Theology, alongside systematic theology and other biblical disciplines as tools that serve and sharpen one another, rather than viewing them in a hierarchical sense.
- d. “The purpose of biblical theology, then, is to sharpen our understanding of the theology contained in the Bible itself through an inductive, salvation-historical examination of the Bible’s themes and the relationships between those themes in their canonical context and literary form.” –Hamilton’s definition of Biblical Theology
  - i. I am arguing that one theme is central to all others. If one theme is central to all others, how do we define and identify them?

#### IV. How Do We Define The Center of Biblical Theology?

- a. The center of biblical theology will be the ultimate reason that the Bible gives to explain what God has done.
- b. If it can be shown that the Bible's description of God's ultimate end produces, informs, organizes, and is explicated by all the other themes in the Bible, and if this can be demonstrated from the Bible's own salvation-historical narrative and in its own terms, then the conclusion will follow that the ultimate end ascribed to God in the Bible is the center of biblical theology.

#### V. How Do we Identify the Center of Biblical Theology?

- a. The center of biblical theology will be the theme that is prevalent, even pervasive, in all parts of the Bible. This theme will be the demonstrable centerpiece of the theology contained in the Bible itself, because this theme will be what the biblical authors resort to when they give ultimate explanations for why things are the way they are at any point in the Bible's story.
  - i. In broadest terms, the Bible can be summarized in four words: *creation, fall redemption, restoration*. This sequence functions as an umbrella story encompassing the whole canonical narrative, but it also repeated countless times on both individual and corporate levels.
    1. One significant variation on this theme takes shape as Yaweh bring Israel out of Egypt, makes a covenant with them, and gives them the Promised Land, where they sin, they are exiled, and the Old Testament prophet points to a return from exile that will be a new exodus.
      - a. In significant ways the Gospels interpret the death and resurrection of Jesus in these terms. It is as though his death is the climatic moment of exile, the moment when the temple is destroyed, and his resurrection begins the new exodus.



- i. This story of salvation history is a story of God's glory in salvation through judgment.
  - b. The center of biblical theology is the theme that organizes this metanarrative, the theme out of which all others flow. Having originated from their center, other themes exposit and feed back into it.
    - i. Many of these other themes have been put forward as central to biblical theology, causing some confusion as to whether the idea of a "center" is even viable. Remarkably, the theme that I am suggesting as *the* center of biblical theology has not received much consideration in this discussion.
- VI. Mere Anarchy Is Loosed Upon the World: The Plethora of Proposed Centers
  - a. Pp. 51-52 full of other proposed "centers" of biblical theology as well as quotes on why searching for a "center" may be less than helpful.
  - b. In spite of the judgment of these respected scholars, it must be observed that their statements do not seem to have taken into account one theme that has only recently been put forward as the center of biblical theology: the glory of God.
    - i. Anticipating the charge that it might be too broad to be useful, I am sharpening the proposal to focus specifically on the glory of God manifested in salvation through judgment. Can the center hold?
- VII. The World is Charged with the Grandeur of God: Proposed Centers and the Center.
  - a. Creation is for the glory of God
    - i. Rom. 11:36, Ps. 19:1
  - b. The self-revelation of God is for the glory of God.
    - i. Num. 14:21, Isa. 6:3, Ps. 72:19, Rev. 4:11
  - c. The holiness of God is for the glory of God.
    - i. Holiness is often seen as judgment and love
    - ii. Ps. 29:2, 85:10-11, 89:14, 115:1
  - d. The election of Israel demonstrates the glory of God
    - i. Deut. 7:7-10

VIII. “Salvation through Judgment to the Glory of God”: What Does This Phrase Mean?

- a. I would suggest that the glory of God is the weight of the majestic goodness of who God is, and the resulting name, or reputation, that he gains from his revelation of himself as Creator, Sustainer, Judge, and Redeemer, perfect in justice and mercy, loving-kindness and truth.
  - i. **Salvation** shows God to be “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and great in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” (Ex. 34:6b-7a)
  - ii. **Judgment** shows God to be the one “who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the sons and the sons of the sons, on the third and on the fourth generations” (Ex. 34:7b)
  - iii. Thus **Salvation** and **Judgment** balance on another.
    1. The reality of **judgment** should keep us from thinking of God in purely sentimental terms as though he were a grandfatherly buddy who just lets us do things.
    2. The reality of **salvation** should likewise keep us from thinking of God as merely a terrifying, vengeful judge.
    3. **Salvation** always comes through **judgment**.
- b. *Everyone who gets saved is saved through judgment. All who flee to Christ and confess that he is Lord and that God raised him from the dead (Rom. 10:9) do so because they realize their need for a Savior. They realize their need for a Savior because they have become convinced that God is holy, that they are sinful, and that God will judge. In a sense, they feel the force of God’s condemning justice. They sense the weight of the wrath that remains upon them (John 3:36), and they recognize that Jesus is their only hope. Thus, historically (in Christ on the cross) and existentially (in their own experience of the wrath of God that makes them feel their need for Christ), believers are saved through judgment.*

IX. Like Shining from Shook Foil

- a. God's glory is like a many-faceted gem, which reflects and refracts light in ever-new, ever-unexpected ways as it is admired. The plan of this book is not to dissect the gem, but selectively to admire it.
- b. The order of the Hebrew Bible
  - i. TaNaK
    1. Torah: Law
      - a. Genesis-Deuteronomy
    2. Neviim: Prophets
      - a. Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings
      - b. Latter Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Book of the Twelve (Minor Prophets)
    3. Ketuvim: Writings
      - a. The book of Truth: Proverbs, Job
      - b. The Megilloth: (small scrolls) Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Ether
      - c. Other Sacred Writings: Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles.
  - c. Order to the New Testament:
    - i. Narrative Storyline
    - ii. Gospels and Acts
    - iii. Letters
    - iv. Narrative Storyline
  - d. I am seeking to show how the glory of God in salvation through judgment is communicated in the parts and the wholes of the biblical books in an effort to preempt the charge that I have foisted this center onto the material.

So the treatment will seek to attend to canonical and literary feature, but in some cases, Genesis for instance, my discussion will be more thematic.

### **Discussion Questions**

- What have been some of the different themes in biblical theology, and what do you think about Dr. Hamilton's theme?

- Should we seek to find the “center” of Biblical Theology?
- How does systematic theology relate to biblical theology, according to Hamilton?
- What do you think about the way the different structure of the Hebrew Bible, the order Hamilton teaches through in this book versus the order we see in our English Bibles? Does the structure change our understanding of the flow of the Old Testament?

## APPENDIX 10

### GGSTJ STUDY GUIDE: MATTHEW-ACTS

#### **Week 15: Matthew**

#### Chapter 5: God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment in the Gospels and Acts

##### I. Introduction

- a. Biblical theology seeks to explain the worldview behind the statements we now find in the Bible. Biblical theology attempts to elucidate the metanarrative embraced by the biblical authors.
- b. I am arguing in this book not only that the biblical authors were consistent with one another in terms of their mutual adoption of an overarching explanation of the world, but also that this story of the world, which the biblical authors all believed, has a theological center.
- c. As noted in chapter 1, the Old Testament canon is structured so that the historical narrative in Genesis-Kings is complemented by the poetic commentary in the Prophets and the first part of the Writings. The latter parts of the Writings then resume the historical line, with a dose of apocalyptic expectation.
  - i. The structure of the New Testament canon is similar.
  - ii. When the curtain rises on the continuation of the Old Testament's story in the Gospels and Acts, the nation is in the land. So in that sense they have experienced a physical return from exile. They still expect, however, the new exodus and the return from the exile from Eden.
  - iii. The Baptist comes quoting Isaiah 40:3 precisely because he is looking for the new exodus that will give way to the return from the exile from Eden.

1. Each of the Gospels strategically quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 to explain Israel's rejection of her messiah, Jesus, because the hardening of Israel unto exile has not yet reached its fulfillment.
- d. The New Testament presents two decisive moments of salvation through judgment that are the climatic fulfillments of the new exodus and return from the exile from Eden. These two are:
    - i. The Cross
    - ii. And the apocalyptic consummation of things.
  - e. The Gospel treat the death of Jesus on the cross as the new exodus. And at the same time the book of Revelation depicts the apocalyptic judgments of the trumpets and bowls as typological fulfillments of the plagues on Egypt, judgments through which the people of God are saved.
    - i. At the end of Revelation, the return from the exile from Eden finally happens as the New Jerusalem, the bride of the Lamb, descends from heaven and the glory of God covers the land as the waters cover the sea.
  - f. Between the new exodus at the cross and the return from the exile from Eden at the consummation of all things, the gospel must be preached to all nations, and then the end will come (Matt. 24:14). The disciples will be witness of Jesus to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), and they will be a light to the nations (13:47).
    - i. Until that time comes, Christians are like Israel in the wilderness sojourning towards the Promised Land. Believers have been redeemed, bought with a price, just as Israel was redeemed from slavery in Egypt.
      1. The new covenant has been inaugurated through the new exodus accomplished by Jesus the messiah in Jerusalem (cf. Luke 9:31).
  - g. The center of this story, this cosmic metanarrative, is the glory of God in salvation through judgment. God built the cosmos so that he could display his glorious justice and mercy.

