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EQUIPPING ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS AT
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, JACKSON, TENNESSEE
TO BE CHRIST-CENTERED EXPOSITORS
OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

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To Anna,
my loving wife and constant encourager;
to Ella, Graham, and Gavin,
true gifts from God;
and to First Baptist Church, Jackson, Tennessee,
my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ.

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PREFACE

This project would never have been completed were it not for the assistance, encouragement, and sacrifices of numerous people. First, I want to thank my parents, Mike and Rose, for the consistent sacrifices they have made throughout the years (known and unknown) to ensure that I was able to further my education. I can honestly say that none of this would be possible without them.

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Third, I would like to thank the dear people of God at First Baptist Church, Jackson, Tennessee, who prayed for me, asked me often how the writing was going, and did so much to encourage me along the way. What a joy to serve as their pastor. Special thanks go to the pastors I serve with, who helped lighten the ministry load for me at times so that I was able to give attention to my project, and also to the adult Sunday School teachers who participated in the class and showed so much interest in my project.

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me. Her editorial and statistical skills aided me tremendously. And her tireless sacrifices made this possible. Truth be known, she deserves to be rewarded with a degree for all her sacrifices more than I do. What a blessing and treasure she is, both to me and to our children.

Justin Wainscott

Jackson, Tennessee

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip adult Sunday School teachers at First Baptist Church to exposit the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective.

Goals

The first goal of this project was to evaluate adult Sunday School teachers' current levels of understanding and confidence in expositing Old Testament texts from a Christ-centered perspective. A survey was given to all adult Sunday School teachers in order to measure this goal of evaluation (see appendix 1). The survey sought to determine their knowledge level (including the unity between the Old and New Testaments, the basic narrative flow of the Bible, and the Christ-centered fulfillment of all of Scripture) as well as their confidence level in teaching the Old Testament in general, and in a way that points to its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ in particular. This goal was successfully met when more than 75 percent of the current Sunday School teachers completed and returned the survey.

The second goal of this project was to develop content for a ten-week class that seeks to explain (1) the unity between the Old and New Testaments (2) the basic storyline of the Old Testament (3) the Christ-centered nature of the Scriptures (4) a basic method of expositional teaching and (5) specific ways to point out an Old Testament text's fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Before this class was taught, copies of the teaching outlines were sent to a panel of experts, three professors from Union University's School of Theology and Missions and two fellow pastors. These experts reviewed the content of the

outlines and then completed an evaluation survey to measure the biblical soundness and practical benefit of the class (see appendix 2). This goal was successfully met when all five experts agreed that the content of the class was both biblically sound and practically beneficial (see table A1 in appendix 3).

The third goal of this project was to teach the above content to adult Sunday School teachers during a ten-week class on Sunday evenings. This goal was measured by re-administering the initial survey to those teachers who participated in the class to determine whether the class had helped them develop a better understanding of the Old Testament and its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, as well as a greater confidence in teaching the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective. This goal was successfully accomplished since the content of the class was taught in the ten-week allotted time period and well over 40 percent of adult Sunday School teachers participated in the class and completed the post-project survey.

Ministry Context

First Baptist Church, Jackson, Tennessee, is a 178-year-old church that has suffered through some dark and difficult days in its recent past, but is now showing signs of health and vitality. Undoubtedly, one of the surest signs of this revitalization is the way the Word of God is becoming central in every aspect of the life of the church. Slowly but surely, a genuine hunger for God's Word is being birthed anew within the congregation. Alongside that hunger, an expectation of clear and faithful exposition of the Bible is rising within both members and guests. The Bible is beginning to take on a new significance, which demands not only a consistent pulpit ministry but also a consistent teaching ministry by laypeople in Sunday School classes and small group Bible studies. Many of the church's new members, whether young or old, are coming to the church with a desire not only to sit under faithful expository preaching but also to sit

in smaller groups where the Bible is opened, explained, and applied in an expository and Christ-centered manner.

This newfound significance and these newfound expectations are extremely encouraging. However, they require a certain amount of biblical knowledge and a certain degree of ability to exposit a biblical text, neither of which the majority of laypeople at First Baptist Church have had the opportunity to learn. Very little training, if any, has been provided in previous years to help them grow in their knowledge of the Bible and in their ability to teach it well. As in so many churches, willingness has usurped giftedness as the essential characteristic in finding lay teachers. As a result, the quality of teaching, and thus the amount of learning, has simultaneously suffered over the years.

Moreover, when the biblical text being taught is from the Old Testament, the issue becomes even more glaring, and usually by no fault of those lay teachers. The problem can be attributed primarily to two sources: poor curriculum and insufficient models. So much of the Old Testament curriculum that is available to adult Sunday School teachers is no better than children's curriculum on the same subject; it is a somewhat baptized version of *Aesop's Fables* with Christ being largely absent. In addition, most laypeople have never before sat under faithful, Christ-centered exposition of the Old Testament. The majority of the preaching and teaching they have heard in the past has either been largely devoid of the Old Testament or merely moralistic sketches of Old Testament characters. Without proper training, lay teachers can only do what they have heard and seen. As a result, they either avoid teaching from the Old Testament altogether, or they do so in a moralistic way that misses the text's fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Rationale

As First Baptist Church continues to develop a reputation for being Word-centered, it needs a means of equipping adult Sunday School teachers to exposit the Old

Testament faithfully from a Christ-centered perspective. Otherwise, prospective members and new members may grow disheartened by the apparent disconnect between what is preached from the pulpit and what is taught from the lectern. Worse, a lack of quality teaching in Sunday School classes and small group Bible studies could end up undermining the efforts that have been made to revitalize the church according to the Word of God. Consequently, this project was implemented to ensure that those who teach the Bible at First Baptist Church are properly trained and are able to “proclaim Christ and him crucified” from all of Scripture.

Therefore, the benefits of such a project are numerous. First, Sunday School teachers will develop a greater confidence in teaching the Bible in general and in teaching the Old Testament in particular. Second, these teachers will grow in their understanding of the Old Testament and in their appreciation for the way it is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Third, those who sit under such teaching will also grow in their knowledge of the Old Testament and the Christ-centered nature of all of Scripture. Fourth, the church as a whole will be healthier because the Word of God will be faithfully taught and Christ will be clearly proclaimed. Fifth, good Bible teaching will cause the congregation’s appetite for the Word of God to continue to increase. And sixth, the church will continue to be rebuilt and revitalized on the sure foundation of the Scriptures.

Definitions

Three terms in this project need to be defined clearly so as to prevent any misunderstanding:

Adult. For the purpose of this project, the term *adult* is used to refer to anyone eighteen years of age or older, as defined by Tennessee state law.¹

¹Tennessee Compilation of Selected Laws on Children, Youth, and Families, “37-1-102. Definitions,” accessed May 13, 2013, <http://www.state.tn.us/tccy/tnchild/37/37-1-102.htm>.

Exposit. In general, the term *exposit* is used to describe the act of explaining or interpreting. To exposit something, therefore, is to expose it for the purpose of explanation. In this project, the content being expounded is the text of the Bible, and the Old Testament in particular. As a result, the term *exposit* is used to describe the specific method of teaching the Bible that was encouraged during the ten-week class, namely a method that seeks to expose and explain the text of the Old Testament in a way that makes the point(s) of the text the point(s) of the lesson. John Stott, arguably one of the best Bible expositors of the previous generation, defined the task this way: “To expound Scripture is to bring out of the text what is there and expose it to view [O]ur responsibility as expositors is to open [the Bible] up in such a way that it speaks its message clearly, plainly, accurately, relevantly, without addition, subtraction, or falsification.”² The kind of Bible teaching that this project encourages, then, is the kind that “*exposes* God’s Word to God’s people, that opens it up to them and applies it to their hearts so that they may understand it and obey it.”³

Christ-centered. Perhaps the best place to begin in defining the term *Christ-centered* is to describe what is not meant in this project by teaching the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective. Christ-centered teaching of the Old Testament is “not identifying Christ with Yahweh in the Old Testament, or the Angel of Yahweh, or the Commander of the Lord’s army, or the Wisdom of God. It is not simply pointing to Christ from a distance or ‘drawing lines to Christ’ by way of typology.”⁴ Instead, it is an effort to teach the Old Testament the way that Jesus and the apostles did, authentically integrating “the message of the [Old Testament] text with the climax of God’s revelation

²John Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 125-26.

³Mark Dever and Greg Gilbert, *Preach: Theology Meets Practice* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2012), 36 (italics in original).

⁴Sydney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 8.

in the person, work, and/or teaching of Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament.”⁵ The Old Testament context should not be ignored or diminished. But at the same time, the climax of God’s revelation must be recognized, which moves expositors to the centrality of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the kind of Christ-centered teaching that is encouraged in this project is that taught by men like Sydney Greidanus,⁶ Bryan Chapell,⁷ and James Hamilton.⁸

Limitations and Delimitations

The primary limitation of this project was the fifteen-week allotted period for its completion. Ten weeks were spent teaching a class designed to equip adult Sunday School teachers to exposit the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way. Prior to that, three weeks were spent developing and reviewing the content of that class. And two weeks were spent on evaluation, one just before the class and one week just after the class. Therefore, the total length of the project was fifteen weeks.

In addition, there were two delimitations for this project. First, it focused only on adult Sunday School teachers. While the class was open to others, the pre-project and post-project surveys were only completed and gathered from this group. Second, the panel of experts that reviewed the content for the class consisted of only five men, three professors from Union University and two pastors from local churches.

Research Methodology

Two different surveys were used to secure data and feedback for this project. One survey was administered to a panel of experts to determine the biblical soundness

⁵Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 10.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994).

⁸James Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014).

and practical benefit of the content developed for the ten-week class. As stated previously, this expert panel consisted of three professors from Union University's School of Theology and Missions and two local pastors. Before the class was taught, these five men had a week to review the outlines for each class session and provide an honest assessment of their content. The survey administered to them asked for their expert opinion on the quality of the class content and whether or not they believed it would be useful for equipping adult Sunday School teachers to be Christ-centered expositors of the Old Testament. This survey employed the Likert scale (a 1 to 6 scale with 1 corresponding to "Strongly Disagree" and 6 corresponding to "Strongly Agree") to measure the panel members' agreement or disagreement with the quality and practicality of the class content (see appendix 2).

The second survey was administered to the adult Sunday School teachers at First Baptist Church, and its purpose was to measure both their knowledge level of a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament and their confidence level in teaching the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective (see appendix 1). This survey was given twice, once as a pre-project survey to all adult Sunday School teachers and then again as a post-project survey to all the teachers who participated in the ten-week class. Before the class was taught, this survey was mailed to all adult Sunday School teachers, accompanied by a letter explaining the purpose of the survey and asking them to complete it and return it before the class began. At the conclusion of the ten-week class, the same survey was administered again to those adult Sunday School teachers who participated in the class. These pre-project and post-project surveys also employed the Likert scale, and participants' scores from before and after the class were matched and assessed using a *t*-test for independent samples (see tables A2 and A3 in appendix 3).

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT
FOR TEACHING THE OLD TESTAMENT
FROM A CHRIST-CENTERED
PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

In his excellent primer on biblical theology, James Hamilton suggests that “the Bible teaches Christians how the Bible should be read.”¹ In other words, Christians are not left to their own devices when they seek to make sense out of the biblical narrative. Instead, a model or a pattern already exists in the Bible itself. If the Bible is a map, then readers have been given the key, and that key is the right interpretive perspective from which to read it. What readers must be careful to do, then, as they seek to be faithful and informed interpreters of the Bible, is to use that key.

In short, Christians should read the Bible the way Jesus and the apostles read the Bible. Or, as Hamilton puts it,

How should a follower of Jesus read the Bible? The way Jesus did. Jesus of Nazareth did not write any of the books in the Bible, but he taught the writers of the New Testament how to interpret earlier Scripture, redemptive history, and the events they were narrating and addressing. On the human level, Jesus learned the interpretive perspective he taught to his disciples from Moses and the Prophets.²

He further explains this approach as follows:

The biblical authors who followed Moses in the Old Testament, whether historians, prophets, psalmists, or sages, learned the interpretive perspective that Moses modeled for them and had it confirmed by other Scripture available to them. Jesus then learned to read the Bible, history, and life from Moses and the Prophets, and he

¹James Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 19.

²*Ibid.*, 20.

taught this perspective to his followers (Luke 24). What we find in the New Testament, then, is Christ-taught, Spirit-inspired biblical interpretation.³

Therefore, when seeking to read and understand the Bible, Christians should follow the example of the apostles as they followed Jesus. They should follow this pattern of “Christ-taught, Spirit-inspired biblical interpretation” that the New Testament provides. And what they should begin to realize very quickly as they follow this pattern is that Jesus taught his disciples to read and understand the Old Testament in a way that finds its ultimate fulfillment and meaning in him.

The aim of this chapter, then, is to demonstrate that the New Testament demands a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament, an understanding which is modeled by the teaching of Jesus and the apostles. In order to demonstrate this claim, four texts from the Gospels (Luke 24:25-27; Luke 24:44-48; John 5:36-46; and Matt 1-9) and a selection of texts from the Pauline epistles (Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Cor 10:4; and Gal 3:16) will be examined. The Gospel passages will reveal Jesus’ own understanding of the Old Testament and how it points to his redemptive work. Indeed, two of those passages provide examples of Jesus specifically teaching this understanding of the Old Testament to his disciples. The passages from the Pauline epistles will give evidence that Paul also shared this perspective, seen clearly in his understanding of how Old Testament events and figures have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. All of these passages viewed together should provide substantial affirmation that the New Testament does, in fact, demand a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament and that such an understanding is modeled by Jesus and the apostles.

Luke 24:25-27

Probably no better example exists of both Jesus’ own understanding of how the Old Testament points to him and also of his teaching that understanding to his disciples

³Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?*, 20-21.

than the two passages to be considered from Luke 24. In fact, Joseph Fitzmyer, in reference to this aspect of chapter 24, says that Luke “thus becomes the model for much of later Christian global reading of the Old Testament as *praeparatio evangelica*” (preparation for the gospel).⁴ Here, then, two of the clearest examples occur in which the New Testament models a Christ-centered reading and understanding of the Old Testament.