- i. To this point in this volume I have argued that the Old Testament authors are in agreement on both the story line and its center, and we now pursue the case with the authors of the New Testament.

## II. The Gospels and Acts Book by Book

- a. Matthew's genealogy and narratives of the early life of Jesus establish connections between Jesus and the story of Israel at both prophetic and typological levels.
  - i. He is shown to be the seed of David prophesied in 2 Samuel 7, and he typologically relives the history of Israel through the nature of his birth, the exile and sojourn in Egypt, and the mini-exodus therefrom.
  - ii. The cleansing of the temple by Jesus and the two references to his destroying the temple and raising it after three days hint at the meaning of Jesus' death.
    1. As Jesus is crucified, the temple is destroyed. He drinks the whole cup of God's judgment, and through the cross salvation comes. Raised from the death, he commissions his disciples to cover the dry lands with his glory by making disciples of all nations.
  - iii. The center of the theology of Matthew is the glory of God in salvation through judgment.
- b. The Gospel according to Mark opens with Jesus as an adult, striding across, the shores of Galilee, amazing and frightening all who behold him, larger than life, for the kingdom has come.
  - i. He brings salvation through judgment in his ability to cast out demons, which glorifies God, whose servant has bound the strong man and is plundering his house.
  - ii. He brings salvation through judgment as he condemns worldly wisdom and worldly ways of getting ahead, which glorifies God as the one who makes the first last and the last first, the one whose greatness is such that it is worth losing one's life to gain entrance

- to his kingdom, the one whose king is so worthy that people should take up the cross and follow him.
- iii. Jesus brings salvation through judgment in his death and resurrection, which glorifies God by upholding justice and making mercy possible for those whose faith will save them.
- c. Luke writes as though the Old Testament narratives are receiving their next installment.
- i. It is as though the story told in 1 and 2 Samuel is being continued. As there, so here: the mighty are thrown down, judged, and through that the weak and lowly are exalted, saved.
  - ii. The exodus Jesus accomplishes in Jerusalem enables him to proclaim forgiveness to those who have the cosmic drama of God's glory in salvation through judgment enacted on the small stages of their lives.
- d. John's prologue gives insight into the creation narrative, showing the role of Jesus the Word, through whom God made the world.
- i. The prologue also present the major themes of the Gospel as the Baptist testifies that the new exodus and return from exile are beginning, the incarnation of the Word being presented as the coming of the new tabernacle.
    - 1. Jesus typologically fulfills the temple and its feasts, and along the way he presents himself as the I Am: Bread of Life; Light of the World; door for the sheep; Good Shepherd; resurrection and life; way, truth, and life; giver of living water; Bridegroom.
    - 2. Having replaced the temple as the place of God's presence on earth, he puts an end to temple sacrifice when he finishes the work the Father gave him to do on the cross. Raised from the dead, Jesus commissions his disciples, making them the new temple of the Spirit where sin can be forgiven.



- a. Their large haul of fish points forward to the ministry they will have.
- e. Luke's narrative of the Acts done in Jesus' name first shows Jesus presenting himself alive by many proofs, then instructing his disciples.
  - i. Baptized in the Spirit, the disciples announce salvation through judgment for God's glory in the death and resurrection of Jesus.
    - 1. The word makes progress in Jerusalem as the enemies of the gospel find all their efforts judged and thwarted, and through that judgment God's people are delivered.
    - 2. Through persecution the gospel advances from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria.
    - 3. As Paul takes the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth, paganism is exposed as powerless, Roman officials are shown to be unjust, and Jewish opposition to the gospel is seen to be in vain.
  - ii. Those who repent and believe the gospel are brought through judgment to salvation to praise God.

### III. Matthew

- a. The Gospel according to Matthew presents Jesus as the typological fulfillment of Israel's story.
  - i. His death on the cross is the judgment through which salvation comes, and along with that, his healings, teachings, controversies enact both judgment and salvation, glorifying God and showing his disciples the way to salvation by announcing judgment against the way to condemnation.
    - 1. Matthew is about the glory of God in salvation through judgment.
- b. There are two major turning points in the narrative of Matthew's Gospel, at Matthew 4:17 and 16:21. In both places Matthew employs the same phrase to highlight the shift in direction: "From that time Jesus began..."
  - i. This means that what precedes Matthew 4:7 sets up Jesus' public ministry.

- ii. Then all the material between 4:17 and 16:21 presents that public ministry.
- iii. After 16:21, everything trends toward Jerusalem, and empty tomb.
- c. In addition to these two major shifts in direction at 4:17 and 16:21, Matthew marks off five major discourses of Jesus by putting a concluding note at the end of each.
  - i. Matthew 1-2: Jesus relives the history of Israel
  - ii. Matthew 3-4: The Baptist prepares the way by calling Israel to repentance, a call that Jesus himself takes up
  - iii. Matthew 5-7: the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount
  - iv. Matthew 8-9: Sermon on the Mount is validated by mighty works
  - v. Matthew 10: Jesus send his disciples to gather the lost sheep of the house of Israel
  - vi. 11-12: opposition begins to mount
  - vii. 13: the parables communicate in a guarded way the surprising paradoxes and absolute value of the kingdom
  - viii. 14-17: an extended section shows Jesus on mission: healing, providing, disputing, and transfigured in glory on the mountain
  - ix. 18: Jesus teaches his disciples how to deal with sin in the community
  - x. 19-23: He enters Jerusalem where he predicts the destruction of the temple and describes the time of the end
  - xi. 24-25:, calling his disciples to be ready
  - xii. 26-28: he is betrayed, crucified, and raised form the dead.
- d. Jesus Relives the History of Israel
  - i. Matthew has learned from the Chronicler. His Gospel opens the same way Chronicles opens, with a genealogy, and his genealogy opens with the phrase used in the Greek translation to render key “toldeth” formulas (“these are the generations of...”) in Genesis (2:4, 5:2).
    - 1. The purpose of Matthew’s genealogy is the same as the purpose of those in Chronicles. By means of genealogy,

Matthew reaches back and grabs key threads from the Law, Prophets, and Writings, weaves them together, and readies his audience for the continuation of the story begun in the Old Testament.

- a. This genealogy also serves as a quick summary of the entirety of the Old Testament
  - i. See Table 5.3
- ii. Having taken his audience through the long story of Israel in his carefully arranged list of names, Matthew next presents Jesus as recapitulating the history of Israel.
  1. Matthew accomplishes this by showing Jesus as the typological fulfillment of the history of Israel.
    - a. Matthew identifies the events he relates of the early life of Jesus as “fulfilling” four texts in Matthew 1-2
      - i. Isaiah 7:14 in Matthew 1:22-23
      - ii. Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15
      - iii. Jeremiah 31:15 in Matthew 2:17-18
      - iv. And no definable text in Matthew 2:23
      - v. He does quote Micah 5:2 in Matthew 2:5-6, but he does not use “fulfillment” language.
    2. Typological interpretation attends to historical correspondence and escalation. Real events that took place in history are seen to match in sequence and import, and as we progress from a type to fulfillment, we find an increase in significance.
    3. What does typological fulfillment have to do with salvation through judgment for God’s glory?
      - a. The first prophet Matthew cites, Isaiah, was commissioned to harden Israel’s heart “until cities lie waste without inhabitant” (Isa. 6:11 cf. 9-13), that is, until exile.

- b. The second prophet Matthew cites, Hosea, mentioned the exodus from Egypt (Hos. 11:1-4) in a context where he said that the northern kingdom would not go to Egypt but would be exiled by Assyria (11:5-6). The mention of the exodus from Egypt in the context of the destruction of the north by Assyria hints at a new exodus after exile.
- c. The third prophet, Jeremiah, spoke of Rachel weeping at the slaughter of the children of Israel when Babylon exiled them from the land (Jer. 31:2, 10,16)
  - i. It seems then that Matthew claims these passages are fulfilled in the events of the early life of Jesus because the exile is coming to its completion. The prophets pointed beyond the judgment of exile to a future day of salvation, and a central feature of the shining glory of God that would come through and after judgment was the raising up of a new Davidic king, a branch.
  - iii. According to Matthew, the exile is coming to its end, fulfilled in Jesus, and the salvation that comes through judgment begins to dawn with his appearance. Matthew presents Jesus as the fulfillment of the salvation through judgment for God's glory revealed in the Prophets.
- e. Call to Kingdom Repentance
  - i. The recapitulation of Israel's history and its fulfillment continues.
    - 1. Matthew identifies John as the voice in the wilderness, and later Jesus identifies John as the Elijah who was to come. The Baptist is the typological fulfillment of the expected Elijah-forerunner, even being clothed like Elijah.