The first of these two passages, Luke 24:25-27, is part of a vivid and fascinating post-resurrection narrative. This passage tells of two confused and grieving disciples who were traveling to a village named Emmaus, and on their way they began discussing all that had happened with the crucifixion of Jesus and the discovery of his empty tomb. A fellow traveler joined them on their journey and began talking with them about these things but unbeknownst to them, this fellow traveler was the risen Lord Jesus himself. In the course of their conversation, he rebukes them for their ignorance of the Scriptures and begins to interpret for them “in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27). Darrel Bock summarizes the passage thus:

The account relates the travelers’ disappointment over Jesus’ death and their curiosity over the empty tomb. Since their “sight” is veiled, they do not initially recognize Jesus when he joins them. They think that all hope is lost. *But things change as their new companion shows how Jesus is the fulfillment of all of the Old Testament.* There is a necessity to God’s plan. During their meal and table fellowship, Jesus gradually reveals himself The travelers are overjoyed at being with Jesus and *understanding God’s plan as revealed in the Scriptures* [emphasis mine].⁵

For the purposes of this chapter, it is important to recognize two facets to this narrative: (1) Jesus’ own understanding of the Old Testament as speaking about him and (2) Jesus’ interpretation of the Old Testament in a Christ-centered fashion for these two

⁴Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, Anchor Bible, vol. 28A (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 1565.

⁵Darrell Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1906.

disciples. First, one must note Jesus' own understanding that the Old Testament spoke about his death and resurrection, contrasted so sharply with the disciples' misunderstanding. Jesus says to these confused disciples, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:25-26). Jesus implies that belief in what the prophets had spoken (and thus knowledge of what the prophets had spoken) should have resulted in an understanding of the events that have them so confused, namely his death and the discovery of the empty tomb. As I. Howard Marshall states, "Acceptance of what the prophets said should have led the disciples to believe the reports of the women at the tomb."⁶ Robert Stein agrees: "If the disciples believed the Scriptures, they would not have been sad or confused."⁷ However, their confusion reveals a slow-hearted blindness to what the prophets had spoken, similar to the blindness of the twelve when Jesus himself previously spoke of these things:

And taking the twelve, he said to them: "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise." But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said. (Luke 18:31-34)

Like the twelve before them, these two disciples seem blind to what Jesus so clearly sees and understands, that the prophets spoke of his suffering and his resurrection. In fact, Jesus says there is much Old Testament teaching on this subject, which is why he speaks

⁶I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 896.

⁷Robert Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1993), 612.

of “all” that the prophets have spoken.⁸ Obviously, Jesus understood the Old Testament to have spoken about the necessity of his suffering and his subsequent glory.

The second facet to recognize from this passage is that not only did Jesus understand the Old Testament in this way, but he wanted to make sure his disciples did as well. So the very next verse reads, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27). Notice the comprehensive nature of his teaching: he explains “all the Scriptures,” doing so by “beginning with Moses” and going through “all the Prophets.” Now, there are two different ways to understand “all the Scriptures” in verse 27. One way is to view it solely as a reference to the third section of the Old Testament (the section called the Writings), but this view is difficult to affirm syntactically.⁹ The other way to view this phrase is to see it as a reference to the whole of Scripture, or the entirety of the Old Testament. As Stein clearly and concisely suggests, “This second interpretation, which understands the word ‘Scriptures’ as a synonym for ‘Moses and all the Prophets,’ is to be preferred.”¹⁰

Consequently, what Luke 24:27 offers is an example of Jesus teaching these two disciples the key to reading and understanding the Old Testament the way he reads and understands the Old Testament, namely that the Scriptures concern him. He begins with Moses and proceeds to walk through the Old Testament, showing how it all points to him and his redemptive work, or as Fitzmyer puts it, “The sense of Christ’s words to the two disciples is that from one end of the Hebrew Scriptures to the other they bear witness about him and his fate, for ‘Christ is the goal and the centre of all the Scriptures’.”¹¹ No

⁸Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1916. He goes so far as to suggest that the “various speeches in Acts where Jesus is proclaimed from the OT indicate what texts are in view here; key among such texts are Deut. 18:15; Ps. 2:7; 16:8-11; 110:1; 118; and Isa. 53:8.”

⁹Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 897.

¹⁰Stein, *Luke*, 612.

¹¹Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1567.

wonder these two disciples later rejoice: “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” (Luke 24:32).

As can be seen from this passage, and as will be seen from the others, it is precisely that kind of Christ-centered opening of the Old Testament Scriptures that the New Testament demands and consistently models.

Luke 24:44-48

The second passage to consider from Luke 24, which is similar to the previous one, is also an account of Jesus’ post-resurrection teaching on the Old Testament, this time to the eleven (Judas is no longer with them). As he did with the two travelers on the road to Emmaus, Jesus explains that his death and resurrection were the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. Luke relates the experience:

Then [Jesus] said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.” (Luke 24:44-48)

Again, there are two features of this text that help illustrate the thesis of this chapter, that the New Testament demands a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament: (1) Jesus’ self-awareness that the whole of the Old Testament was written about him and must be fulfilled in him and (2) Jesus’ interpretation of the Old Testament for his disciples according to this awareness.

First, one should notice Jesus’ own awareness, both before the crucifixion and resurrection as well as afterward, of his saving work being the fulfillment of what was written in the Old Testament. He reminds them of the words he spoke to them “while he was still with [them],” referring to his ministry prior to the cross, and referring specifically to what he said to them in places like Luke 9:22, 44; 17:25; 18:31-34; and

22:37.¹² In other words, he was not proclaiming a new message. It was the same message he had been trying to help them understand from the beginning, namely that the “fulfillment of Scripture is a divine necessity”¹³ and that the way Scripture was going to be fulfilled was through his own suffering, rejection, crucifixion, and resurrection. Bock summarizes it this way: “The events of his life are thus no surprise; they are in continuity with what God revealed throughout Scripture. It is fair to say that Jesus sees himself and his career outlined in the sacred texts of old.”¹⁴

Just as he did with the two disciples earlier in Luke 24, the risen Lord makes specific reference to the entirety of the Old Testament, this time mentioning the threefold divisions of the Hebrew canon: “the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44).¹⁵ He wants to help them recognize that it is not just scattered bits and pieces or isolated texts strung together that he has fulfilled, but the overarching scope of the whole Old Testament. Stein, commenting on this comprehensive reference to the Old Testament in relation to its fulfillment in Jesus, states, “As in 24:25 the central message of the Old Testament is seen as focusing on Jesus. For Luke the Old Testament was a Christian book from beginning to end.”¹⁶ Put another way, Jesus clearly demonstrates an awareness that the Old Testament Scriptures were written about him and thus find their central fulfillment in him.

Second, not only did Jesus understand the Old Testament in this way, he ensured that his disciples did as well by teaching them to read it in the same light. He “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45), helping them to see the

¹²Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 905.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1936.

¹⁵“This is the only place in the NT where this three-part division occurs.” Ibid., 1937.

¹⁶Stein, *Luke*, 619.

Old Testament's fulfillment in his death and resurrection. In other words, he taught them to understand the Old Testament the way he understood the Old Testament, and the way that he understood the Old Testament was clearly in a Christ-centered way. Thus the disciples, who had completely missed this Christological foreshadowing in the Old Testament earlier (see Luke 9:45 and 18:34), now had their minds opened to understand that the centrality of Jesus' saving work had been taught all along in the Old Testament.

Now, this interpretive understanding is important to recognize for two reasons. First, it serves as a reminder that the apostles learned to interpret the Old Testament directly from Jesus himself. Jesus' understanding of the Old Testament shaped their understanding of the Old Testament, because it was Jesus who opened their minds to understand the Scriptures in the first place. As Stein says, "The disciples' new understanding of the necessity of Jesus' death and resurrection was not achieved through their own study of the Scriptures. What was involved was not a new hermeneutic or method of interpretation. Rather this understanding was given them by Jesus."¹⁷ Moreover, Bock suggests, "The disciples came to read the Old Testament in this manner because of their exposure to Jesus."¹⁸ Thus the apostles are simply following Jesus when they interpret the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way.

Second, it explains why the apostles interpret the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way in the rest of the New Testament. It is not insignificant that the next facet of this text from Luke 24 is that of proclaiming the Scriptures' fulfillment in Jesus Christ, preaching a message of forgiveness and repentance to all nations. The apostles are the ideal preachers of this message because they have been "witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:48). Therefore, the apostles are specifically commissioned (and eventually empowered by the Holy Spirit) to proclaim the Scriptures in such a way that shows the necessity of

¹⁷Stein, *Luke*, 620.

¹⁸Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1937.

their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Even a cursory survey of Acts and the Epistles will demonstrate that this is exactly what they did; they employed a Christ-centered hermeneutic in explaining the Old Testament. What this chapter is suggesting, then, is that the reason this consistent Christ-centered hermeneutic is seen throughout the New Testament is because the apostles are simply employing the method of Old Testament interpretation that they learned from Jesus, or as Hamilton puts it, “[I]f we want to know how [Jesus] interpreted the Scriptures, we need only examine the way that the Scriptures are interpreted in Luke-Acts and the rest of the New Testament.”¹⁹

Clearly, Luke 24 teaches that Jesus understood the Old Testament to be centrally concerned with him and with his redemptive work. In addition, it also reveals that he intentionally helped his disciples to understand the Old Testament in this way, ensuring that the New Testament’s treatment of the Old would be Christ-centered. All of this evidence affirms that the New Testament demands a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament.

John 5:36-46

The third passage to consider that substantiates the claim that the New Testament demands a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament is found in the Gospel of John (John 5:36-46). This passage comes on the heels of heated conflict during the ministry of Jesus. John 5:16 reveals that the Jews were “persecuting Jesus” and John 5:18 shows that they were “seeking all the more to kill him.” The root cause for this murderous desire was their lack of belief in his identity as the Son of God, as John 5:18 goes on to explain: “The Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.” Therefore, the rest of John 5 is ultimately about attesting to the true

¹⁹James Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 404.

identity of Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus himself explains that there are many who bear witness about him, and John 5:30-47 provides those witnesses. Leon Morris summarizes the passage in this way: “Jesus speaks of a fivefold witness. Witness is borne to him by (i) the Father (vv. 32, 37); (ii) the Baptist (v. 33); (iii) his works (v. 36); (iv) Scripture (v. 39); and (v) Moses (v. 46).”²⁰ It is these last two witnesses, Scripture and Moses, that require the attention of this chapter. That Jesus points to Scripture (which in this context is the Old Testament) and Moses (who authored the first five books of the Old Testament) as witnesses to him reveals even further that Jesus understood the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way.

First, Jesus says about the witness of Scripture, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me” (John 5:39). Admittedly, some passages in the Bible are hard to understand. Indeed, some of Jesus’ statements are hard to grasp, but this statement is not one of them. Here, Jesus plainly states that the Old Testament bears witness about him. Lest one thinks that this idea is an obscure or isolated one in John, D. A. Carson corrects such thinking when he states, “This is one of six passages in the Fourth Gospel where Scripture or some writer of Old Testament Scripture is said to speak or write of Christ (cf. 1:45; 2:22; 3:10; 5:45-46; 20:9).”²¹ Clearly, this example is one of many where a Christological focus to the Old Testament is affirmed.

In fact, closer examination of this verse reveals just how important it is to see and understand such a Christological focus to the Old Testament. Jesus acknowledges that the Jewish leaders diligently studied the Scriptures, so it is not as though they have

²⁰Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 286.

²¹D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 263.

failed to read the Old Testament.²² That issue is not why Jesus rebukes them. The problem, Jesus says, is *the way* in which they have read the Old Testament Scriptures: “You search the Scriptures because you think that *in them* you have eternal life; *and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life*” (John 5:39-40, emphasis added). They have read the Scriptures without understanding their true content and purpose. They have missed the Christological focus of the Old Testament. Carson bluntly but accurately concludes, “If therefore some of the Jews refuse to come to Jesus for life, that refusal constitutes evidence that they are not reading their Scriptures as they were meant to be read.”²³

In other words, this passage reveals that it is entirely possible to study the Old Testament and completely miss what it is all about, namely Jesus Christ. George Beasley-Murray said, “The Scriptures were given by God to witness to the Christ, that his people might come to *him* and *through him* gain the life of which they give promise. To search the Scriptures and reject their testimony to Christ is to frustrate the purpose of God in giving them.”²⁴ Consequently, in John 5:39 Jesus is teaching a very important interpretive lesson, one that is vital to learn if Christians hope to read (and teach) the Old Testament correctly: “What is at stake is a comprehensive hermeneutical key. By predictive prophecy, by type, by revelatory event and by anticipatory statute, what we call the Old Testament is understood to point to Christ, his ministry, his teaching, his death and resurrection.”²⁵ Without a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament, one simply cannot read it (or teach it) rightly.

²²Carson notes, “The Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day were undoubtedly diligent students of the Scriptures.” Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 263.

²³Ibid., 264.

²⁴George Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36 (Dallas: Word, 1999), 79.

²⁵Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 263.

The second witness to Jesus in John 5 that is relevant to this chapter, in addition to the Scriptures in general, is Moses. Jesus goes on to say to the religious leaders, “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me” (John 5:45-46). In these verses, Jesus clearly affirms both Mosaic authorship (“he wrote”) and a Christological focus to Moses’ writing (“he wrote of me”). Thus, Jesus states that the writings of Moses in the Old Testament (the Pentateuch) are about him. And therefore, to miss the Christological perspective of Moses is to misread him. That is why Jesus says, “For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me” (John 5:46).

Just as Jesus rebuked them for misreading the Scriptures in general (see John 5:39-40), so now he brings to light their misreading of Moses. Morris states,

Had they really paid heed to Moses they would have been convicted of their sin and eager to recognize the Savior. If they had really believed what Moses said they would have believed what Jesus said, too. Moses’ writings were prophetic. They pointed forward to Christ (cf. 1:45). Therefore those who rejected the Christ did not really believe what Moses had written.²⁶

Again, what becomes obvious is the Christ-centered hermeneutic that Jesus is highlighting, a hermeneutic that is essential to rightly understanding the Old Testament in general, and Moses in particular. The mistake these Jewish leaders were making was a mistake that continues to be made all too often today: reading Moses without seeing the Messiah to whom Moses points. Carson explains their mistake in this way:

They take [the law of Moses] as an end in itself, the final epitome of right religion, and not, as Jesus insists it was, as witness to Christ himself. If scrupulous adherence to the law brings people to hope for salvation in the law itself and to reject the Messiah to whom the law pointed, then the law itself, and its human author, Moses, must stand up in outraged accusation.²⁷

²⁶Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 295.

²⁷Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 266.

Taking Jesus' statements regarding Scripture and Moses from John 5 together, an overarching principle becomes abundantly clear: there is a right way and a wrong way to read the Old Testament, and the right way is to read it as bearing witness to Jesus Christ. To miss the Messiah in the Old Testament is to misread the Old Testament. For that reason, Jesus rebuked the Jewish leaders in John 5; they missed the fact that the Old Testament pointed to him. Therefore, John 5:36-46 stands as further evidence that the New Testament demands a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament.

Matthew 1-9

The final Gospel passage to explore is an overview of Matthew 1-9, and the reason for looking at such a large portion of Matthew is because of the unique nature of this Gospel. Matthew presents Jesus as the true fulfillment of the history of Old Testament Israel. Indeed, R. T. France argues that Matthew's overriding theological concern is "to present Jesus as the fulfillment of all the hopes and patterns of Old Testament Israel."²⁸ In other words, Matthew teaches that the right way to read the Old Testament narrative about Israel is to look forward and see its fulfillment in Jesus; and the right way to read the Gospel narrative about Jesus is to look backward and see its foreshadowing in the Old Testament history of Israel. As Hamilton states in his discussion of Matthew, "Just as Jonah lived out a sort of enacted history of Israel, so also Jesus will relive Israel's history, except that Jesus does it right."²⁹ Moreover, Jesus himself says in Matthew 5:17, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

This consistent fulfillment theme is the primary reason why Matthew's Gospel is the first book in the New Testament canon: "In its constant reference to the Old

²⁸R. T. France, *Matthew*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 22.

²⁹Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 362.

Testament, its strong Jewish flavoring, its explicit discussions of the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities, it forms a fitting ‘bridge’ between Old and New Testaments.”³⁰ In this way, Matthew shows that “Christianity is the true continuation of the Old Testament – the true Judaism, if we may put it that way.”³¹ In fact, David Turner goes so far as to say that the frequent Old Testament fulfillment references in this Gospel call into question “the very notion of an ‘Old Testament’ in Matthew’s theology.”³² He goes on to explain what he means by this assertion:

If Matthew’s Jesus came not to abolish but to fulfill the law and the prophets (Matt 5:17), it is doubtful that Matthew conceived of the Jewish Scriptures as “old,” at least in the connotative sense of “antique, outmoded, and quaint.” Instead, Matthew viewed both the historical patterns and the prophetic oracles of the Hebrew Bible as filled with ultimate significance through the ministry and teaching of Jesus.³³

Therefore, the Jesus that readers meet in the pages of Matthew is the true Israel – the true fulfillment of the historical patterns, promises, people, events, and narratives that fill the pages of the Old Testament.

The way this fulfillment theme is consistently presented in Matthew’s Gospel, though, is not so much as straightforward predictive fulfillment but typological fulfillment: “Matthew’s view of Jesus as the one who fulfills the whole fabric of scriptural revelation is most strikingly brought to light in the large number of what may be called ‘typological’ allusions to the Old Testament.”³⁴ Hamilton explains these typological allusions by stating, “Matthew is not claiming that these Old Testament

³⁰France, *Matthew*, 16.

³¹Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 2.

³²David Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 17.

³³Ibid.

³⁴France, *Matthew*, 40.

prophets looked ahead and foretold that these events would happen to the messiah. Rather, he is claiming that these events that happen to the messiah fulfill the pattern of events seen in the Old Testament texts he cites.”³⁵ France adds, “Put simply, we are talking here about ‘fulfillment’ not only of Old Testament *predictions*, but of Old Testament *history* and *religion*, including events and institutions which in themselves carried no explicit reference to the future” (italics in original).³⁶ Thus Matthew shows Jesus as the fulfillment of more than just scattered and isolated prophecies, but rather as “the whole warp and woof of the Old Testament.”³⁷

This typological fulfillment can be seen all throughout the Gospel of Matthew. For instance, consider the typological comparisons that Jesus himself makes in Matthew 12. In 12:6, he compares himself to the temple. In 12:40-41, he compares himself to Jonah. And in 12:42, he compares himself to Solomon. But the point of each comparison is to communicate that “something greater” than all of these is now here, with the “something greater” actually being “Someone greater,” referring to himself. Thus Jesus is the true fulfillment of the temple, “the *greater* embodiment of God’s presence” (italics in original).³⁸ His resurrection is the true fulfillment of Jonah’s deliverance from death, and his wisdom is the true fulfillment of the wisdom of Solomon. When these three references are taken together, the picture becomes even more impressive: “We see Jesus as greater than temple (priesthood), prophet and king (wise man), a comprehensive list of those through whom God’s message came in the Old Testament.”³⁹ In other words, Jesus

³⁵Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 365.

³⁶France, *Matthew*, 40.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 41.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 203.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 214.

typologically fulfills the role of prophet, priest, and king; he fulfills the realities to which the temple, Jonah, and Solomon all pointed.

But it is not just in Matthew 12 that this typological fulfillment can be seen. It can be seen, perhaps most clearly, in the narrative of Jesus in Matthew 1-9, where Matthew presents Jesus as recapitulating the history of Old Testament Israel. It is apparent that this is Matthew's primary purpose in these opening chapters, a purpose which can be seen in both the frequency of the "this was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet" references and in the way he begins, with a genealogy (see Matt 1:1-17). Indeed, the significance of the genealogy is explained in the following statement by Hamilton: "By means of the 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."⁴⁰

Moreover, the genealogy begins in a way that proves this point. Not only does it open with references to David and Abraham, two key figures in Israel's history, but it also opens with the word *genesis* ("the book of the genealogy, or genesis, of Jesus Christ," Matt 1:1). Clearly, Matthew is communicating that Jesus initiates a new beginning, a new creation, a new genesis. The story of Israel is beginning again in him.

In addition to the genesis reference, France points out four other ways that Matthew's genealogy presents Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament hopes and promises:

1. It places Jesus fully in line with the history of Old Testament Israel, as one famous name after another reminds the reader of the forward movement of God's saving purpose.
2. By organizing that history into a regular scheme of three groups of fourteen generations, it indicates that the time of preparation is now complete, and that in Jesus the time of fulfillment has arrived.
3. By tracing Jesus' descent through the royal line of Judah, it stakes his claim to the title "King of the Jews."
4. It establishes his status as "son of David," not only by emphasizing David's place in the genealogy, but, perhaps, by a play on the name of David in the use of the

⁴⁰Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 363.

number fourteen. . . . The genealogy is thus a vital part of the conception of Matthew's introductory section. It is "a resume of salvation history, of God's way with Israel."⁴¹

The genealogy, therefore, presents Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of God's covenant promises to Abraham and David, and it establishes that he is both the fulfillment and the new beginning to Israel's story. This truth becomes immediately obvious in the narrative that follows in chapters 2-9, as Jesus relives the history of Old Testament Israel.

Consider the major episodes in Israel's early history recounted in Genesis through Joshua: the covenant with Abraham (which has already been referenced in Matt 1), persecution under Pharaoh and slavery in Egypt, the "baptism experience" of the Red Sea, the testing in the wilderness, the giving and receiving of the law on Mount Sinai, and the conquest of their enemies in order to settle in the promised land. In Matthew 2-9, Jesus relives all of these episodes. In chapters 2-7, Jesus is seen primarily as reliving the Moses narrative, whereas chapters 8-9 present Jesus primarily as reliving the Joshua narrative.

Notice first the connections between Moses and Jesus in Matthew 2-7. It is in these chapters that Matthew tells of Herod's murderous plot to kill Jesus (2:1-12, 16-18), the flight of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus to Egypt (2:13-15), the baptism of Jesus (3:13-17), the temptation in the wilderness (4:1-11), and the giving of the Sermon on the Mount (5-7). In rehearsing these events, Matthew is presenting Jesus in such a way that reminds his readers of what happened with Israel in the Old Testament, and with Moses in particular. Ponder the following connections between Moses and Jesus in these chapters, so helpfully articulated by Hamilton:

Pharaoh tried to kill the baby Moses; Herod tried to kill the baby Jesus. Moses and his parents were strangers in the land of Egypt; Jesus and his parents were strangers in the land of Egypt. God summoned Moses to lead Israel, his firstborn son (Ex 4:22), out of Egypt; God gave a dream to Mary's husband, Joseph, in response to which he led Jesus, God's beloved Son, out of Egypt (Matt 2:15). Moses led the

⁴¹France, *Matthew*, 71-72.

children of Israel through the waters of the Red Sea into the wilderness, where the people were tempted and sinned (Exodus 16-34); Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River by John, then went into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan, where he stood firm on God's Word (Matt 3:13-4:11). At Mount Sinai, Moses went up on the mountain and came down with the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 19-24, esp. 24:7); Jesus "went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him" (Matt 5:1); and Jesus taught his disciples the law of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 9:21; Gal 6:2) in the sermon on the mount (Matthew 5-7).⁴²

While more comparisons might be made, these certainly show a clear pattern, demonstrating how Matthew presents Jesus as the true fulfillment of the Old Testament narrative.

This pattern continues in chapters 8-9. There, it seems, Matthew moves from seeing Jesus as the true Moses to the true Joshua. In the Old Testament, it was Joshua who led God's people to defeat their enemies and settle in the promised land. In the New Testament, Jesus is presented as the true and better Joshua who defeats humanity's greatest enemies (sin and death) and thus opens the way into the true promised land of heaven. In Matthew 8-9, one sees Jesus cleansing a leper (8:1-4), healing many (8:14-17), calming a storm (8:23-27), healing two demon-possessed men (8:28-34), healing a paralytic (9:1-8), raising a girl from the dead (9:18-19, 23-26), healing a woman of a previously incurable disease (9:20-22), healing two blind men (9:27-31), and healing a man unable to speak (9:32-34). In each of these instances, Jesus is waging war against his enemies; he is rolling back the effects of the curse. Thus what Jesus is doing in Matthew 8-9 is defeating his enemies, foreshadowing his triumph over them at the cross and pointing forward to the day when his kingdom shall come in full, the curse shall be no more, and God's people will enjoy peace and rest in the promised land of the New Jerusalem.

More evidence could be mounted and more examples could be given from the Gospel of Matthew, but the information discussed above should be more than enough to

⁴²Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?*, 78-79.

demonstrate that to read the Old Testament without seeing its fulfillment in Jesus Christ is to completely misread and misunderstand it. The Gospel of Matthew, then, only further substantiates the claim that the New Testament demands a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament.

Up to this point, however, the discussion has dealt only with passages from the Gospels. What about the rest of the New Testament? Can similar evidence be seen there? It can, and a few select examples from Paul's letters will suffice to show that the apostles (even an apostle like Paul, who was not present for Jesus' teaching in Luke 24:44-48) also understood and interpreted Old Testament events and figures as having been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Selected Texts from the Pauline Epistles

Numerous texts from Paul's corpus of writing in the New Testament could be mentioned to confirm the thesis of this chapter, but space prevents discussing them all here. Instead, the discussion is limited to just a few: one from Romans (Rom 5:12-21), two from 1 Corinthians (1 Cor 5:7 and 10:4), and one from Galatians (Gal 3:16). Each of these examples validates the fact that the New Testament fosters a Christ-centered hermeneutic when reading the Old Testament.

Romans 5:12-21

Much has been written about the interpretation of Romans 5:12-21, but the interpretive complexities of this passage fall beyond the scope of this discussion.⁴³ The concern here is with how this passage, which compares and contrasts the work of Adam and the work of Christ, demonstrates Paul's view of the Old Testament. Specifically, the interest is in whether or not Paul sees the Old Testament as being rightly understood in

⁴³Schreiner notes, "Romans 5:12-21 is one of the most difficult and controversial passages to interpret in all of Pauline literature." Thomas Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 267.

light of Christ. And it becomes clear that he does when he speaks of Adam as “a type of the one who was to come” (Rom 5:14).

As discussed previously, a *type* refers to “those OT persons, institutions, or events that have a divinely intended function of prefiguring the eschatological age inaugurated by Christ.”⁴⁴ Thus Paul views Adam as a type of Christ, because they both function as representative heads of humanity. Consequently, both the actions of Adam and the actions of Christ have universal effects on humanity, albeit very different effects. As Schreiner puts it, “Two Adams have exerted their influence on human history, but the impact of the latter is greater than that of the former . . . Christ has undone what Adam has wrought, and the rule over the world promised to Adam has begun to be restored through Christ’s work.”⁴⁵

Paul’s comparison and contrast of Adam and Christ in Romans 5:12-21 demonstrates that he too is interpreting the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way. He sees in the first Adam a figure that prepares readers for the second Adam. He reads Genesis 1-3 by seeing it point forward to the work of Christ, who has “undone and reversed the evil Adam imposed on the world.”⁴⁶

1 Corinthians 5:7

Another example of Paul’s typological interpretation of the Old Testament can be seen in 1 Corinthians 5:7, where he speaks of Christ as “our Passover.” Paul sees the sacrifice of Christ on the cross as typologically analogous to the sacrifice of the Passover

⁴⁴Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 333-34.

⁴⁵Schreiner, *Romans*, 267.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 284.

lamb in Exodus 12. Or, as Leon Morris puts it, “Christ is for believers what the Passover was for the Jews.”⁴⁷

This Old Testament allusion comes in the context of Paul’s instructions to the Corinthians about what to do with the case of the incestuous man (1 Cor 5:1-13), and his instructions are plain: “Purge the evil person from among you” (5:13). To illustrate this need to clean out the evil from among them, Paul mentions the Passover and the yeast or leaven as an analogy (1 Cor 5:6-8), which Morris explains as follows:

Paul is using this imagery to remind his readers that the death of Christ had delivered them from slavery to evil and made them the people of God. There is emphasis on emergence to new life, and here the symbolism of yeast makes an important point. Ancient Israel was commanded to remove all yeast before the sacrifice (Exodus 12:15; 13:7), and in Paul’s day a feature of Passover observance was a solemn search for and destruction of all yeast before the feast began. This had to be done before the *pascha*, the kid or lamb, was offered in the temple. Paul points out that *Christ, our Passover* has already been sacrificed. It is time and more than time that all yeast (i.e. all evil) was put away.⁴⁸

The primary purpose of pointing out Paul’s reasoning here is that this is another example of his interpretation of an Old Testament event (Passover) in a way that clearly points to Jesus Christ. For he calls Christ “our Passover” (1 Cor 5:7), which is hardly a subtle or veiled reference.