- ii. In Jesus God is glorified in salvation through judgment, fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies and typological patterns.
  - 1. While the seed of the serpent, the brood of vipers denounced by John (3:7), are warned of the wrath to come, the seed of the women, Jesus of Nazareth, fulfills all righteousness as heaven opens, the Spirit descends, and the Father speaks his approval. (3:13-17).
- iii. Having passed through the waters of Jordan, he is led by the Spirit into the wilderness. It is as though he has been brought up from Egypt to the wilderness where Israel failed, but here the star predicted in the midst of Israel's failures (Num. 24:17, cf. Matt. 2:2,9-10) triumphs where the nation was defeated.
  - 1. Citing Scripture to shield himself from Satan's fiery darts, Jesus shows himself to be the king who lives out what Deuteronomy 17 sought to inculcate.
  - 2. He shows himself to be the blessed man of Psalm 1.
  - 3. Salvation comes through judgment for God's glory is seen in the overarching story of the end of the exile and the new exodus that Jesus will accomplish, and in the events and incidents along the way.
    - a. Matthew is claiming that Jesus fulfills the expectation for the deepest darkness of the exile, and not morning has begun to break as the day that will bring God's glory begin to dawn.
- iv. Then one of Matthew's key structural markers in his Gospel announces Jesus' call that people repent because of the nearness of the Kingdom.
  - 1. The exile is coming to an end. The light is beginning to break. Therefore, people should repent and experience the joy of the new Exodus.
  - 2. In keeping with this, Jesus calls his disciples to be those who will gather the scattered exile.

- a. Jer. 16:13-15 Yahweh announces that he would gather many *fishermen*, who would fish his people out. The promise informs Jesus' telling Peter and Andrew that he would make them "fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19)
- f. The message of the Kingdom (5-7)
  - i. The seed of the woman, born of a virgin to save his people from their sins, comes up from Egypt, passes through the waters, faces down temptation in the wilderness, gathers his fishermen, then ascends the mountain to give his people a new word from God.
    - 1. Those blessed to live in the way Jesus describes "will inherit the earth" (5:5), and the word rendered "earth" here could just as well be trans. "land."
    - 2. The salvation Jesus offers, which itself comes through the judgment of exile, will also come through messianic woes.
      - a. The followers of Jesus are to do good through all the purging judgments they face until the kingdom for which they strive comes, and in their persevering and receiving of the kingdom of God's glory will shine.
    - 3. There is a common thread that runs through the body of the Sermon on the Mount.... Jesus is condemning the false way in order to bring to the people the way of truth. He means to save his disciples through the judgment he pronounces on external obedience.
      - a. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus seeks to produce people who live out God's glory, going through the narrow gate (7:13-14), rejecting false teachers (7:15-20), being delivered from final judgment (7:21-23) by his explanation of the outcome of the two ways (7:24-27).

- i. Those who build their lives on the teaching of Jesus experience salvation through the exposure of unsound thinking that his teaching accomplishes.
- g. Mighty Works That Confirm the Teaching (8-9)
  - i. The mighty works in Matthew 8-9 are tied to the authoritative teaching in chapters 5-7 by the repetition of Matthew 4:23 in Matthew 9:35.
    - 1. The mighty works validate the authoritative teaching.
  - ii. These mighty works enact salvation through judgment for God's glory.
    - 1. Hereby Jesus is condemning the work of darkness. Reversing its judgments, he annuls its power and repeals its verdicts. Jesus is saving by rendering judgment on the effects of the curse.
  - iii. Jesus saves through judgment, and what results is glory for him and God: his disciples marvel (8:27); the crowds are afraid and glorify (9:7); the reports are broadcasted (9:26); as his fame spreads (9:31) and the crowds marvel (9:33).
    - 1. Jesus brings salvation through judgment for God's glory, calling sinners unto himself (9:9-13).
    - 2. Jesus comes announcing himself as the Bridegroom, offering the new wine of the new covenant (9:14-17). The new covenant wine is for those saved through judgment for God's glory.
- h. Gathering the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel (Matthew 10)
  - i. Enabled by his clear word to overcome every human fear and stand against any human power, they are saved, and those martyred declare God's glory. The followers of Jesus also declare the supreme worth of God and his messiah as they leave home to announce his kingdom, thereby showing their devotion to Christ

to be greater than their devotion to father, mother, son, or daughter (10:32, 37).

1. Through judgment salvation comes and God is glorified.

i. Rising Opposition (Matthew 11-12)

- i. The many parallels exist between John and Jesus hint that they will meet similar opposition
- ii. The easy yoke and the light burden of rest in the Land of Promise reverberates with the statements in the Old Testament of when Israel enjoyed rest in the land. Jesus is bringing an end to exile through all the tribulation and rejections he is enduring.
- iii. Jesus continues to bring salvation through judgment as he heals (12:15, 22), and God is glorified as people are amazed (12:23). The logic of Jesus carries the force of truth as he shows that the kingdom of God has come (12:28), he threatens those who blaspheme the Spirit (12:31-32), and he denounces his enemies as a brood of vipers, seed of the serpent (12:34).

1. Again, he interprets the Old Testament typologically, asserting his superiority over both Jonah and Solomon (12:38-42).

j. Kingdom Parables (Matthew 13)

- i. God's glory is demonstrated as the supreme value of his kingdom is highlighted while the value of other things is condemned—and through the condemnation those who hear are led to salvation, and they shine like the sun with the glory of God (13:43).
  1. The seed of the serpent (13:38) may hide among the seed of the woman, but they will be judged (13:42). The kingdom is so valuable that it is worth selling all one has to gain it (13:44-46).

k. Jesus on Mission (Matthew 14-17)

- i. When Jesus asks his disciples how the people identify him, the audience of Matthew's Gospel comes to a crucial turning point in the narrative. A new Elijah was predicted in the Old Testament



(Mal. 4:5), and this would perhaps explain why some identify Jesus with Elijah.

ii. But no Old Testament text identifies that a new Jeremiah will arise, nor is there any indication of a new John the Baptist. Why, then, would the crowds identify Jesus with Jeremiah or John the Baptist (16:13-14)?

1. I submit that this identification reflects a typologically generated expectation for a new suffering prophet. What Jeremiah, Elijah, and the Baptist have in common is that they were all genuine prophets who were rejected and persecuted by the people to whom God sent them.

iii. Peter's answer goes in a different direction

1. Having affirmed Peter, that Jesus is the son of God, Jesus then seems to affirm what the crowds have discerned when he asserts that, like the suffering prophets who preceded him, he will go to Jerusalem and suffer (16:21).

a. Through judgment salvation will come to God's glory. Jesus will go to Jerusalem and suffer.

2. And through the judgment on Satan's kingdom the kingdom of God will be built.

3. The gates of hell will not hold people against the onslaught of the kingdom of heaven. They will not stand. Jesus will build his church.

a. He judges Satan and his kingdom, and through that judgment he saves his people. In this triumph the glory of God shines.

1. Discipleship (Matthew 18)

i. Chapter 18 presents Jesus addressing his followers regarding sin.

1. Throughout the discourse in Matthew 18 on sin and discipleship, sin is clearly judged, and the possibility of mercy is held out for those who will repent of sin and trust in God. In this God's glory shines in justice and mercy,

which is another way to say that he is glorified in salvation through judgment.

m. Entering Jerusalem (Matthew 19-23)

- i. Judgment will fall on Jerusalem precisely because her leadership and the majority of her people have not been like the blind men crying out to the Son of David for mercy.
- ii. Matthew 21 presents the judgment on Jerusalem from several angles
  1. Jesus saves the weak and childlike even as he condemns the strong and proud.
- iii. Faithless Israel is like the fig tree that Jesus curses (21:18-20), and it seems that his word about the disciples' removing the mountain into the sea by faith points to the removal of the temple mount (21:21-22).
- iv. The parable of the two sons means that repentant sinners do God's will, while smug religious leadership agrees to serve but does not (21:28-32).
  1. Both Pharisees (22:15-22) and Sadducees (22:23-33) seek to trap Jesus, but they are silenced, and people marvel at Jesus (22:22, 33).
  2. The hick carpenter from Nazareth shuts their mouths and condemns their unbelief, and as he triumphs over them, his glory is made known.
  3. From Abel to Zechariah, all the blood of the righteous will come on them as they typologically fulfill this pattern in the murder of Jesus (23:29-36). They are the wicked tenants who think to kill the son and take his inheritance (21:38). They are seed of the serpent, a brood of vipers (23:33). Their house (the temple?) is desolate, and they will not see Jesus again until they bless him as he comes in the name of the Lord (23:37-39).