1 Corinthians 10:4

In addition, in a similar reference later in 1 Corinthians, Paul speaks of the wilderness experience of the Israelites and the fact that they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, which Paul identifies when he says, “and the Rock was Christ” (1 Cor 10:4). As he did with the Passover, so here, Paul is “interpreting the Israelite

⁴⁷Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 91.

⁴⁸Ibid.

experience of water from the rock christologically.”⁴⁹ The Lord miraculously provided Israel with water from the rock in both Exodus 17:1-7 and in Numbers 20:2-13, and Paul is teaching here in 1 Corinthians 10 that it was Christ who was that true Rock, that true source of water. For this reason, Gordon Fee states that Paul’s aim here is “to emphasize the typological character of Israel’s experience, that it was by Christ himself that they were being nourished in the wilderness.”⁵⁰

Therefore, here is yet one more example of Paul’s Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament. He sees events such as the Passover and the miraculous provision of water in the wilderness as pointing to the person and work of Jesus Christ. He views the right way to read the Old Testament as forward-looking, and specifically, forward-looking to the true Passover and the true Rock, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:16

One final example to consider from the Pauline epistles is the reference to Christ made in Galatians 3:16: “Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, ‘And to his offsprings,’ referring to many, but to one, ‘And to your offspring,’ who is Christ.” In arguing for the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant in Christ, Paul observes that the word *offspring* (or *seed*) is singular rather than plural, which means that it ultimately points to one person. And he goes on to say that the one person it refers to, Abraham’s true offspring, is Jesus Christ.

This example from the pen of Paul, like the others already cited, further demonstrates how the apostles sought to understand and interpret the Old Testament. It is not as though Paul suddenly forgot that Abraham’s offspring could refer to all his

⁴⁹Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 447.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 449.

descendants or even all the nations. It is that he specifically wanted to communicate that the ultimate fulfillment of Abraham's offspring was Jesus Christ. Timothy George explains:

Of course, Paul was aware that the word "seed" (*sperma*), in Hebrew and Greek as well as English, could be used as a collective noun as he himself employed it elsewhere (cf. Rom 4:13-18). It was not uncommon in rabbinic exegesis for a theological argument to be based on the singular or plural form of a particular word in the scriptural text. Paul may well have been responding here to the popular Jewish claim that they alone, along with a few proselytes, were the "true sons of Abraham." Paul wanted to show that the greater fulfillment of the promise is not biological but Christological.⁵¹

The point is that this interpretive decision is intentional on Paul's part, a choice made in order to show that the greater fulfillment of the promise to Abraham is "not biological but Christological."⁵² Indeed, what Paul and the rest of the New Testament authors show is that the greater fulfillment of all the Old Testament is Christological.

In short, then, whether it is an Old Testament person (such as Adam) or an Old Testament event (such as Passover), Paul shows that the way to rightly understand that person is to see his fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Put another way, the Pauline epistles not only demonstrate but also demand a Christological reading of the Old Testament.

Conclusion

If it is true that "the Bible teaches Christians how the Bible should be read,"⁵³ then believers should make every effort to read the Bible according to that pattern. Christians should want to read the Bible the way Jesus read the Bible and the way he taught his disciples to read the Bible. Moreover, they should want to teach the Bible in

⁵¹Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary, vol. 30 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 247.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?*, 19.

that way. Thankfully, they are not left to guess how this should be done. Jesus and his apostles both read and explained their Hebrew Bibles in a Christological way.

The New Testament, then, demands a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament. Moreover, this understanding is modeled by the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, seen clearly in passages such as Luke 24:25-27, 44-48; John 5:36-46; Matthew 1-9; Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 10:4; and Galatians 3:16. All of these texts substantiate the argument of this chapter.

In sum, one simply cannot read and interpret the Old Testament rightly without seeing it ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It cannot be viewed only in a historical or cultural or literary way; it must be read and understood in a Christological way. To do otherwise is not only to veer from the model taught by Jesus and the apostles, it is to miss the beauty and unity of the Bible. Like the two disciples in Luke 24, it is to become blind to what the Old Testament is fundamentally about; and like the Pharisees in John 5, it is to become deaf to Jesus saying of the Old Testament Scriptures: “It is they that bear witness about me” (John 5:39). Ultimately, it is to miss the Savior in the pages of Scripture. Therefore, Christians want always to heed the counsel of J. C. Ryle: “Read the Bible with Christ continually in view.”⁵⁴

⁵⁴J. C. Ryle, *Practical Religion* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1998), 134.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL SUPPORT FOR TEACHING
THE OLD TESTAMENT FROM A
CHRIST-CENTERED
PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

The previous chapter demonstrated that the New Testament demands a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament. It did so by surveying a number of New Testament texts in which Jesus and the apostles model such a Christological understanding of the Old Testament. Scripture shows that Jesus deliberately teaches his disciples to read their Hebrew Bible in such a way that finds its ultimate fulfillment in him (see Luke 24:25-27 and Luke 24:44-48). Therefore, the biblical support for teaching the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective is both firm and well-founded.

What of the theoretical support for such a practice? For instance, what support is gained by considering the authorial intent of the biblical writers? Is there support for this practice from Christian history, especially the history of biblical interpretation? What current publishing trends within evangelicalism might lend support to a resurgence of Christ-centered teaching of the Old Testament? Also, what issues affecting the church today might be helped by a Christological understanding of the Old Testament? This chapter seeks to answer such questions.

In short, this chapter aims to show that the significance of teaching the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective finds theoretical support in its keeping with the authorial intent of the biblical writers, its consistent practice throughout church history, its current resurgence within evangelicalism, and its assistance in stemming the

tide of biblical illiteracy. First, this chapter will demonstrate that teaching and understanding the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective is being faithful to what the biblical authors actually intended to communicate. Second, it will argue that Christ-centered exposition of the Old Testament is not a novel concept but the consistent method used throughout the history of the church, illustrated most clearly by the church fathers and the reformers. Third, it will claim that this historic practice has been neglected in recent generations but is being revived, evidenced by the steady stream of resources related to this topic which have been produced within evangelicalism in recent years. Fourth, it will suggest that one of the ways to help stem the tide of the growing problem of biblical illiteracy is to teach people the unity between the two Testaments, explaining how the Bible tells one story with Jesus Christ as its focal point. This “four-legged stool” of theoretical support – literary, historical, cultural/sociological, and educational – provides sure footing to the practice of teaching the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective.

The first consideration, then, is the literary.

Christ-centered Exposition of the OT and Authorial Intent

A primary aspect of literary exposition is understanding a text in a way that remains faithful to the author’s intention. This understanding is necessary for all types of literature, whether novels or creative essays or works of non-fiction. To stray from the message that the author intended to communicate or to neglect it altogether is to fail as an interpreter and expositor. Moreover, such carelessness and neglect loses sight of the purpose of the text and the message it is meant to convey. Expositors are meant to be servants of the text, not masters over it, and part of serving the text is understanding it in a way that remains true to the author’s intention.

These things are no less true and no less important when the text being considered is from the Bible. Indeed, they are more important, because the human authors of the Bible wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. To neglect the authorial intent of any text of Scripture in the task of exposition, then, is not just literary arrogance but spiritual treason. Authorial intent must be recognized, valued, and upheld in the task of biblical exposition.

So if fidelity to authorial intent is vital to biblical exposition, then exposition must be done in a way that remains true to the intention of the biblical authors. As chapter 2 demonstrated, the intention of the New Testament authors was to communicate that the way to read, understand, and interpret the Old Testament is from a Christ-centered perspective. To ignore their clear intention in this, or to consider it insignificant, is to be an unfaithful and irresponsible expositor. To disregard the Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament intended by Luke in Luke 24:25-27, 44-48 or by John in John 5:36-46 or by Matthew in Matthew 1-9 or by Paul in places such as Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 10:4; and Galatians 3:16 is to simply ride roughshod over the original message of the biblical authors. Worse, it is to misunderstand and misinterpret their writings.

If biblical exposition is to be done faithfully and responsibly, it must be done in line with the intention of the biblical authors. Considering that the New Testament authors clearly intended for the Old Testament to be understood and interpreted in light of the person and work of Jesus Christ, right exposition of the Bible happens when expositors learn to adopt the “interpretive perspective of the biblical authors”¹ themselves. Such attention to authorial intent ensures that expositors are interpreting the Bible the way the Bible itself intends to be interpreted. Therefore, commitment to

¹James Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 15.

authorial intent provides literary support for the practice of Christ-centered exposition of the Old Testament.

Christ-centered Exposition of the OT throughout Church History

Jesus' interpretation of the Old Testament in a Christo-centric way, his teaching the disciples to do the same, and the intention of the New Testament authors to continue this practice all provide clear evidence that this interpretive perspective should be the one that was adopted and followed throughout the succeeding generations. In other words, there should be a historically consistent (though not necessarily identical) interpretive method when it comes to Christian interpretation of the Old Testament. If a clear pattern exists in Luke 24 that is then echoed in the rest of the New Testament, then that same basic pattern ought to be woven throughout the history of biblical interpretation. Indeed, such a Christ-centered pattern does weave itself throughout the church's history of interpreting the Old Testament, which this section will demonstrate.

Before examining the historical evidence, two caveats arise to clarify expectations. First, what follows is in no way meant to be an exhaustive, full-scale survey of the history of Old Testament interpretation. Such an exploration would go far beyond the scope of this chapter, which neither time nor space allows. Therefore, this brief survey will be limited to only two representative periods in the history of the church: (1) the Patristic era and (2) the Reformation era. These two eras were chosen because they represent some of the church's most able and well known interpreters, and because they are far enough apart (chronologically) to provide evidence that a Christ-centered pattern of teaching the Old Testament was not limited to one particular time period. Furthermore, the discussion will be limited to only a select number of figures and exegetes from these two periods, and only a few examples from their works will be explored. To consider

every major person, even from just these two significant periods in Christian history, or to explore their works in detail, would not be practical for the purposes of this chapter.²

Second, the differences in interpretative method (e.g., typological vs. allegorical or law-gospel vs. covenant theology), while significant, will not be the focus here. Instead, the focus will be on the similarity that exists across the spectrum of interpretation, namely a shared Christological understanding of the Old Testament. Granted, the approaches to such a Christ-centered understanding of Old Testament texts may be drastically different, but the main concern here is with the fact that such a Christ-centered understanding consistently appears throughout the history of the church, even if specific approaches to interpretation varied widely. This unity of understanding amid a diversity of method is perhaps best seen in the church fathers, of whom David Dockery notes: “While there were definite differences among the Fathers regarding their understanding of the literal-historical sense of Scripture, as well as the typological and allegorical, *there existed a general consensus that Scripture should be interpreted christologically*” (emphasis mine).³ That general consensus is most relevant here, not the definite differences.

The Patristic Era

With those two caveats stated, attention can now be given to Old Testament interpretation in the Patristic era, an era dating from roughly AD 100 to at least the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451.⁴ As mentioned previously, if Jesus interpreted the Old Testament in a Christo-centric way and if he taught his disciples to do the same, then

²For a comprehensive study, see Alan Hauser and Duane Watson, eds., *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, vols. 1 and 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003 and 2009); or Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation Past and Present* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996).

³David Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 157.

⁴Bray, *Biblical Interpretation Past and Present*, 77.

there should be a consistent pattern of interpretation that can be witnessed in the succeeding generations of the early church. In other words, a clear connection between patristic interpretation of the Old Testament and the interpretation of the Old Testament by Jesus and the apostles should exist. And as the evidence is examined, that is the exact connection that becomes apparent.

However, it may prove helpful to get a sense of “the big picture” of biblical interpretation that emerges from this time period before looking at the evidence in detail. What general conclusion can be drawn from the evidence as a whole? Dockery sums up this period well when he writes, “While the apostolic fathers were on the whole more wildly fanciful than the New Testament writers, they followed the New Testament exegetical pattern and remained, like the apostles, christocentric in their interpretation.”⁵ The last part of that sentence bears repeating: “they followed the New Testament exegetical pattern and remained, like the apostles, christocentric in their interpretation.”⁶ Two aspects of Dockery’s summary should be noted. First, he claims that there is a clear “New Testament exegetical pattern” that can be followed, which is exactly what both the previous chapter and the previous section argued. Second, he claims that the early church fathers followed that pattern and “remained, *like the apostles*, christocentric in their interpretation” (emphasis mine). They followed the pattern established in Luke 24 and demonstrated in the rest of the New Testament, and they remained Christ-centered in their interpretation of the Old Testament, just like the apostles. Consequently, what the general picture from history reveals is that the biblical interpretation of the church fathers was not motivated by novelty or originality. Instead, it was motivated by faithfulness to the New Testament pattern and commitment to the apostolic example, or the authorial intent of the apostolic writers.

⁵Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now*, 45.

⁶Ibid.

Such a general claim can be substantiated by examining the writings of specific figures from this era. For the purposes of this chapter, the different Patristic interpreters will be divided into three groups or schools: (1) the Post-Apostolic School (2) the Alexandrian School and (3) the Antiochene School. While each group had its different emphases and faced different challenges, they shared a consistency when it came to understanding and interpreting the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective, as can be seen from what follows.

The first “school” to consider, the Post-Apostolic School (dating from about AD 100-200), is really no “school” at all, meaning there was no established method or school of exegesis that characterized those in this group (such as can be found later in both the Alexandrian and Antiochene Schools). In the words of Gerald Bray, theirs was a “pre-systematic biblical exegesis.”⁷ They were simply trying to be faithful to the pattern they saw and learned from the apostles. Bray summarizes the biblical interpretation of this period as follows:

Before the time of Origen there were no Christian commentaries on Scripture, and little attempt was made to offer a methodical exposition of its contents The most frequent type of exegetical literature during this period was the homily, or sermon, a mode of discourse which has continued to the present, and which was popular throughout patristic times.

Among those who took the text at face value, a basically literalistic interpretation was dominant, though the sermon style lent itself to allegory, particularly of a moralizing kind. The literalistic approach reflects the influence of the New Testament, which interpreted the Old in terms of the fulfilment of prophecy in and by Jesus Christ. This theme rapidly became the universal distinguishing mark of all Christian exegesis. Apart from Christ, the Scriptures were incomprehensible, and so it was permissible to find reference to him in any way possible. The Christocentric bias of this early period produced tendencies toward typological and allegorical exegesis, but in an unsystematic way. Many writers were probably unaware of what they were doing, as they sought to relate every Scripture passage somehow or other to Christ. It is therefore wrong to say that typology or allegory

⁷Bray, *Biblical Interpretation Past and Present*, 97.

formed the basis of their hermeneutic. The factor which gave unity to their exegesis was the person and work of Christ.⁸

Setting aside the concerns that believers today might have with allegorical interpretation or a moralizing tendency, it is important to note that here in this early period of the church, immediately following the ministry of the apostles, there was a clear “Christocentric bias” that became “the universal distinguishing mark of all Christian exegesis.” While there was no established method or school of interpretation, there was still unity to their exegesis, a unity which was rooted in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Three figures from this period will demonstrate the “Christocentric bias” that was evident in their interpretation of the Old Testament. The first figure to consider is Clement of Rome, whom tradition views as the author of *First Clement*, a letter from the church at Rome to the church at Corinth near the end of the first century. In this letter, it is clear that “Clement interpreted Scripture in a christological fashion, not unlike his predecessors.”⁹ For example, when he encourages his readers to a life of Christ-like humility, he illustrates that humility not from Christ’s earthly ministry, but from the passion accounts prefigured in the Old Testament.¹⁰ More specifically, “In *1 Clement* 16, we find the prophecies of the servant song in Isaiah 53 applied to Jesus. Like the author of Hebrews, he was especially fond of Psalms 2, 22, and 110, as is seen in *1 Clement* 36.”¹¹ Thus in Clement there exists a clear post-apostolic example of a Christ-centered handling of the Old Testament, very similar to that of Jesus and the apostles.

A second example from this period is the apologist Justin Martyr, who sought to defend the Christian faith against pagan misconceptions, pleading the antiquity of the

⁸Bray, *Biblical Interpretation Past and Present*, 97.

⁹Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now*, 50.

¹⁰Ibid., 49.

¹¹Ibid., 50.

Old Testament but still interpreting it in a Christ-centered way. Like Clement, Justin provides an example of a faithful following of the pattern established in the New Testament with Jesus and the apostles. In fact, Willis Shotwell studied and compared the interpretive approach of Justin with that of Jesus and the apostles, reaching the undeniable conclusion that Justin shared a Christ-centered interpretation of the Old Testament with that of Jesus and the New Testament authors.¹² Dockery agrees, stating that Justin's "typological exegesis was characteristically christocentric."¹³

A third and final representative figure from this period is Irenaeus, who leaves little doubt as to how he views the relationship between Christ and the Scriptures, as can be seen from what he teaches in his work, *Against Heresies*:

If one carefully reads the Scriptures, he will find there the word on the subject of Christ – *de Christo sermonem* – and the prefiguration of the new calling. He is indeed the hidden treasure in the field – the field in fact is the world – but in truth, the hidden treasure in the Scriptures is Christ. Because he is designed by types and words that humanly are not possible to understand before the accomplishment of all things, that is, Christ's parousia.¹⁴

Again, Irenaeus demonstrates that the post-apostolic fathers approached the Old Testament Scriptures in a way that sought to understand and interpret them in light of the coming of Christ. So even though there was no particular "school" of interpretation during this time, there was still an interpretive unity based on the person and work of Christ, which was learned from the apostles. Or, as Dockery states, "Included in the second-century hermeneutical approach was a continuity with the typological-christological methods of Jesus and the apostles."¹⁵

¹²See Willis Shotwell, *The Biblical Exegesis of Justin Martyr* (London: SPCK, 1965).

¹³Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now*, 64.

¹⁴Cited in Christopher Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 192.

¹⁵Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now*, 72.

Following this period of a more general, pre-systematic approach there arose two specific and distinct schools of interpretation: the allegorical approach of the Alexandrian School and the typological approach of the Antiochene School. And while these two schools differed drastically, there was still a shared concern on the part of both to read and interpret the Old Testament in a Christological fashion. In other words, they had the same goal, but their methods for attaining that goal were vastly different. And as stated already, the concern in this chapter is not so much on the particular differences of these two approaches to biblical interpretation but on the fact that both approaches desire to understand the Old Testament Scriptures in a Christ-centered way.

The chief proponent of the allegorical approach from the Alexandrian School was Origen. Although it was Clement of Alexandria that first began to establish this approach, it was Origen who fully developed it and became its primary exemplar. With the present-day bias against allegorical interpretation (and for good reason), it is at least worth remembering that such an approach was utilized out of necessity. Bray explains, “Christians first resorted to allegory on a large scale in defense of the Old Testament against Marcion The aim of Christian commentators was to achieve a harmony between the two Testaments, and it was in this endeavor that allegory was most useful.”¹⁶ To be fair, Origen defended his use of allegory not just theoretically but biblically. For example, he mentioned Jesus’ usage of parables and Paul’s usage of allegory in Galatians 4 as biblical justification for his allegorical approach.¹⁷

What is most important for the purposes of this chapter is the motivating factor behind this interpretive approach. For Origen, that motivating factor was a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament: “Origen argued that the authority of the

¹⁶Bray, *Biblical Interpretation Past and Present*, 101.

¹⁷See Origen, *On First Principles, and Contra Celsum*, in *Ante Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4, ed. Phillip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976).

Old Testament is confirmed by Christ, *so that all interpretation of it must ultimately be Christocentric*” (emphasis mine).¹⁸ Origen believed that Christ, who is the Word of God, speaks all throughout the biblical narrative. His words, Origen said, are not just those “which He spoke when He became man and tabernacled in the flesh; for before that time, Christ, the Word of God, was in Moses and the prophets.”¹⁹ This “voice of Christ” is ultimately what drove Origen to seek a deeper meaning in the text of Scripture: “[F]or the deeper meaning that Origen sought was christocentric. For Origen, Christ was the center of history and the key to understanding the Old Testament.”²⁰ Though interpreters today might disagree with the approach, it is clear that Origen shared with both those who came before him and those who would come after him a desire to understand and interpret the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way.

In contrast to Origen and the Alexandrians, the other school of interpretation that developed during the Patristic era was the Antiochene School, which was characterized by a typological approach to biblical exegesis. Dockery describes this approach in the following way:

Following the example of Jesus and the apostles, the church fathers practiced a hermeneutical technique for bringing out the correspondence between the two Testaments and took as its guiding principle the idea that the events and personages of the Old Testament prefigured and anticipated the events and personages of the New. The typologist took history seriously; it was the scene of the progressive unfolding of God’s consistent redemptive purpose. It was assumed that the same redemptive plan could be discerned in the sacred history from creation to judgment, the former stages serving as shadows of the latter. Christ was the ultimate climax; because God in his dealings with humankind was leading to this point, it seemed

¹⁸Bray, *Biblical Interpretation Past and Present*, 101.

¹⁹Origen, *On First Principles*, Preface.1, cited in Christopher Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 143.

²⁰Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now*, 93-94.

appropriate to find typological pictures or pointers in the experiences and events of the chosen nation.²¹

This approach became the norm for Antiochene exegesis. And interestingly enough, while it was a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament that motivated the allegorical approach of the Alexandrians, it was a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament that motivated the Antiochenes to reject an allegorical interpretation in favor of a typological one. Here is one reason they did so:

The greatest exponent of the Antiochene exegetical method was Theodore of Mopsuestia, who rebuked the allegorizers for their tendency to lapse into fables far removed from historical fact. It was this question of history which most disturbed Theodore, because he recognized that an allegorical treatment of Adam, for example, would undermine the claim of Christ to be the new Adam. If the fall of humankind were merely a fable, how could redemption have any real meaning?²²

For Theodore, the incarnation of Christ becomes both unnecessary and unintelligible apart from a literal and typological understanding of Adam.

Again, the aim here is not to focus on the differences of these two approaches but to show that both had a shared desire to understand and interpret the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective. Both the Alexandrians and the Antiochenes read Scripture Christologically, seeing Jesus Christ as the unifying factor between the two Testaments. And both schools were seeking to follow the example they saw in Jesus and the apostles.

Therefore, the history of interpretation during the Patristic era, while revealing a diversity of method, also reveals a consistency of motivation and message. The fathers were motivated by a commitment to remain faithful to the interpretive pattern provided by Jesus and the apostles, and they were motivated by proclaiming the Christ-centered message that the Bible itself unfolds. Enough consistency occurred during this era to lead Christopher Hall, in *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*, to list as his first two

²¹Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now*, 81.

²²Bray, *Biblical Interpretation Past and Present*, 106.

hermeneutical principles to be learned by the church fathers as (1) read the Bible holistically and (2) read the Bible christologically.²³ Dockery summarizes the consistent Christocentric interpretation of the Bible during this era as follows:

The diversity, dissensions, and heresies did not obscure the agreement shared by all from Clement and Ignatius to Jerome, Augustine, and Theodoret. The church recognized that the fulfillment of the Old Testament events, promises, and prophecies was centered in Christ. Whether viewed functionally, typologically, or allegorically, this was so. As G. W. Bromiley has so aptly stated, “The Old Testament and the New Testament were seen together in indissoluble unity as the one book of the one God inspired by the one Spirit and testifying to the one Son.” The themes of unity and fulfillment for the Fathers were focused in the conviction that Christ was the true and final subject of Scripture.²⁴

The Reformation Era

Generally speaking (though there were certainly exceptions), the Medieval era, the period between the Patristic era and the Reformation era, was a period of time that witnessed a great diminishing of the Bible’s significance and usage. Partly due to widespread illiteracy, partly due to the Bible being available only in Latin, and partly due to official Roman Catholic teaching, the Bible became an obscure and neglected book. With the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, a revival of interest in the Scriptures arose. Erasmus’ 1516 edition of the Greek New Testament was more than just a significant linguistic achievement. It provided the biblical and theological kindling for men such as Luther, Zwingli, Tyndale, Calvin, and others to light the fire that would become “the unquenchable flame”²⁵ known as the Protestant Reformation. Thus, in many ways, the Reformation was a rediscovery of the Bible and a rediscovery of the biblical gospel, which had been lost in a world of popes, saints, sacraments, relics, indulgences,

²³Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*, 191-92.

²⁴Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now*, 157.

²⁵Michael Reeves, *The Unquenchable Flame: Discovering the Heart of the Reformation* (Nashville: B&H, 2010).

etc. The reformers soon realized that what was at stake in the Reformation was the authority and availability of the Bible itself.

The significance here, though, is not just that the reformers began to read the Bible again, but how they began to read the Bible. Specifically, this section seeks to discover how they interpreted the Old Testament and if they continued the Christo-centric pattern seen first in Jesus and the apostles and then later in the church fathers. In most Protestant circles, it is generally agreed that the two most prominent and prolific reformers were Martin Luther and John Calvin. For those of us who are English-speaking Christians, no reformer may be more significant than William Tyndale, since it was Tyndale who labored and sacrificed to translate the Bible into English. Therefore, the discussion here will be limited to those three figures: Luther, Calvin, and Tyndale. And again, what becomes apparent when their sermons, commentaries, and other works are studied is that they too employed a Christ-centered hermeneutic when working with the Old Testament.

Martin Luther, whose name has become forever associated with the Reformation, is well known for his work in biblical exegesis. As Gerald Bray notes, “His exegetical works comprise slightly over half his total output – thirty volumes out of fifty-five in the American edition of his works.”²⁶ One of the consistent elements seen in Luther’s approach to biblical interpretation, according to Mark Thompson, is “his conviction that the focus of the entire Bible is its testimony to Jesus Christ.”²⁷ Bray adds, “For Luther the Bible is not simply a catalogue of truths, but a record of God’s saving purpose, which came to fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Everything in Scripture pointed

²⁶Bray, *Biblical Interpretation Past and Present*, 172.

²⁷Mark Thompson, “Biblical Interpretation in the Works of Martin Luther,” in *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 2, ed. Alan Hauser and Duane Watson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 304.

towards him, and anything which was not read in the light of Christ was fundamentally misinterpreted.”²⁸

This approach can be seen, for example, in Luther’s preface to his glosses on the Psalms, where he states that “every prophecy and every prophet must be understood as referring to Christ the Lord, except where it is clear from plain words that someone else is spoken of.”²⁹ It is also displayed in a number of different quotes from his works. For example, he published a collection of sermons (known in German as the *Kirchenpostille*) in which he insisted that “all Scripture tends towards Christ.”³⁰ He told a group of his students during one of their “table talk” conversations that “Christ is the central point of the circle around which everything else in the Bible revolves.”³¹ So strongly did he believe that the Old Testament testified of Christ that he could refer to it as “the swaddling cloths of Scripture,” because there Christ was to be found: “simple and lowly are these swaddling cloths, but dear is the treasure, Christ, who lies in them.”³² It is this conviction that led to Luther’s famous axiom that the primary purpose of Scripture is “to preach and inculcate Christ.”³³

Clearly, Luther interpreted the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way, following the pattern modeled by Jesus and the apostles and the pattern witnessed in the works of the church fathers (of which Luther was quite familiar). So consistent was Luther in this approach that it led Thompson to conclude, “[For Luther] the task of the exegete then is to look for *was Christum treibet*, ‘that which drives home Christ.’ To

²⁸Bray, *Biblical Interpretation Past and Present*, 198.

²⁹Quoted in Thompson, “Biblical Interpretation in the Works of Martin Luther,” 305.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹*Ibid.*

³²*Ibid.*

³³*Ibid.*, 306.

expound the Scriptures (and at this point he had in mind particularly the OT) without reference to Christ is to distort their message.”³⁴

Coming a generation after Luther, John Calvin continued this Christ-centered interpretive pattern and helped to establish it for succeeding generations through his influential commentaries on Scripture. Granted, Calvin was more subtle in his approach than Luther had been. And he was more cautious, because he wanted to ensure that proper treatment was given to the original Old Testament context of a passage before just irresponsibly leaping forward to Christ. Bray summarizes Calvin’s approach in the following way:

For him, Christ was the fulfillment of the Old Testament and the theme of the New, but that did not mean that every verse necessarily contained some hidden reference to him. Rather, the interpreter must be careful to relate every passage of Scripture to Christ, whatever it actually said in itself, and not to interpret it in a way which would destroy the gospel. Thus, the Levitical sacrifices were types of Christ’s sacrifice, in that they illustrated the principles underlying his death on the cross, but they were not thereby unhistorical, or merely allegorical.³⁵

So Calvin’s approach was more careful and measured than many who had gone before him. However, that does not mean that Calvin was somehow unconcerned with interpreting the Old Testament in a Christological way. This concern can be seen, for instance, in his preface to Olivetan’s French New Testament: “This is what we should in short seek in the whole of Scripture: truly to know Jesus Christ and the infinite riches that are comprised in him and offered to us by him from God the Father.”³⁶ Likewise, Calvin’s Christo-centric view of the Old Testament can be seen clearly in this explanation from one of his commentaries:

³⁴Thompson, “Biblical Interpretation in the Works of Martin Luther,” 306.