- a. Somehow, through judgments Jesus announces against them, salvation will apparently come even for Israel.
- n. The Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25)
  - i. As the cross looms large on the horizon, Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple (24:1-2).
  - ii. Through the judgments of the time of tribulation, salvation will come. Through the judgments of the false christs and false prophets (24:24), salvation will come. And through the announcement of these judgments before they happen, Jesus means to save his disciples and Matthew means to teach audience.
  - iii. Salvation will come through judgment, and the glory of Christ will be more impressive than words can tell.
- o. Passion, Resurrection, Commission (Matthew 26-28)
  - i. The end of the exile, like the exodus, came through a Passover celebration. As Jesus celebrates the Passover with his followers, he gives them a new meal and a new cup, and in the cup is the blood of the new covenant (26:26-28).
    - 1. As a new exodus takes place, like the first exodus, the new one comes with a covenant. Like the first exodus it comes through the slaughter of a lamb, whose blood covers the people. The blood of the lamb on the lintel is typologically fulfilled in the blood of Jesus, “which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins” (26:28).
  - ii. As if to highlight the connections between the death of Jesus and the exile, the words John records Jesus saying when he cleansed the temple—about the temple being destroyed and raised after three days (John 2:19)—resurface at Jesus’ trial (26:61). The death of Jesus is something of a typological fulfillment of the destruction of the temple.

1. Through judgment salvation comes, then glory, as the Son of Man will take his seat at the right hand of power and come on the clouds of heaven (26:64).
- iii. Just as Ezekiel prophesied about the dry bones coming to life at the end of the exile (Ezek. 37:1-14), tombs are opened and saints are raised from the dead (Matt. 27:52-53).
  1. The exile is over. The new exodus has begun.
- p. The center of the Theology of Matthew
  - i. The Gospel of Matthew shows the fulfillment of the exile in the death of Jesus, and through that judgment salvation comes for God's people to God's glory.
    1. So the kingdom will come in salvation through judgment, and the purpose of the kingdom is the enjoyment of God's glory under the rule of his king.
    2. In Matthew the kingdom comes as a result of the new exodus and the return from exile that Jesus accomplishes—in short, in salvation through judgment accomplished by the messiah for the glory of God.
  - ii. The center of Matthew's theology is the glory of God in salvation through judgment, supremely manifested in the cross of Christ.

**Discussion Questions:**

- How has Hamilton's writing helped you in understanding these scripture books of Scripture?
- What are the most significant insights you have taken away from the reading so far?
- What do you think about his center of theology?
- Is he forcing his reading on the text, or does it naturally flow from Scripture?
- What do you think about Matthew's genealogy as an announcement of the continuation of the Old Testament?
- How does Jesus ending the exile and bringing about a new exodus inform the way we understand his calling of the disciples?

## Week 16: Mark

### I. Mark

- a. Like Matthew, Mark presents Jesus as the culmination of the long story of salvation through judgment for God's glory that began in the garden and culminates in Jesus. Jesus is the end of the judgment of exile, and the judgment is completed in his death on the cross.
  - i. Mark presents Jesus as the embodiment of salvation through judgment for God's glory.
- b. The Baptist and Jesus (Mark 1:1-13)
  - i. The Gospel of Mark declares that through the judgment of exile salvation is coming in Jesus the messiah for the glory of God.
- c. Jesus in Galilee (Mark 1:14-8:30)
  - i. The most remarkable feature of Mark's fast moving narrative is its central character, Jesus.
    1. He calls men to leave livelihoods and families, and to fish out the exile with him (1:16-20)
    2. He teaches with authority (1:22), commanding unclean spirits (1:25), who obey (1:26)! People are amazed (1:27), and his fame spreads (1:28).
    3. Jesus casts out demons (1:29-34); he cleanses lepers at will (1:40-44).
      - a. In these actions he overturns the condemnation of sin and reverses its sentence. This is salvation through judgment—on the judgment itself.
    4. Jesus has the nerve to claim that those who follow him have been given the secret of the kingdom of God (4:11), while those who do not understand the parable are experiencing the fulfillment of Isaiah 6:9-10.
      - a. Mark presents this fulfillment of Isaiah to the same end that Matthew did, to contribute to the theme of the realization of the exile in Jesus.

5. As will be seen from the cycle of the three passion predictions, three failure on the part of the disciples, and three teaching of Jesus on discipleship (see table 5.6), the disciples are like the blind man, partially seeing Three times in Mark 8-10 Jesus predicts his death, the disciples fail to understand or to respond appropriately, and he then teaches them about discipleship.
- d. Before we move to the next section of Mark's Gospel, we should connect the dots between the impudent audacity of Jesus and the glory of God in salvation through judgment.
    - i. Casting out demons, he reveals that he has entered the home of the strong man, bound him, weighed him in the scales, found him wanting, and he is now plundering his possessions.
      1. Jesus brings salvation through judgment, and in response his fame spreads, the people marvel, and everyone glorifies God.
        - a. Mark does not use the formulation, but it is clear that the centerpiece of the theology of the theology of his Gospel is that Jesus is bringing in the kingdom by conquering all other kingdoms. His is glorifying God in salvation achieved through judgment.
  - e. Jesus on the way to Jerusalem (Mark 8:31-10:52)
    - i. Having gone about condemning all the principalities and powers and Pharisees and Herods, saving those they lifted no finger to help Jesus responds to Peter's confession with the announcement that he will bring salvation by undergoing judgment himself, in his own person.
    - ii. Not only does Jesus overturn all human expectations regarding the way the world works, but he makes himself and his message the nonnegotiable element of the equation.

- iii. In Mark 8:35 Jesus demand that his followers act for his sake. This is powerful evidence of “early high Christology.”
  - 1. It also brings a certain tension that I hope has been rising as I have described the actions of Jesus in Mark: does Jesus have the right to conduct himself with divine audacity or does he not?
    - a. However the audience of Mark’s Gospel might answer that question, Mark’s answer is clear.
- iv. What Jesus goes on to say give a glimpse into why taking up one’s cross to follow him to Golgotha might be the right choice.
  - 1. In 8:36-37 Jesus speaks of gaining the whole world but losing one’s soul, which makes clear that he assumes that there is something beyond this world and this life worth losing everything in this world and this life to gain.
    - a. In other words, Jesus is not simply saying that he is going to Jerusalem to lead a rebellion against Rome, and that anyone who wants to go with him needs to be prepared for crucifixion if the cause fails.
      - i. He is not merely saying that one’s allegiance to him determines one’s earthly destiny; he is claiming, with a divine audacity, that one’s allegiance to him determines the fate of one’s soul.
  - 2. Jesus is going to come with a host of heavenly being and crush the kingdoms of the earth, and through that great judgment salvation will come for those who have risked all for his cause.
    - a. Jesus seeks to accomplish salvation through the announcement of judgment for the glory of God.
- v. Jesus renders judgment on disputes about divorce (10:1-12), on low views of children (10:13-16), and on a worldly preference for wealth over him and his kingdom (vv. 17-31).

1. Through judgment salvation will come for God's glory, and Jesus will serve "the many" by taking their judgment in order to ransom them.
- vi. 10: 46-52: Sight comes through the judgment of blindness, through the judgment of one's own ability to restore one's sight, through the judgment of the source of blindness in a world broken by sin. Through judgment salvation comes to God's glory.
- f. Jesus in Jerusalem (Mark 11:1-16:8 [20])
  - i. The audacity continues: Jesus declared that the temple will be destroyed, that many will claim to be him, that his message will be carried to all nations and that his followers will be hated for the sake of his name (13:2, 6, 10, 12).
    1. Interpreting Daniel, Jesus warns of an abomination of desolation and a great tribulation, then his apocalyptic coming (13:14-27).
    2. Through the judgment of that time of tribulation salvation will come when the Son of Man comes in power and glory to gather his elect and defeat his enemies (13:19, 26-27).
  - ii. The conspiracy is introduced (14:1-2), the Lord is anointed (14:3-9), the traitor is found (14:10-11), the Passover is eaten (14:12-16), the Scriptures are fulfilled, and the traitor's judgment is announced (14:17-21).
    1. Fittingly, the new exodus, like the first, is inaugurated by a Passover meal. At that meal Jesus redirects its symbolic elements.
      - a. The unleavened bread that symbolized a hasty departure from Egypt henceforth symbolize his pure body, broken on behalf of his people.
      - b. The cup, likely the third cup that symbolized redemption, will henceforth symbolize his blood, "poured out for many" (14:22-24).