³⁵Bray, *Biblical Interpretation Past and Present*, 203.

³⁶Quoted in Barbara Pitkin, “John Calvin and the Interpretation of the Bible,” in *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 2, ed. Alan Hauser and Duane Watson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 354-55.

He [Christ] is Isaac, the beloved Son of the Father who was offered as a sacrifice, but nevertheless did not succumb to the power of death. He is Jacob the watchful shepherd, who has such great care for the sheep which he guards. He is the good and compassionate brother Joseph, who in his glory was not ashamed to acknowledge his brothers, however lowly and abject their condition. He is the great sacrificer and bishop Melchizedek who has offered an eternal sacrifice once for all. He is the sovereign lawgiver Moses, writing his law on the tablets of our hearts by his Spirit. He is the faithful captain and guide Joshua, to lead us to the Promised Land. He is the victorious and noble king David, bringing by his hand all rebellious power to subjection. He is the magnificent and triumphant king Solomon governing his kingdom in peace and prosperity. He is the strong and powerful Samson who by his death has overwhelmed his enemies.³⁷

The third and final figure to consider in this section is William Tyndale, who was the genius behind the English Bible. Though others before him, such as John Wycliffe, had made efforts to translate the Bible into English, none of them matched Tyndale. His translation work was (and still remains) a literary masterpiece. Sadly, he was strangled and then burned at the stake in 1536 because of his labors, but that tragedy could not stop the lasting impact his work of providing the Holy Scriptures in English would have on the English-speaking world.

When he published his English New Testament in 1526, Tyndale provided an introduction to it titled *A Pathway to Scripture*, which is considered not only the oldest hermeneutical study in English, but also the source for what would later be known as covenant theology.³⁸ This issue is mentioned not to raise a debate about the particular merits of covenant theology (or the lack thereof) but because this influential way of understanding the Bible provides an additional example of Christo-centric interpretation of the Old Testament. Covenant theology seeks to maintain the unity of the two Testaments and tie the whole biblical narrative together around the theme of God's covenant promises with human beings. And of course, at the center of the biblical

³⁷John Calvin, *Calvin: Commentaries*, ed. Joseph Haroutunian (London: S.C.M. Press, 1958), 68-69.

³⁸Bray, *Biblical Interpretation Past and Present*, 175-76.

narrative is Jesus Christ, who came to be the fulfillment of those covenant promises. The impetus for this kind of understanding of the Bible, which is quite popular in many Protestant circles still today, came first from Tyndale, who argued that the Old and New Testaments belonged together in the Christian Bible.³⁹ There was an essential unity between the two Testaments, a unity based on promise and fulfillment. And that fulfillment came in and through Christ. In other words, William Tyndale, in laying the groundwork for covenant theology, helped give yet another method for reading and understanding the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way.

Therefore, as was the case during the Patristic era, a variety of emphases and methods of biblical interpretation were employed during the Reformation era. Nevertheless, there was an ever-present consistency too when it came to the reformers' understanding of the Old Testament. Like Jesus, the apostles, and the church fathers before them, the reformers were Christ-centered exegetes of the Old Testament. They continued reading and interpreting the Old Testament the way that Jesus instructed his followers to in the pages of the New Testament and the way intended by the New Testament authors, namely in a way that pointed ultimately to Christ.

The next section moves from the historical to more of the sociological and cultural. Specifically, it provides a survey of recent evangelical publications related to a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament to demonstrate a resurgence of interest in this topic, a topic which has fallen on hard times in the last few generations but which seems to be making a comeback.

³⁹Lee Gibbs, "Biblical Interpretation in England," in *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 2, ed. Alan Hauser and Duane Watson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 388.

The Resurgence of Christ-Centered Exposition Illustrated by Current Evangelical Publishing Trends

What some might label as a “gospel-centered” or “Christ-centered” emphasis currently prevails in evangelical publishing. Books with that language in the title or subtitle seem to be flooding the market. One of the reasons for such an abundance of resources on this topic is the obvious need within evangelicalism to grasp a clearer understanding of the Old Testament, and specifically, one that is centered on Jesus Christ. If that need did not exist, these books themselves would not exist (at least, not in the quantity that they currently do). There would simply be no market for them, and publishers would not waste precious resources on them. The reason this need is so great is that for the last few generations, the Old Testament has been largely ignored in scores of evangelical churches and pulpits, and where it has been preached and taught, seldom has it been done in a Christ-centered way.

Some might argue that this recent neglect of the Old Testament or its being taught only in a moralizing way is proof that the church never consistently read the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way in the first place. Such a practice was the exception, not the rule, they might say. However, the previous section plainly demonstrated, through different eras and by means of different figures, that the consistent practice of the church throughout history has been to read and interpret the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way. The normative pattern of the church through her history has been careful attention to authorial intent, commitment to the New Testament pattern, and adoption of the apostolic example, all of which point to a Christ-centered interpretation of the Old Testament. The last few generations, which have been affected by higher criticism, demythologizing, and the like, are actually the exception, not the rule. Thus, the current resurgence of interest in a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament is a move to get the church back on the right track after being derailed and misled for far too long. The plethora of resources devoted to this topic being published today should be

welcomed as a sign of reviving a neglected practice of Christian interpretation of the Bible.

Therefore, the need for such books is real, and perhaps the best way to see this need is by considering the number of resources devoted to it that have been published in recent years (of the resources noted below, the overwhelming majority of them have been published in the last decade, and many of them in the last five years). The brief summary to follow will divide these resources into four categories: (1) thematic works (2) preaching and teaching helps (3) commentary series and Bible study series and (4) children's Bibles and books. While none of the lists under each category are meant to be exhaustive, they do show something of the breadth of this current publishing trend, which serves to demonstrate the legitimate need for a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament in the evangelical world today, which in turn points to the resurgence of interest in this neglected area of biblical interpretation.

Thematic Works

“Thematic works” refers to resources that give attention to the theme of a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament throughout their pages. The target audiences of these books range from popular to academic and their sizes vary from quite brief to quite lengthy, but they all treat this theme in some way. This category of books continues to grow.⁴⁰

⁴⁰T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009); Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen, *The True Story of the Whole World* (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2009); D. A. Carson, *The God Who Is There* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010); D. A. Carson, ed., *The Scriptures Testify about Me* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013); Tim Chester, *From Creation to New Creation* (Purcellville, VA: The Good Book Company, 2010); Edmund Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery* 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013); Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), *Gospel and Kingdom* (Carlisle, PA: Paternoster, 2012), *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012); Wayne Grudem, John Collins, and Thomas Schreiner, eds., *Understanding the Big Picture of the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012); James M. Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010); Walter C. Kaiser, *The*

Preaching and Teaching Helps

In addition to the thematic works, there have also been a number of books published to aid specifically in preaching and teaching the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way. The majority of these books begin with a similar argument as the one above, namely that the church today needs to return to the practice of Christ and the apostles by employing a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament.⁴¹

Commentary Series and Bible Study Series

It is also worth noting that whole series of commentaries and Bible studies have been published in recent years that focus specifically on a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament. Three of the newest and most popular series are:

(1) *The Gospel According to the Old Testament* series⁴² (2) the *Christ-Centered*

Messiah in the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); Alec Motyer, *Look to the Rock* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996); David Murray, *Jesus on Every Page* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013); Vern Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007); Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003); Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope*, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology (Nashville: B&H, 2010); Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012); Christopher Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995).

⁴¹Jonathan Akin, *Preaching Christ from Proverbs* (Nashville: Rainer Publishing Group, 2015); Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005); Edmund Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003); Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Sydney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); idem, *Preaching Christ from Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); idem, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); idem, *Preaching Christ from Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013); Dennis Johnson, *Him We Proclaim* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007); Dennis Johnson, ed., *Heralds of the King* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009); Jack Klumpenhouwer, *Show Them Jesus* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2014); Trevin Wax, *Gospel-Centered Teaching* (Nashville: B&H, 2013).

⁴²Michael P.V. Barrett, *Love Divine and Unfailing: The Gospel According to Hosea* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008); Mark J. Boda, *After God's Own Heart: The Gospel According to David* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007); Raymond B. Dillard, *Faith in the Face of Apostasy: The Gospel According to Elijah and Elisha* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1999); Iain M. Duguid, *Living in the Gap between Promise and Reality: The Gospel According to Abraham* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1999); idem, *Living in the Grip of Relentless Grace: The Gospel in the Lives of Isaac and Jacob* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002); Iain M. Duguid and Matthew P. Harmon, *Living in the Light of Inextinguishable Hope: The Gospel According to Joseph* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013); Bryan D. Estelle, *Salvation through Judgment and Mercy: The Gospel According to Jonah* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005); Zack Eswine, *Recovering Eden: The Gospel*

Exposition Commentary series⁴³ and (3) the *Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament Bible* study series.⁴⁴

Children's Bibles and Books

In addition, books and Bibles have been published specifically for children to help them form a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament and to help counteract the longstanding practice of children being taught the Old Testament in a merely moralistic way. A few of these resources have become very popular among evangelical families and churches, aiding not just children but the parents who read these books to their children.⁴⁵

The examples above demonstrate the sheer quantity of books published on this same subject, which reveals more than a growing fascination; it reveals a glaring problem that is trying to be addressed through an abundance of new resources. Therefore, what is

According to Ecclesiastes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2014); Bryan R. Gregory, *Longing for God in an Age of Discouragement: The Gospel According to Zechariah* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010); David R. Jackson, *Crying Out for Vindication: The Gospel According to Job* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007); Tremper Longman III, *Immanuel in Our Place: Seeing Christ in Israel's Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001); George M. Schwab, *Hope in the Midst of a Hostile World: The Gospel According to Daniel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006); idem, *Right in Their Own Eyes: The Gospel According to Judges* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2011); Anthony T. Selvaggio, *From Bondage to Liberty: The Gospel According to Moses* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2014); Dean R. Ulrich, *From Famine to Fullness: The Gospel According to Ruth* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007).

⁴³Daniel Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Song of Songs* (Nashville: B&H, 2015); Landen Dowden, *Exalting Jesus in Ezekiel* (Nashville: B&H, 2015); Micah Fries and Stephen Rummage, *Exalting Jesus in Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi* (Nashville: B&H, 2015); James M. Hamilton, *Exalting Jesus in Ezra-Nehemiah* (Nashville: B&H, 2014); Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Exodus* (Nashville: B&H, 2014); Allen Moseley, *Exalting Jesus in Leviticus* (Nashville: B&H, 2015).

⁴⁴Nancy Guthrie, *The Promised One: Seeing Jesus in Genesis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011); idem, *The Lamb of God: Seeing Jesus in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012); idem, *The Son of David: Seeing Jesus in the Historical Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013); idem, *The Wisdom of God: Seeing Jesus in the Psalms and Wisdom Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012); idem, *The Word of the Lord: Seeing Jesus in the Prophets* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014).

⁴⁵Sally Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible* (Grand Rapids: ZonderKidz, 2007); James Hamilton, *The Bible's Big Story* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2013); Paul Helm, *The Big Picture Story Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004); Marty Machowski, *The Gospel Story Bible* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2011); *The Big Picture Interactive Bible Storybook* (The Gospel Project) (Nashville: B&H, 2014).

discouraging about this trend is that it points to a very real problem that exists, namely that the church has lost her way over the last few generations when it comes to the Old Testament and its interpretation. The church has drifted from the consistent pattern that she followed for well over a thousand years. However, what is encouraging about this trend is that a number of evangelical scholars, pastors, and authors are devoting their time and attention to addressing this problem and providing solutions to it. Admittedly, not all trends are positive, and not all prevailing winds are the right winds. But this is a positive trend and it is a wind that is blowing in the right direction, because it is a return to our historic practice, and more importantly, because it rings true to the Bible and the intention of the biblical authors. Therefore, Christians today should rejoice that so many resources are becoming readily available for those who seek to grasp a better understanding of the Old Testament, and how it is to be read and taught in light of its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Up to this point, the emphases of this chapter have been literary, historical, and cultural. This final section to follow will emphasize an educational component. Specifically, it will highlight the biblical illiteracy that plagues the church today and suggest the teaching of the unity between the Old and New Testaments as one corrective method that can help improve biblical literacy.

Stemming the Tide of Biblical Illiteracy by Teaching the Unity between the Two Testaments

The problem of biblical illiteracy within the evangelical world, and in our own nation in particular, has been well documented over the last few decades. So overwhelming is the evidence that it led pollster, George Gallup, to refer to the United States as “a nation of biblical illiterates.”⁴⁶ A decade later, researcher George Barna came

⁴⁶George Gallup, Jr. and Jim Castelli, *The People's Faith: American Faith in the 90's* (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 60.

to the same conclusion, stating that “the Christian body in America is immersed in a crisis of biblical illiteracy.”⁴⁷ In his book, *Religious Literacy*, Stephen Prothero speaks of “the disparity between Americans’ veneration of the Bible and their understanding of it,” leading him to conclude that the evidence paints “a picture of a nation that believes God has spoken in scripture but can’t be bothered to listen to what God has to say.”⁴⁸ He notes that “according to the Gallup Organization, which has tracked trends in US religion for over fifty years, Bible reading has declined since the 1980s and ‘basic Bible knowledge is at a record low.’”⁴⁹

Sadly, these indicting statistics are true not just of the general population but of American evangelicals as well: “All of the polls show that those who claim to be evangelical Christians only do marginally better than their nonbelieving neighbors when asked questions about the content of the Bible.”⁵⁰ In other words, Bible-believing, church-going Americans are still largely ignorant of the Bible. Prothero puts it this way, “Despite their conviction that the Bible is the Word of God, evangelicals show scant interest in learning what scripture has to say or wrestling with what it might mean.”⁵¹ He adds, “Even in the Bible Belt, the Good Book is fast becoming, as another evangelical puts it, ‘The Greatest Story Never Read.’”⁵² The accuracy of such polling data is only being confirmed by professors of religion and professors of the Bible in colleges and

⁴⁷George Barna, “Religious Beliefs Vary Widely by Denomination,” *The Barna Update*, June 25, 2001, accessed December 22, 2014, <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=92>

⁴⁸Stephen Prothero, *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know – And Doesn’t* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 6.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 30.