2. Through the judgment that will fall in the breaking of his body and shedding of his blood, salvation will come, and Jesus will next drink of the fruit of the vine in the kingdom of God (14:25).
- g. The center of the Theology of Mark
- i. In Jesus salvation comes through judgment for God's glory. In his ministry in Galilee Jesus condemns false sources of authority, upstages ineffectual source of healing, judges unclean spirits, and demons, and shows the folly of the world's wisdom.
  - ii. In Jerusalem he brings salvation through judgment in his ransoming death, and symbolically the long story of salvation through judgment in Israel's exile is resolved by means of the new exodus and return from exile that Jesus inaugurates in his body and blood.
    1. The center of Mark's theology is the glory of God in salvation through judgment.
    2. Jesus not only brings salvation through judgment for God's glory, but he experiences it in himself in his death and resurrection.

**Discussion Questions:**

- How has Hamilton's writing helped you in understanding these scripture books of Scripture?
- What are the most significant insights you have taken away from the reading so far?
- What do you think about his center of theology?
- Is he forcing his reading on the text, or does it naturally flow from Scripture?
- How does Jesus' "binding of the strong man" help us understanding God's glory in salvation through judgment?
- How does God's glory in salvation through judgment inform our understanding of the cross?

## Week 17: Luke

### I. Luke

- a. If Matthew reminds readers of the Pentateuch and Mark is Isaianic, the Gospel according to Luke bears a striking resemblance to the narrative in Samuel.
  - i. Like Samuel:
    1. Luke opens with a godly priest and a remarkable birth.
    2. The seed of promise (David in Samuel, Jesus in Luke) is raised up through difficulty, suffers, and in the end is vindicated.
    3. Luke pursues his story across two-volumes, with the first tracing the rise of the king, and the second showing him enthroned and reigning.
    4. Luke-Acts is a story of reversals, with the small and weak exalted while the proud and strong are brought low.
    5. The center of theology of Luke's Gospel is the glory of God in salvation through judgment.
  - ii. Jesus brings salvation as he heals, teaches, conquers, and dies, and this salvation comes through judgment as he defeats his enemy and pronounces condemnation on those allied with Satan, who falls from heaven like lightning.
    1. The glory of God and Jesus are expressed in a number of different ways in the Gospel of Luke, and table 5.8 seeks to account for this variety and to note where these expressions are found.
- b. The discussion here will be structured according to the following understanding of Lucan literary structure:
  - i. Luke 1-3: Luke's opening narratives present parallel accounts of the births of John and Jesus, moving then to the Baptist's preparation of the way.
  - ii. Luke 4-9: Having overcome temptation, Jesus ministers in Galilee.

- iii. Luke 9:51-19:27: Jesus then sets his face towards Jerusalem and slowly makes his way there.
  - iv. Luke 19:28-24:53: Jesus triumphantly enters Jerusalem, where he is betrayed, arrested, crucified, and raised.
- c. Preparation for Jesus' Ministry (Luke 1-3)
- i. Luke's prologue (1:1-4) declares that the purpose of the Gospel is to give a believer, Theophilus, certainty concerning the things he has been taught.
    - 1. Based on my study of the narrative, I take this reference to refer to the way that Luke has juxtaposed mutually interpretive episodes.
      - a. See table 5.10 and 394-395 for the various parallels.
    - 2. Luke want his message to be taken to heart and pondered, and he commends this behavior by noting how it was modeled for his audience
      - a. See table 5.11
    - 3. These narratives of the circumstances surrounding the births of John and Jesus are saturated with the glory of God in salvation through Judgment.
  - ii. Luke also depicts salvation through judgment happening in the proclamation of the Baptist. In response to John's call to repentance, announcement of the second exodus and return from exile, and warning of the wrath to come (3:1-9), crowds tax collectors, and soldiers are saved through the warnings of judgment (3:10-17).
- d. Temptation and Beginning of Jesus' Public Ministry (Luke 4)
- i. Unlike Adam, who was in a garden, Jesus is in the wilderness
  - ii. Unlike Adam, who had all the trees of the garden for food, Jesus eats nothing for forty days.
  - iii. Like Adam, Jesus is tempted by the Devil.
  - iv. Unlike Adam, Jesus trusts God's word and conquers.

1. Salvation comes through judgment for God's glory. Judgment fell on Adam for his sin, and Jesus brings judgment on Satan by resisting his temptation.
  2. Thus God is glorified in salvation through judgment as Jesus resists temptation.
- v. Then Jesus goes from Nazareth, where having identified himself as Isaiah's anointed servant of Yahweh, he draws typological parallels between himself and Elijah and Elisha.
1. Luke then validates the claims that Jesus has made by showing him teaching with authority, casting out demons, building a reputation, and rebuking sickness.
    - a. Jesus has set out to preach the good news of God's kingdom, and that good news celebrates the glory of God in salvation through judgment.
- e. Ministry in Galilee (Luke 5-9)
- i. Having healed the woman with the flow of blood and raised the daughter of Jairus, Jesus sends out his disciples. Luke narrates this Baptist's death, the return of the disciples, and the feeding of the five thousand, before coming to a decisive turning point in the narrative.
  - ii. As in Matthew and Mark, so in Luke: at the account of Jesus' asking the disciples who the crowds say he is, the narrative begins to turn a corner.
    1. What this means for the thesis of this book must be understood: the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is the definitive moment when the glory of God is displayed in salvation through judgment.
      - a. Thus the claim can be made that at the level of narrative structure, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all pivot on and drive toward the demonstration of the glory of God in salvation through judgment in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

- b. This is the center of the theology of the Gospels.
    - 2. The cross of Jesus upholds the justice and mercy of God, glorifying him.
  - iii. Two incidents that relate to things begun done in the name of Jesus portend the many things done in his name in Acts.
  - iv. Then Jesus sets his face to go to Jerusalem.
    - 1. This portion of the Gospel of Luke is thick with the center of Luke's theology, which is that Jesus had come as the Messiah, who is the supreme agent of God for the manifestation of his glory in salvation through judgment.
- f. On the Way to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-19:27)
- i. The high degree of overlap between Matthew, Mark, and Luke allow for some summary at this point, let the discussion grow unnecessarily repetitive.
    - 1. Within the scope a purpose of the argument of this book, such summary can function to demonstrate the thesis of this book and allow us to move forward.
  - ii. Jesus brings salvation through the judgment he accomplished on the ruler of the forces of darkness.
    - 1. Through judgment on the forces of darkness and on the ways of thinking that align with those forces, Jesus intends to save people, delivering them to true thoughts that glorify God.
      - a. Jesus sets out to accomplish salvation through judgment for God's glory, as we see in Luke's recitation of all that Jesus began to do and teach (cf. Acts 1:1).
    - 2. Indeed, this salvation by faith through judgment puts the enemies of God and Christ to shame while the believing rejoice at the mighty acts of God (cf. 13:17).
- g. In Jerusalem: Arrest, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Commission (Luke 19:28-24:53).

- i. Once again this section can be quickly summarized: Jesus enters Jerusalem to the praise of God.
  1. The death and resurrection of Jesus are the new exodus that eclipses the exodus from Egypt as the definitive moment of God's glorifying himself in salvation through judgment.
  2. Through the judgment he experienced on the cross, Jesus brings salvation, and those who hear the report marvel.
    - a. If we want to know how he interpreted the Scriptures, we need only examine the way the Scriptures are interpreted in Luke-Acts and the rest of the New Testament.
    - b. Luke closes his Gospel in a way that prepares readers for the continuation of his story in the book of Acts.
- h. The Center of the Theology of Luke
  - i. The Gospel according to Luke, Jesus is the one who comes as the new David to accomplish the new exodus and inaugurate the new covenant through the definitive display of the glory of God in salvation through judgment at the cross.
    1. This salvation that is achieved as judgment falls on Jesus opens the way for sins to be forgiven, and this forgiveness is so glorious that it should be proclaimed to all the nations.

**Discussion Questions:**

- How has Hamilton's writing helped you in understanding these scripture books of Scripture?
- What are the most significant insights you have taken away from the reading so far?
- What do you think about his center of theology?
- Is he forcing his reading on the text, or does it naturally flow from Scripture?
- How does Hamilton's teaching concerning the parallel's between Samuel and Luke help inform our understanding of biblical theology?
- Do Matthew, Mark, and Luke really pivot around God's glory in salvation through judgment (i.e. the cross), as Hamilton suggests?

## Week 18: John

### I. John

- a. The glory of God pervades the Fourth Gospel, and it is most clearly seen in the demonstration of God's justice and mercy when Jesus is glorified on the cross.
  - i. Leading up to the climactic moment, Jesus typologically fulfills the temple and its ministries, fulfills Old Testament expectation for a good shepherd, declares his unity with the Father, and sends his disciples as the Father sent him.
- b. The Gospel consists of
  - i. 1:1-18—A prologue
  - ii. 1:19-12:50—A Book of Signs
  - iii. 13-20—A Book of Glory
  - iv. 21—An Epilogue
    1. The Bible is more to be admired than the Louvre Museum, and the Gospel of John is perhaps its *Mona Lisa*.
    2. John's theology centers on the glory of God in salvation through judgment.
- c. Prologue (1:1-18)
  - i. See table 5.14 for the Chiasm in John's Prologue
    1. The opening of John's prologue is matched by its closing verses (16-18), where the allusion to Genesis in John 1:1 is matched by the salvation-historical placement of the revelation that comes through Jesus in the statement in 1:17 that "the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus the Messiah."
    2. To understanding how the theme of the rejection of Jesus is introduced here, we must observe how the theme of the rejection of Jesus is introduced here, we must observe the way that John's prologue introduces his major themes.