⁵⁰George Guthrie, *Read the Bible for Life* (Nashville; B&H, 2011), 8.

⁵¹Prothero, *Religious Literacy*, 36.

⁵²*Ibid.*

universities across the nation. As George Guthrie, who teaches Bible at Union University, notes, “Our students, even those coming out of the church, simply are no longer grounded in the basics of the Bible’s story.”⁵³

Admittedly, a number of reasons exist for the alarming levels of biblical illiteracy that affect the church today, but Guthrie correctly observes that one major reason for them is that “we don’t know the Bible’s grand story or how its parts work.”⁵⁴ There is a basic ignorance of the overarching storyline of the Bible, and therefore, people cannot make sense of what they are reading. Put another way, many people do not understand the unity that exists between the Old and New Testaments, that the sixty-six books of the Bible are really one book that is telling one story. Consequently, they do not understand how the Old Testament points forward to and is to be read in light of the person and work of Jesus Christ, all of which makes the Bible seem disjointed and completely fragmented. And when that is the case, people will simply forego reading the Bible, especially the Old Testament. Guthrie provides the following insightful explanation of the problem:

The vast majority of people in our churches have no frame of reference, no overarching narrative, which holds all the bits and pieces together. Not surprisingly, the most common comment from my students who have just finished a Bible survey course is, “I never understood how everything fit together before!” Of course, understanding the overarching story of the Bible is part of what it means to *be* biblically literate. Yet our failure to teach people the story of the Bible makes their ongoing growth in biblical literacy hard sledding. The Bible ends up being a jumble of stories, psalms, proverbs, prophecies, and strange passages that don’t make sense because they do not fit into a grand narrative. When a person doesn’t get *the story*, all the little stories, and psalms, and parables have no point of reference by which we can understand them. Thus, we are going to have to teach people *the story* if we are going to reverse current trends in biblical illiteracy.⁵⁵

⁵³Guthrie, *Read the Bible for Life*, 7.

⁵⁴Ibid., 11.

⁵⁵Ibid., 11-12.

That last sentence illustrates well the need for this particular ministry project. It attempts to “teach people *the story*” in an effort to help “reverse current trends in biblical illiteracy.” If people have a better grasp of the basic storyline of the Bible and understand how all the individual stories fit into *the story*, then they will be much more confident readers (and competent teachers) of the Bible, and of the Old Testament in particular. When they understand that the Old Testament is not some sort of divine version of *Aesop’s Fables*, giving us nothing more than morality tales to help us achieve salvation, but instead an important part of the narrative flow of salvation history that is leading to Jesus Christ, then the Old Testament becomes so much more than just a “jumble of stories, psalms, proverbs, prophecies, and strange passages that don’t make sense.” It becomes an integral part of the story, the necessary prequel to the New Testament and the coming of Jesus.

Therefore, one way to help stem the tide of biblical illiteracy today is to ensure that people have a clear understanding of the meta-narrative of Scripture. And the plot episodes that seem to provide the most common confusion for people are those occurring in the Old Testament. So it is necessary that people gain a clear sense of the basic narrative flow of the Old Testament, and how it finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, if they hope to understand the one, main story that the whole Bible is telling. Otherwise, they will remain lost, confused, and frustrated when it comes to reading and understanding the Bible. They will be like someone trying to put together a jig saw puzzle without the picture on the box to guide them. Without a picture of the whole puzzle, the individual pieces make very little sense. And it becomes all too easy to get discouraged, overwhelmed, and to just quit. But if there is a picture of the whole puzzle, then there is a guide or a map to make sense of all the individual pieces and how they fit together.

So it is with the Bible. Teaching people the unity between the two Testaments is like giving them the picture on the puzzle box. And for many of them, they will finally begin to see how all of the pieces fit together into a beautiful whole, how all of the people and events in the Old Testament find their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. They will be able to make sense of the Bible, many of them for the very first time. And undoubtedly, this will go a long way in helping reverse current trends in biblical illiteracy.

It should be noted, however, that a potential danger does exist in arguing from the sheer utility of a practice. Just because something works does not always mean it should be done. For instance, Jonathan Gruber, the MIT professor and architect of President Barak Obama's healthcare reforms, argued that abortion is actually good for society because it prevents crime and saves the government money. Thus someone might object to the reasoning used in this section, claiming that it mirrors that same kind of logic to argue that teaching the unity of the Bible is useful to stem the tide of biblical illiteracy and therefore it should be done simply because it works. However, the difference is that Gruber's argument is based on a faulty premise, while the argument used in this section is not. Whereas killing unborn children is bad, stemming the tide of biblical illiteracy is good, and whereas teaching what the Scriptures actually say and how the Old and New Testaments tie together is a good and justified way to remove ignorance, killing people is never a good or justified way to prevent crime or save money. Therefore, when this argument is taken alongside the others previously made in this chapter, it too lends strong support for teaching the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to show that the significance of teaching the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective finds theoretical support in four ways: (1)

its keeping with the authorial intent of the biblical writers (2) its consistent practice throughout church history (3) its current resurgence within evangelicalism and (4) its assistance in stemming the tide of biblical illiteracy. It has shown that Christ-centered exposition of the Old Testament is keeping with the obvious authorial intent of the New Testament authors. In addition, it has demonstrated that such an approach to the Old Testament is neither an outdated practice nor a new invention, but rather, the consistent interpretive method used throughout the history of the church, illustrated by the church fathers and the reformers. It has also provided clear evidence of a resurgence in a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament by considering the plethora of resources related to this topic that have been published by evangelicals in recent years, a movement aimed at returning the church to her previous interpretive perspective and the perspective of the Bible itself. And finally, it has suggested that one of the ways to help stem the tide of the growing problem of biblical illiteracy is to teach people the unity between the two Testaments, explaining how the Bible tells one story with Jesus Christ as its focal point. This “four-legged stool” of theoretical support – literary, historical, cultural/sociological, and educational – gives both balance and stability to the practice of teaching the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

If the New Testament itself demands a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament (as argued in chapter 2) and if the authorial intent of the New Testament writers, the witness of church history, the current resurgence in evangelicalism, and the growing problem of biblical illiteracy all encourage such an understanding as well (as argued in chapter 3), then it would certainly seem worthwhile to devote the time and energy necessary to equipping those who regularly teach the Bible in the local church to be able to exposit the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way. If a church is to be truly Word-centered, then it must teach the Word from a Christ-centered perspective. In order for that to happen, Bible teachers must be taught exactly what this means, why it matters, and what it actually looks like.

Thus in an effort to do just that, I completed a ministry project in which I devoted fifteen weeks to preparing, evaluating, and teaching a class to the adult Sunday School teachers at First Baptist Church, covering those very topics. This chapter provides a detailed, week-by-week description of the project and explains how I went about trying to equip the adult Bible teachers in our church to exposit the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective.

Week 1

During the first week, I mailed a letter to all the adult Sunday School teachers in our church explaining the upcoming class I was going to be teaching specifically for them, and I informed them of all the pertinent details (dates, times, location of the class,

etc.). Along with that letter, I also mailed them a survey with detailed instructions on completing and returning it (see appendix 1). The primary purpose of this survey was to evaluate the teachers' level of understanding the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way and their level of confidence in teaching the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way. Having this information allowed me to know something of the attitudes and abilities of our teachers when it comes to Old Testament texts. This survey also had a secondary purpose, which was to cause our adult Bible teachers to practice some self-evaluation, in hopes that it would help them see the need for a class like the one that was to be taught. In addition to those two purposes, it also provided me with a means of measurement to determine the effectiveness of the class, because this same survey was completed again by those who took the class at its conclusion.

The teachers were asked to take time to complete the survey and then return it to me. For purposes of anonymity and confidentiality, I put a clearly-labeled folder in the church office in which the completed surveys were to be placed. Once they were returned, I assessed the completed surveys, recorded their information, and saved the data to compare it with the surveys that were to be completed at the conclusion of the class.

Week 2 – Week 4

The next three weeks were spent reading, researching, developing, and reviewing the content for the equipping class. During week 2, I spent the majority of the time reading, researching, and studying in preparation to compose teaching outlines for the class. The primary resources I utilized in the preparation were *What Is Biblical Theology?*,¹ *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*,² *Preaching Christ from the Old*

¹James Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014).

²James Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

*Testament,*³ *Christ-Centered Preaching,*⁴ *The God Who Is There,*⁵ *Gospel and Kingdom,*⁶ *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture,*⁷ *God's Big Picture,*⁸ *The Drama of Scripture,*⁹ *Jesus on Every Page,*¹⁰ and *Reading the Bible through the Jesus Lens.*¹¹

During week 3, I determined how I wanted to structure the ten-week equipping class, organized and utilized the information from my research, and then composed a teaching outline for each of the ten class sessions. I designed the class to move progressively from the conceptual to the practical. I wanted to spend the first several weeks demonstrating the unity between the Old and New Testaments, explaining the basic narrative of the Old Testament storyline, and helping show how Jesus and the apostles approached the Old Testament. Then, I wanted to provide some basic knowledge and skills related to Bible exposition, how to trace an Old Testament text's fulfillment in Christ, and how specifically to teach an Old Testament text in a Christ-centered way.

Once I completed the teaching outlines, I contacted the five men who had agreed to serve as a panel of experts to review and evaluate the content I was planning to teach. These five men, three of them professors in the School of Theology and Missions

³Sydney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

⁴Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994).

⁵D. A. Carson, *The God Who Is There* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010).

⁶Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom* (Carlisle, PA: Paternoster, 2012).

⁷Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

⁸Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

⁹Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004).

¹⁰David Murray, *Jesus on Every Page* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013).

¹¹Michael Williams, *Reading the Bible through the Jesus Lens* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

at Union University and two of them pastors of local churches in my community, are all faithful scholars and churchmen who desire to see the Word of God rightly taught. The three Union University professors on the panel of experts were George Guthrie, who serves as the Benjamin W. Perry Professor of Bible and is the author of a number of books and commentaries; Ray Van Neste, who is Professor of Biblical Studies, Director of the Ryan Center for Biblical Studies, as well as the author and editor of a number of books and articles; and Brad Green, who is Associate Professor of Christian Thought and Tradition and the author of a number of recent books, including a volume in the New Studies in Biblical Theology series. The two pastors on the panel were Lee Tankersley, pastor of Cornerstone Community Church (Lee holds a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) and Eric Smith, pastor of Sharon Baptist Church (Ph.D. candidate in Biblical Spirituality from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary).

During week 4, I sent this panel of experts the teaching outlines along with a survey to measure their evaluation (see appendix 2). I asked them to review the outlines, evaluate their content, and communicate their evaluation by completing the survey and returning it to me. I received affirming evaluations from this panel of experts, so I was then ready to begin teaching the class.

Week 5 – Week 14

During weeks 5 through 14, I taught a ten-week class to equip our adult Sunday School teachers to be able to exposit the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective. The class was taught on Sunday evenings during consecutive weeks and met for approximately an hour each session. A summary of each class session is provided below.

Week 5 (Session 1)

The first session served as an introduction to the class as a whole. I gave a brief overview of what all would be covered during the ten weeks of the class. The rest of this session was devoted to teaching the unity between the Old and New Testaments. I explained that while there is certainly diversity to the Bible (different human authors, different time periods, different languages, different books, and different types of literature), there is also great unity. I tried to help the class see that in a very real sense, the Bible is one book with one author telling one story about Jesus Christ and the salvation he provides. I concluded the first session by discussing some of the most important reasons why we need to understand the Bible as a unified whole rather than just a collection of divided and fragmented stories.

Week 6 (Session 2)

The second session continued what I began covering in the first session, only in this session I provided several specific ways to see and consider the unity between the two Testaments. I traced several themes through the Bible, showing their progression and consistency from Genesis through Revelation (i.e., the image of God, the presence of God, the covenants between God and humanity, salvation through judgment, etc.). I also discussed some of the more popular ways to summarize the basic unity of the Bible, including Graeme Goldsworthy's and Vaughan Roberts' kingdom summaries,¹² the more basic pattern of Creation-Fall-Redemption-Consummation, and the parallels we see between Adam, Israel, and Jesus. Then I concluded by setting many of the familiar

¹² Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*, 57: "The Kingdom Revealed in Eden, The Kingdom Revealed in Israel's History (Abraham to Solomon), The Kingdom Revealed in Prophecy (Elijah to John the Baptist), and The Kingdom Revealed in Christ (New Testament times to return of Christ)." Roberts, *God's Big Picture*, 22: "The Old Testament: (1) The pattern of the kingdom (2) The perished kingdom (3) The promised kingdom (4) The partial kingdom (5) The prophesied kingdom. The New Testament: (6) The present kingdom (7) The proclaimed kingdom and (8) The perfected kingdom."

stories from the Old Testament (often learned in childhood) in the context of the one unfolding story being told in the whole Bible.

Week 7 (Session 3)

In the third session, I continued to encourage the approach of viewing the Bible as an unfolding story from beginning to end. In particular, I gave the class an outline of the redemptive storyline of the whole Bible, focusing primarily on the Old Testament but also showing how the story is fulfilled and brought to its final resolution through Jesus Christ in the New Testament. This outline mirrored the basic structure of a narrative or drama (setting/main characters introduced, conflict introduced, conflict intensified, climax, resolution). This was not original with me, but something I adapted from the outline used by Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen in *The Drama of Scripture*.¹³ The outline I used is as follows:

- Act 1 God Establishes His Kingdom: Creation (Gen 1-2)
- Act 2 Rebellion in the Kingdom: The Fall (Gen 3-11)
- Act 3 The King Chooses Israel: Redemption Initiated (Gen 12-Mal)
 - Scene 1 A People for the King (Gen 12-Ex 18)
 - Scene 2 A Law for the People (Ex 19-Deut)
 - Scene 3 A Land for the People (Josh-Mal)
- Interlude A Kingdom Story Waiting for an Ending: The Intertestamental Period
- Act 4 The Coming of the King: Redemption Accomplished (Matt-John)
- Act 5 Spreading the News of the King: The Mission of the Church
 - Scene 1 From Jerusalem to Rome (Acts-Jude)
 - Scene 2 And Into All the World (1st Century-Present)
- Act 6 The Return of the King: Redemption Completed (Rev)

I chose to use this particular outline for several reasons. First, it has been immensely helpful to me personally as I have sought to better understand and grasp the redemptive storyline of the Bible. Second, it succeeds in helping someone put the individual stories of the Bible into the context of the grand or overarching story of the

¹³Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 27.