- a. This theme will be resumed in John when the Gospel declares, for instance, that the wrath of God remains on those who do not believe in Jesus (3:36), that those who have done evil will rise to judgment (5:29), and that those who oppose Jesus are seed of the serpent, of their father the devil (8:44).
  - ii. The Gospel of John clearly teaches that the new birth gives people an *ability* that they did not otherwise have. This new ability enables those who are born again to perceive the glory of Jesus and believe in him.
  - iii. This Prologue—so full of glory, salvation, and judgment—introduces the Gospel written “that you may believe that Jesus is the messiah, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name” (20:31).
    - 1. And this story is told so that people will be saved through its proleptic announcement of judgment on those who do not believe in Jesus, through the persuasion that comes by the description of the manifest glory of Jesus in these pages.
      - a. John’s Gospel is about the glory of God in salvation through judgment in Jesus the messiah.
- d. The Book of Signs (1:19-12:50)
  - i. The Fourth Gospel opens with the Baptist announcing that the salvation through the judgment of the exile is beginning to dawn.
    - 1. He himself is the voice in the wilderness, preparing the way for the return of Yahweh to Zion (1:23)
  - ii. The Baptist is clearly one who prepares the way, though he is not literally Elijah (1:21), he fulfills the prophecy, and Jesus is the king messiah who will pour out the Spirit in fulfillment of eschatological expectation.
  - iii. Not only does this first chapter of John’s Gospel identify Jesus as the messiah through whom salvation comes after exile, but it also



begins to point to the way that salvation will come through the judgment that will fall on the messiah.

1. The messiah himself will be judged, and through that judgment will come salvation. As John's Gospel unfolds, the notes sounded in this first chapter are developed and explicated.
- iv. In John 2 Jesus attends a wedding and the wine runs out (2:3).
1. The filling up of the jars used in Old Testament purification rites seems to symbolize the fulfillment of the time in which such things would be done, and out of that fulfillment Jesus brings something as superior as wine to water, the best wine, no less (2:10).
    - a. The message seems to be that the fullness of time has come, and something new is about to be brought forth.
  2. This message is reinforced by the following episode at Passover in 2:13-25.
    - a. The first instance of festival fulfillment in John's Gospel brings together Passover and exile themes, promising also the resurrection of the body of Jesus.
      - i. Jesus' zeal for God's house will take him to his death.
        1. There appears to be a deeper reference, however, to the temple, the people of God, for ultimately Jesus goes to the cross for God's people, in whom he will take up residence by his Spirit, making them the temple.
      - ii. This reference to the destruction of the temple brings into the Passover context an exile overtone. Jesus speaks of his death in

- terms of the destruction of the temple  
because he is the fulfillment of the temple.
- iii. His death is the destruction of the temple  
because his death is the darkest moment of  
exile.
    1. This passage, then, present Jesus as  
the typological fulfillment of the  
Passover.
    - b. As with the wedding in John 2, marriage overtones  
color the narrative in John 3 as the Baptist testifies  
that Jesus is the Bridegroom
  3. The power of Jesus and the significance of faith are  
reinforced in the second sign Jesus does.
    - a. The official believe and obeys the remarkable  
command of Jesus to go (4:50), and before he  
reaches home, he hears that his son was healed at  
the hour Jesus said he would live (4:53).
  4. It is almost painful to try to summarize the ways that  
John's theology centers on God's glory in salvation  
through judgment.
    - a. So much is passed over without comment.
      - i. For the purposes of the argument being  
advanced here, I simply observe that Jesus  
has much to say about the judgment he will  
execute (5:27,29,30), much to say about  
those who testify to the rightness of his  
cause, and about the salvation he offers.
  - v. This offensive message is spoken in words that are spirit and life,,  
and only the Spirit gives life (6:63). Only those drawn to Jesus by  
the Spirit (6:44,65), those given to him by the Father (6:37, 39),  
can receive this message.

- vi. John 7 and 8 seem united on the theme of Jesus' response to those seeking his life at the Feast of Tabernacles
- vii. God's glory is displayed in his saving the blind man and consigning those who refuse to acknowledge the glory of God in Christ to guilt.
- viii. Then in John 11, Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead.
  - 1. The return from exile is dawning. Judgment is reaching its appointed fulfillment. The new exodus will soon begin.
  - 2. The sickness and death of Lazarus are for the glory of God in Christ (11:4), and so it is with the exile, new exodus, and return from exile being carried out in the life of Jesus.
  - 3. Those who believe will not die; indeed, they will see the glory of God. (11:40).
- ix. What follows in John's Gospel will fulfill those aspects of Zechariah as well, and John 12 sets the stage for the glorification of Jesus at the cross, where salvation come through judgment for the glory of God
  - 1. In fact, John 12 connects Zechariah's struck shepherd to Isaiah's suffering servant, with the result that the first half of John's Gospel concludes by focusing on the fulfillment of these line of promise in Jesus the messiah.
  - 2. The temple is about to be destroyed, this destruction reenacting the exile.
  - 3. The way to that eschatological salvation goes through the judgment that will fall on the messiah, and that moment of judgment bringing salvation is all about the glory of God in Christ.
- x. The glorification spoken of in 12:23 is clearly the cross, for in John 12:24 Jesus speaks of the grain of wheat that falls into the earth, dies, and bears fruit, and in 12:25 he speaks of losing life.
- xi. Jesus and the Father are joined together to glorify one another at the cross. The cross will be the moment when the world is judged

and the archenemy defeated, as Jesus says in 12:31, “Now is the judgment of this world, now the rule of this world will be case out.”

1. The sins of the world will be exposed and condemned by the cross of Christ, Satan will be conquered, and Jesus and the Father will be glorified. Salvation comes through judgment for God’s glory.
- xii. Those afraid of the consequences of believe in him prefer the glory of man to the glory of God (12:42-43; 5:44)
- e. The Book of Glory (John 13-20)
  - i. The yearly Passover in John 2, 6, and 11 in John 1-12 shows the events of Jesus’ ministry unfolding over the course of several years, and the feast in John 5 might be yet another Passover.
    1. By contrast, the events in 13-20 focus on
      - a. the night Jesus is betrayed (13-18:27)
      - b. the crucifixion (18:28-19:42)
      - c. and the day of resurrection (20:1-29)
    - ii. Jesus washing his disciples feet indicates that Jesus is teaching his disciples not only that he will typologically fulfill the pattern of the events experienced by the nation at the exile, but also that he will typologically fulfill the pattern of events David experienced in having a trusted companion become a traitor.
    - iii. What Jesus is about to accomplish on the cross will glorify God in salvation through judgment, and it will pattern Christian living.
      1. Jesus is about to lay down his life to love others and glorify God on the cross, and that is the way he urges his disciples to show that they belong to him.
    - iv. At this point we can reflect on the ways that God and Christ will be glorified in the cross. God will be glorified in mercy and justice.
      1. His justice will be seen in the outpouring of his wrath to uphold truth and establish his righteousness.

2. His mercy will be seen in the fact that the substitutionary death of Jesus makes it possible for God righteously to extend forgiveness to those who believe.
  - a. God's love and justice, then, are put on display at the cross.
- v. The cross uniquely displays that both Jesus and the Father are committed to justice and mercy, even unto death.
  1. The cross displays that Jesus and the Father are unique—holy—in their devotion to righteousness, to mercy and to one another.
- vi. As Jesus prays in John 17, two concerns predominate.
  1. He asks his Father to glorify the Father (17:1, 4-5),
  2. And he asks the Father to secure the disciples such that they will be kept in the name of the Father to experience the glory of Jesus (17:6, 10-13, 17, 22, 24, 26).
  3. Jesus prays that the disciples will live out the salvation that comes through judgment for God's glory. In their lives, they will love each other, condemning by their deeds all selfishness, injustice, and God-dishonoring behavior.
- vii. Through judgment comes salvation
  1. on the first day of the week Jesus rises from the dead (20:1-10).
  2. He appears to Mary (20:11-18)
  3. Commissions his disciples as the new temple (20:19-23)
  4. Convinces Thomas that he is Lord and God (20:24-29)
  5. That people might believe and have life (20:30-31)
- f. Epilogue (John 21)
  - i. The catch of fish points to the way the disciples will catch men (21:1-14)
  - ii. Reinstatement of Peter (21:15-23).
  - iii. John's testimony is true (21:24-25).
- g. The Center of the theology of John

- i. As with the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the center of the theology of the Gospel of John is the glory of God in salvation through judgment.
- ii. In John, Jesus comes as the typological fulfillment of both the temple and the suffering servant.
  1. He fulfills Israel's festivals and sacrificial system precisely *through* his fulfillment of the role of the new suffering Davidic servant.
- iii. John 12, 13, and 17 lay the groundwork for the cross to be understood as the moment when God and Christ are glorified and glorify one another, for at the cross love and truth meet, righteousness and peace kiss each other (cf. Ps. 85:10)
- iv. The love of Jesus upholds justice and extends mercy
  1. Through judgment that falls on Jesus, salvation comes.
  2. That judgment is depicted in such a way that the death of Jesus is to be interpreted in light of the cosmic story (John 1:1), and within that, in terms of the history of Israel, so that in the death and resurrection of Jesus the exile is completed, and the new exodus and return from exile begin.
- v. Salvation has come through judgment for God's glory.

**Discussion Questions:**

- How has Hamilton's writing helped you in understanding these scripture books of Scripture?
- What are the most significant insights you have taken away from the reading so far?
- What do you think about his center of theology?
- Is he forcing his reading on the text, or does it naturally flow from Scripture?
- How does the destruction of the temple connect with Passover?
- How does Jesus providing for the multitudes connect with Israel in the desert?

## Week 19: Acts

### I. Acts

- a. The book of Acts has two programmatic statements that structure the volume, and both have to do with proclamation.
  - i. First, Acts 1:8 Jesus tells his disciples that they will be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
    1. Acts then shows the witness borne in
      - a. Jerusalem in chapters 1-7
      - b. Samaria in chapter 8-12
      - c. And to the ends of the earth in chapters 13-28
    - ii. In Acts 9:15 Paul is told that he will carry the name of the Lord before the Gentiles, Kings, and Israelites.
      1. The remainder of the book shows Paul doing just this.
- b. See pages 421-422 for the various parallels of 1 and 2 Samuel with Luke-Acts
- c. The display of the glory of God and Christ that saturates the book of Acts centered on the salvation that comes through judgment.
  - i. This salvation through judgment is manifested in two primary ways
    1. First, is through the proclamation of the redemption accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus.
    2. The second is the preservation and growth of the church through the judgment that falls on her enemies.
      - a. See table 5.22
- d. Witness to the Resurrection in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7)
  - i. Acts 1: sets the stage for the day of Pentecost, which is described in Acts 2.
  - ii. Acts 3-4 largely focuses on the healing of a lame man at the temple gate and the conflicts engendered by it with the religious leadership.

- iii. Acts 5 tells of the death of Ananias and Sapphira, before again showing the apostles in conflict with the Jewish religious establishment.
- iv. Acts 6 introduces deacons and Stephen
- v. Acts 7 largely consist of Stephen's speech.
  - 1. His speech provides an exposition of several themes sounded out in earlier chapters
  - 2. Flowing out of the central theme of God's glory in salvation through judgment in Acts are three main ways in which this theme is established
    - a. First, there is announcement that God has fulfilled the Scriptures in his death and resurrection of Jesus.
    - b. Second, there is the announcement of judgment on the sinners who crucified Jesus, and because of the resurrection, they can repent and find forgiveness.
    - c. Third, there is gathering opposition to the early church, which culminates in the death of Stephen.
- e. The day of Pentecost (2:1-4) temporarily reverses the judgment that fell at Babel (Genesis 11) and points to the day when all nations will speak with one voice in praise of "the mighty acts of God" in Christ (2:5-11).
  - i. Peter explains this by quoting the prophet Joel
    - 1. The prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit in the eschatological days of the messiah is realized on the day of Pentecost.
  - ii. Peter argues that Jesus has indeed ascended to the Father and poured out the Spirit, as prophesied, and that he has fulfilled Psalm 110 and taken his seat at the Father's right hand, where he will be until the Father makes his enemies his footstool.
  - iii. Peter calls them to repent and be baptized for forgiveness, and three thousand do so and are saved.



1. Because God judged Jesus at the cross, those who repent and believe in Jesus can be saved through the announcement of judgment.
  - a. They devote themselves to the apostles' teaching and praise God (2:42-47).
- iv. This announcement of salvation through judgment for God's glory is repeated in Acts 3 after Peter and John heal the lame man in Jesus' name.
  1. Salvation is available in Jesus' name, which glorifies him.
- v. In Acts 4 the Jewish religious leadership begins to make war on God (cf. 5:39).
  1. Their opposition will be thwarted as God judges them, and through the judgment he brings upon them God will carry out his purpose to save.
- vi. Opposition continues from within and from without. The opposition from within comes from the sinfulness of Christians.
  1. This is seen in the selfishness of Ananias and Sapphira, (5:1-2), then in the racial and linguistic tension between Hebrews and Hellenists (Acts 6:1).
  2. The opposition from without takes the form of persecution from the high priests and his religious party, the Sadducees (5:17-18), and also from the synagogue of the Freedmen (6:9).
- vii. The speech of Stephen answers the three charges that the synagogue of the Freedmen have leveled against him:
  1. speaking against Moses and God (6:11)
  2. speaking against the temple (6:13-14)
  3. and speaking against the law (6:13-14)
    - a. Stephen's response to the first charge, of speaking against Moses and God, and the third charge, of speaking against the law and teaching that Jesus

would change the customs Moses delivered, is the part that, I would suggest, got him killed.

- i. The lynchpin for this part of Stephen's address is found in his final statements

4. Luke presents Stephen arguing the same way that Jesus argued.
  - a. In this case, the argument is that Joseph, Moses, the prophets, and Jesus stand on one side, and against them are the wicked Israelites
  - b. This is a typological identification, and it fits with Jesus' statement that those who believe in Moses will believe him, for Moses wrote about him (John 5:46). It also fits with Luke's presentation of Jesus' opening the minds of his disciples.
    - i. Thus Stephen's response to the charges of speaking against Moses and God, and teaching that Jesus would change the customs of Moses is twofold.
      1. Those making the charge about the law do not understand the law.
      2. Those making the charge about Moses do not understand Moses, who wrote that God would raise up a prophet like him (Deut. 18:15-18; cf. Acts 7:37).
5. Everything in the first seven chapters of Acts centers on the glory of God in salvation through judgment
  - a. The church announces this judgment on Christ, and it also declares that judgment awaits those who acted wickedly in putting him to death.
6. Through this announcement of judgment the church holds out the possibility of forgiveness for those who will repent.

The church is announcing salvation through judgment, and God is glorified as those who repent glorify him, as those who oppose him are judged and shown to be wicked, and as his purposes prevail.

- f. Witnesses to the Resurrection in Judea and Samaria (Acts 8-12)
  - i. As we see from what happens to Saul and Herod, those who oppose God face one of two futures, but both in end in judgment.
    - 1. Through judgment Saul (Paul) is converted and experiences salvation.
    - 2. Herod, on the other hand, is judged, and he becomes a testimony to God's justice and power.
      - a. Both Herod and Paul glorify God, Paul being a display of God's mercy.
  - ii. The incident at Samaria shows the triumph of the gospel over racial pride and division.
  - iii. Philip proclaims Isaiah 53 to the Ethiopian eunuch, a passage that prophesies the salvation through judgment Jesus fulfilled on the cross.
  - iv. Gentile inclusion in the church apart from circumcision is so significant that the story will be told three times in Acts (10, 11, and 15).
    - 1. Once Peter takes the gospel to the Gentiles (10-11), the stage is set for Paul to go to the nations with the good news of God's glory in salvation through judgment in Christ.
- g. Witness to the Resurrection to the Ends of the Earth (Acts 13-28)
  - i. Luke shows that Paul is preaching the same message of salvation through judgment to God's glory as Jesus and Peter preached. Paul quotes from the Old Testament that Peter quoted from and offers the same explanations of them.
    - 1. See table 5.25, page 432.

2. Psalm 2 was quoted in the prayer after Peter and John were released in Acts 4:25-26, and Paul quotes this text in his sermon at Pisidian Antioch, Acts 13:33.
  3. So also with Psalm 16, which Peter quoted and explained in his sermon on the day of Pentecost (2:24-32); Paul quotes and explains it just as Peter did (13:35-27).
- ii. This section of Acts shows the progress of the gospel to the uttermost parts of the known world.
1. Luke seems to have organized the material according to the geographical realities related to Paul's various trips.
    - a. Paul goes on four missionary journeys in Acts 13-28 . . . three in which he is free, and a fourth when he is arrested and taken through Caesarea Philippi to Rome.
    - b. The first three begin in Antioch and end in Jerusalem
- iii. Paul's first journey
1. Paul's sermon in Pisidian Antioch concludes with the announcement that salvation is available through the judgment that fell on Jesus (13:29-30, 37)/
  2. The proclamation of judgment against those who would justify themselves by the law is meant to lead to salvation. Paul then warns his hearers not to be those on whom God exercises justice.
    - a. Again, the announcement of judgment against those who reject the gospel is meant to lead to salvation.
  3. The book of Acts is clear that God appoints people to eternal life. The text does not say that those who believe are appointed to eternal life, but rather that "as many as were appointed to eternal life believed" (13:48).
    - a. See table 5.26, page 434.

4. Those who enter life will do so through refining experiences of tribulation, as Paul tells the church on the way home: “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (14:22).
- iv. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)
    1. The Jerusalem Council pronounces judgment against the law-keeping requirement of circumcision.
      - a. Through this judgment on the requirement of the law for justification and acceptance, salvation by grace through faith is upheld.
  - v. Paul’s Second Journey (Acts 16-18)
    1. The Romans react to the loss of their source of profit by opposing Paul and the gospel (16:19-24). God condemns this opposition to the gospel, and the very jailer keeping Paul and Silas is converted (16:25-34).
    2. Luke shows that Christianity is not a political threat to the Roman Empire in the incident recounted in Acts 16:35-40, and the point is made again in the incident at Corinth recounted in 18:12-17.
    3. According to Luke, the Christians are not out trying to subvert the Roman Empire, but their opponents are falsely charging them of doing just that.
      - a. Luke’s narrative only depicts Paul and the other Christians obeying the authorities, subverting the claims falsely made against them.
      - b. In Corinth the Lord tells Paul in a dream that no one will harm him because he has many to be saved in the city (18:10).
  - vi. Paul’s Third Missionary Journey (Acts 19-21)
    1. The Ephesus episode with the disciples of John pronounces judgment on any attempt to maintain Old

Testament religion apart from faith in the one to whom the Old Testament prophets pointed, Jesus (Acts 19:1-19).

- a. Judgment is rendered on magic and superstition, with the result that the superstitious are trounced, magic books are burned, and the name of Jesus is extolled as the word of the Lord prevails (19:11-20).
2. Paul spent considerable time in Ephesus (19:10), and the church received not only this significant address in Acts 20 but also his letter to the church in Ephesus.
  - a. Tradition hold that the apostle John later ministered here, making it likely that the churches in and around Ephesus received the letters of John, and Jesus addressed the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2:1-7.
3. Through the judgment that fell on Jesus, and through the judgment of human wickedness, salvation is possible for those who repent and believe in Jesus (20:21) by the power of this gospel of God's grace (20:27).
  - a. To God and the word of his grace Paul commends the church in Ephesus (20:32), and God is glorified in salvation through judgment. The mutual love between Paul and the church displays the beauty of God's purposes (20:36-38).
4. The people in Cyprus respond to the prophecy of Agabus by urging Paul not to go to Jerusalem (21:12), but when Paul declares his readiness to be imprisoned and even die for Jesus' name (21:13), they commit themselves to God's will (21:14). What happens to Paul matches what Agabus prophesied in a way that is typical of the fulfillment of biblical prophecies.
5. When Paul meets with James in Jerusalem, James proposes a plan designed to take away roadblocks to Jewish

evangelism (21:17-26). This plan involves Paul engaging in Jewish piety with four other Christians who have taken a vow.

- a. Paul does not compromise himself by engaging in these purification rites, for Luke shows him taking and keeping vows earlier in Acts (18:18), and Paul himself declares elsewhere that for the sake of evangelizing those under the law he willing to be under the law, though he is not himself under the law (1 Cor. 9:20).

6. In the temple, Paul is arrested, and for the rest of the book of Acts he is in Roman custody.

vii. Paul's Captivity and Transfer to Rome (Acts 22-28)

1. The Jews who oppose Paul are shown by Luke to be trumping up false charges (24:1-21), and the Roman governor Felix is shown to be a self-serving bribe seeker (24:22-27).
2. When Festus replaces Felix, he shows himself no more concerned with justice than Felix, and Paul, knowing that he must testify in Rome (23:11), appeals to Caesar (25:1-12).
3. Paul defends himself before King Agrippa (25:13-26:32), where again Paul testifies of the way he was saved through judgment for God's glory on the Damascus road (26:12-18). Then he declares how in Christ God has wrought salvation through judgment for his glory in fulfillment of the Old Testament (26:22-23).
  - a. Remarkably, Felix, Festus, and Agrippa are united in their inability to implement justice. They provide a stark contrast with God, who upholds both justice and mercy.
4. When Paul is shipped to Rome, the rejection of his good counsel (27:1-11) bears fruit of injury and loss (27:21), but

God promises deliverance to Paul and those with him (27:23-26).

5. And so they come to Rome (28:14, cf. 11-16), where Paul proclaims the glory of God in salvation through judgment (28:17-31).

h. The Center of the Theology of Acts

- i. The book of Acts bears explicit and implicit testimony to the triumph of God over idolatry.

1. The implicit testimony I have in mind come in the form of the names that appear in the account.

- a. Zeus and Hermes (14:12, 15).

- b. Apollo(s) (18:24-28)

- c. This implicit testimony is reinforced by the explicit calls for pagans to turn from idols to the living God (14:15; 17:29-31).

- i. These calls judge the gods as worthless, and through that judgment those who repent are saved to the glory of God.

2. The Glory of God in salvation through judgment is also repeatedly seen in Acts as the death and resurrection of Jesus is announced again and again.

- a. Judgment fell on Jesus, and through that judgment salvation is available

- b. The opposition to Christianity is also judged and thwarted, and through the judgment of their enemies the followers of the way are delivered.

3. The center of the theology of Acts is the glory of God in salvation through judgment.

i. The Center of the Theology of the Gospels and Acts

- i. The four Gospels all proclaim that salvation has come through the judgment that fell on Jesus.



1. Having recapitulated Israel's history and typologically fulfilled it, he saves his people by undergoing judgment.
  2. Salvation then comes through that judgment as God raises Jesus from the dead, accomplishing salvation through judgment for all who trust in Jesus.
    - a. God is glorified by this as the power of God in Christ is seen to be superior to all powers in heaven and on earth.
- ii. The glory of God in salvation through judgment finds expression also in the birth and growth of the early Christian community.
1. It is impossible to discuss this apart from the glory of God in salvation through judgment at the individual level, for communities are composed of individuals. These individuals come under personal judgment as a result of which they perceive their own condemnation.
    - a. Through the experience of going into the water, they are buried with Christ, united with him in the judgment he experienced. Coming up out of the water, they are raised with Christ, united with him in the salvation through judgment of resurrection life.
      - i. See table 5.27, page 441.
    - b. The community of believers loves one another as Jesus has loved them, and in doing so they live out God's glory in justice and mercy as they relate to one another and outsiders.
  2. In Christ, the cosmos, in individual's lives, and in the church, the glory of God in salvation through judgment is the center of the theology of the Gospels and Acts.

**Discussion Questions:**

- How has Hamilton's writing helped you in understanding these scripture books of Scripture?
- What are the most significant insights you have taken away from the reading so far?
- What do you think about his center of theology?
- Is he forcing his reading on the text, or does it naturally flow from Scripture?
- How do the apostles' preaching help us understand what Jesus taught them in Luke 24?
- How does the spread of the gospel point to the glory of God in salvation through judgment?

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## ABSTRACT

### TEACHING THE STORYLINE OF SCRIPTURE AT RICH POND BAPTIST CHURCH, BOWLING GREEN, KENTUCKY

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. James M. Hamilton, Jr.

The purpose of this project was to help the members of Rich Pond Baptist Church understanding the storyline of Scripture through a Bible study. The project sought to develop a small group study wherein members would grow in the practice of studying and interpreting Scripture, as well as their ability to understand the storyline of Scripture.

Chapter 2 shows that the biblical authors present understanding the storyline of Scripture as a necessary means to rightly knowing Christ, which produces increased affection for him. The chapter contains an exegesis of Luke 24, with particular attention given to Jesus teaching his disciples (24:25-27, 44-46). The chapter also surveys other biblical and theological themes in the book of Luke, concluding with a look at Peter's preaching in Acts (2:14-36, 3:11-26).

Chapter 3 examines three theological themes: the Temple of God, the Bride, and the Family of God. These different themes show that the biblical authors intentionally connect various themes, metaphors, and images to explain the storyline of Scripture.

Chapter 4 presents the cultivation of spiritual disciples, namely Bible intake and prayer, as essential for understanding the storyline of Scripture.

Chapter 5 presents the curriculum administered during the course of the project.



Chapter 6 presents an evaluation of the effectiveness of the project. This evaluation provides suggestions for improvement to make the Bible study more effective for future implementation.

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