Bible. Third, it shows how the story begun in the Old Testament is continued and fulfilled by Jesus in the New Testament. Fourth, it is arranged in story form, which makes it both memorable and easy to understand. Fifth, it is detailed enough to cover the main aspects of the broad sweep of redemptive history but also simple enough to memorize and call to mind as someone studies an individual text.

This outline, then, provided a grid through which to view individual stories and texts, allowing our Bible teachers to better situate the texts they teach in the overall context of redemptive history or the redemptive storyline of the whole Bible. It gave them the Bible's "big picture" so that they could help those they teach see each "little picture" in light of the "big picture." More importantly, it showed them how the events of the Old Testament and the story begun there set the stage for the coming of Jesus Christ to accomplish redemption and bring resolution to this unfolding drama.

Week 8 (Session 4)

In the fourth session, I discussed the major people, places, events, and plot episodes of the Old Testament, all with a view toward their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. I began by providing a brief historical timeline of the Old Testament that included major people, places, and events. I walked through this timeline, reminding the class of the flow of redemptive history discussed the week before and pointed out how all of this history was pointing forward to and preparing for the coming of Jesus Christ.

Then I provided a chart with the major plot episodes in the Old Testament and how they find their fulfillment in Christ in the New Testament. Like the outline used the week prior, this chart was not original with me but adapted from notes taken during a Doctor of Ministry seminar on Biblical Theology in the Local Church with Jim Hamilton (some of which is also discussed in his book, *What Is Biblical Theology?*¹⁴). The four

¹⁴Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?*

major plot episodes were (1) Creation/Fall (2) The Flood (3) The Exodus and (4) Exile/Return from Exile. Under each of these major plot episodes, a number of people, places, events, and themes were discussed. And then finally, all of this information was paralleled with two major plot episodes in the New Testament: (1) The First Coming of Jesus Christ and (2) The Second Coming of Jesus Christ. By doing so, I demonstrated how the major plot episodes of the Old Testament find consistent parallels and ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Week 9 (Session 5)

Session 5 provided an opportunity to look at Jesus' own approach to the Old Testament, as seen in the Gospels. This seemed an appropriate topic to cover for three reasons. First, I wanted the class to understand that the rationale for teaching the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective comes from Christ himself. Second, I wanted the class to see that Jesus clearly teaches that to read the Old Testament and not see it as bearing witness to him is to read it wrongly. Third, I wanted them to understand that Jesus not only viewed the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way but that he explicitly taught his disciples to do the same.

Thus, I began this session by looking at several different references from Jesus' teachings in the Gospels to demonstrate his attitude and approach to the Old Testament in general. Then, I spent the majority of the time in three particular passages: (1) Luke 24:25-27 (2) Luke 24:44-48 and (3) John 5:36-46. All three of these passages provide instances of Jesus interpreting the Old Testament in a way that points to him and finds its ultimate fulfillment in him. In addition, the two passages from Luke 24 show that Jesus was concerned to establish this pattern of interpretation for his disciples. I closed this session by sharing a quote from Hamilton that is a helpful reminder about reading and understanding the Bible the way Jesus himself did:

How should a follower of Jesus read the Bible? The way Jesus did. Jesus of Nazareth did not write any of the books in the Bible, but he taught the writers of the New Testament how to interpret earlier Scripture, redemptive history, and the events they were narrating and addressing. On the human level, Jesus learned the interpretive perspective he taught to his disciples from Moses and the Prophets. . . . and he taught this perspective to his followers (Luke 24). What we find in the New Testament, then, is Christ-taught, Spirit-inspired biblical interpretation.¹⁵

Week 10 (Session 6)

Concluding session 5 the way I did helped set the stage for discussing the apostles' approach to the Old Testament in session 6. I began with a general discussion of different examples we see in the New Testament of the apostles interpreting the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way (i.e., the shared perspective of the Gospel writers, Peter in Acts, Paul in Acts, the imagery and arguments in the epistles, and the imagery in Revelation). Then I focused on two specific cases: Matthew and Paul.

With Matthew's frequent citation of the Old Testament, his emphasis on Jesus fulfilling the Old Testament, and with his Gospel being the first in the New Testament canon, it seemed an appropriate example to consider. What I focused on in exploring Matthew was the way Jesus is presented in the opening chapters as typologically fulfilling the history of Israel. This is seen first in Matthew's genealogy and then all throughout the opening narrative. Specifically, Jesus is presented as recapitulating the history of Israel during the time of Moses in chapters 2-5, so I pointed out all the parallels that can be seen between Israel/Moses and Jesus in those opening chapters.

Then I looked at several specific passages from the letters of Paul to demonstrate how he interprets the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective. I discussed four passages in particular. First, I showed how Paul viewed Adam as a type of Christ in Romans 5:12-21. Second, I pointed to the example of Paul viewing Christ as "our Passover lamb" in 1 Corinthians 5:7. Third, I mentioned 1 Corinthians 10:4, where

¹⁵Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?*, 20-21.

Paul interprets the rock in the wilderness as Jesus Christ. Fourth, I discussed Galatians 3:16, a passage in which Paul interprets the promise to Abraham about his offspring as finding its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus.

This session, and the session before it, helped lay the biblical foundation and support for what I was trying to encourage our teachers to do when they teach from the Old Testament. I wanted them to see and be convinced that this was not just my idea, nor was it just *a* way to teach the Old Testament. Instead, I wanted them to see and be convinced that this was *the* way Jesus himself told us to understand and teach the Old Testament, and it was *the* way we see the apostles in the New Testament interpreting and teaching the Old Testament.

Week 11 (Session 7)

Having laid the necessary conceptual foundation, in session 7 I then began to turn toward the practical aspects of teaching the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way. This session was primarily about biblical exposition in general. I tried to define exposition as clearly as possible, stating what it is and what it is not. After mentioning some specific examples of what exposition is not, I gave the class some helpful definitions of exposition from people such as Charles Simeon, John Stott, Mark Dever, and James Hamilton. From those different definitions, I compiled a list of the key components that should be present in biblical exposition: exposing the Word of God to the people of God, structuring the message based on the structure of the Word of God, proclaiming the Word of God as an ambassador of God, and explaining and applying the Word of God as a servant to the people of God, all of which should be done to the glory of God. I also discussed the theological significance of exposition and why it should be the regular method of Bible teaching in the church. I tried to help them see that the implications of what we believe about God and what we believe about the Bible demand an expositional approach to teaching the Scriptures. I then spent the rest of session 7

walking through a basic method of expositional Bible teaching, laying out a step-by-step plan and providing practical suggestions in implementing it.

I discussed eight basic steps. First, read and re-read the text in its literary context. Second, outline the basic structure of the text. Third, interpret the text in its literary, grammatical, historical, and theological contexts. Fourth, formulate the main point(s) of the text and consider its primary purpose for its original audience. Fifth, understand the text in the larger contexts of the whole Old Testament and the whole redemptive story of the Bible. Obviously, it is during this step that the text's fulfillment in Christ is considered. Sixth, turn the main point or theme of the text into a main teaching theme or point. Seventh, structure the lesson in accordance with the structure of the text, and eighth, craft a clear and concise teaching outline for the lesson.

Week 12 (Session 8)

In session 8, I discussed some of the specific ways to point out an Old Testament text's fulfillment in Christ. But I began by offering some general reminders about teaching the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective. First, I reminded the class that this kind of teaching of the Old Testament is demanded by the New Testament, as evidenced by Jesus and the apostles. Second, I reminded them that Christ-centered teaching of the Old Testament is badly needed today. I mentioned that in far too many churches, the Old Testament is simply neglected, and in churches where it is taught, it is often done in a moralistic way or in a merely biographical way. Third, I reminded them that Christ-centered teaching of the Old Testament needs to be done responsibly and faithfully. The original context of the passage under consideration cannot be ignored. Nor should the text be misused, misinterpreted, or fancifully interpreted.

With those reminders in place, I then proceeded to discuss some of the ways to point to an Old Testament text's fulfillment in Jesus Christ. I explained that different texts require different ways of Christ-centered interpretation. So in this session, I covered

those texts that have the easiest and most obvious means of Christ-centered interpretation. Those texts can be grouped into three main categories: (1) Texts that have direct Messianic references (Messianic psalms and Messianic prophecies) (2) Texts that have typological references to Christ (Adam, the Passover lamb, the sacrifice of atonement, Joshua, etc.) and (3) Texts that are referenced or alluded to in the New Testament. With each category, I provided examples and showed how those texts find their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Week 13 (Session 9)

In session 9, I continued looking at the way that different Old Testament texts can be interpreted in a Christ-centered way. Having dealt with the texts that have the “straightest point” to Christ in the previous session, I spent this session discussing those harder texts, the ones that have no “obvious” reference to Christ. I provided five ways or methods of interpreting those texts in a Christ-centered way, showing examples with each one.

The first way is through redemptive historical progression, or simply tracing the redemptive storyline of the Bible forward from the Old Testament to its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The second method, similar to the first, is that of promise and fulfillment, tracing the covenant promises or prophetic promises of the Old Testament forward to their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The third method is a thematic method. In other words, different themes can be seen to continue throughout the Bible and find their most visible expression in Jesus Christ (themes such as seed, sacrifice, substitution, and priesthood). The fourth way is using contrast between some person, event, or situation in the Old Testament and Jesus. Examples include Adam and Jesus, Israel and Jesus, and the temple and Jesus. Finally, the fifth method discussed was the reflective method. This method asks two reflective questions of the Old Testament text: (1) What does this text reflect about the nature of God that provides the ministry of Jesus Christ? and/or (2)

What does this text reflect about human nature that requires the ministry of Jesus Christ? Simply answering those questions can help provide a very clear path to showing how the Old Testament prepares people for the coming of Jesus Christ.

I concluded this session by pointing the class' attention to several different Old Testament texts and asking them to share how those texts could be interpreted in a Christ-centered way. I intentionally gave them texts from different genres and texts that had multiple methods of Christ-centered interpretation available. The reasoning for this was to see if they could put what they were hearing and learning into practice and actually begin to do this for themselves. Thankfully, they proved very willing and very able.

Week 14 (Session 10)

The last session was meant to be a culmination of all that had been discussed in the class and an opportunity to put it all into practice. It seemed that the best way to do that was to walk through the process of teaching an Old Testament text in a Christ-centered way together with the class, demonstrating it for them as we went. Therefore, I worked through Genesis 22:1-19 with the class, from the beginning of the process to the end. First, we began by simply reading the text in its literary context. Second, we outlined the basic structure of the narrative. Third, we sought to interpret the text in its literary, grammatical, historical, and theological contexts. Fourth, we formulated the main point of the text (the Lord's provision) and discussed why that text was written to its original audience. Fifth, we considered the text in light of the context of the rest of the Old Testament and in light of the redemptive-historical context of the whole Bible. As a part of this consideration, we discussed some different ways that this text is fulfilled in Christ and how it can be understood in a Christ-centered way. Sixth, we turned the main point or theme of the text into a main teaching theme or point. Seventh, we discussed the best way to structure a lesson on a text like Genesis 22:1-19, determining that a narrative text was

best taught in narrative form. Finally, we crafted a basic teaching outline that followed the narrative of the text and that also traced the theme of the Lord's provision forward through the history of Israel and all the way to Jesus Christ. Thus our teaching outline was as follows: (1) Provision Needed (verses 1-10) (2) Provision Supplied (verses 11-19) and (3) Provision Continued (seen in the history of Israel and seen most clearly in Jesus Christ).

Week 15

The last week of the project was spent collecting data and evaluating the effectiveness of the equipping class by surveying its participants again. The same survey that was administered prior to the class being taught was re-administered after the class, and then the results were compared. The comparison measured changes in knowledge, confidence, and competency related to both a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament and to Christ-centered teaching of the Old Testament from the beginning of the project to its completion. It also provided me with a means to measure the effectiveness of a class like this one and to determine whether it was beneficial and worthwhile. The findings from the surveys and the conclusions drawn from their comparisons are discussed in the chapter to follow.

Conclusion

This chapter gives the reader a detailed description of the methodology used for this particular project, helping sketch out a plan that can be easily adapted and followed in any other local church setting if someone desires to better equip their Bible teachers to be Christ-centered expositors of the Old Testament. Though I devoted fifteen weeks to this project, it could easily be stretched out longer so that more in-depth teaching could occur and more opportunities for teachers to practice what they are learning could be provided. And while I taught the class on Sunday evenings, it could

obviously be taught at another time that proved conducive to the participants. Whenever it might be taught and for how long would be up to each person and each church, but the benefits for the teachers themselves and for those they will be teaching (and for the church as a whole) make the general aim of this project one that should definitely be considered by others.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

Introduction

This final chapter serves as an evaluation of the ministry project described in the previous chapter. I will discuss whether or not the original purpose was fulfilled and the goals met. In addition, I will consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of the project, as well as what I would do differently if I were to do it again. Then I will conclude by offering some theological and personal reflections from the overall experience.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

As stated in the opening chapter, the purpose of this project was to equip adult Sunday School teachers at First Baptist Church, Jackson, Tennessee, to exposit the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective. This project desired to increase both their knowledge of how Old Testament texts are fulfilled in Christ and their confidence in teaching Old Testament texts in a way that shows how they are fulfilled in Christ. Based on the attendance of the class sessions, data from the completed surveys of the class participants, anecdotal evidence from comments made during and after the class sessions, and hearing some of the teachers teach through an Old Testament text after they participated in the class, the purpose of this project was certainly fulfilled.

When I mailed the initial letter to the adult Sunday School teachers, which explained the purpose and content of the class and asked for them to consider participating, I mailed it to all 20 of our regular adult Sunday School teachers. However, when word got out about the class, others expressed interest and asked if they could

participate as well, even though many of them did not formally teach the Bible in any capacity. After the first week of the class, even more interest was generated as people talked about what all would be taught. So, what was initially thought to be a class for 12-15 people ended up being a class with an average attendance of 40 people each week. This proved that the need for such a class to equip people to understand and to exposit the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective was real and that this need was being met through the content of the class.

The data from the pre-project and post-project surveys also confirm that the purpose of this project was fulfilled. The teachers who completed the surveys and participated in the class all confirmed an increased knowledge level of a Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament and an increased confidence level of teaching the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective. Before the class, the knowledge level of the teachers averaged a 4.09 (based on a 6-point Likert scale). After the class, however, their knowledge level increased to an average of 5.19. Moreover, their confidence level in teaching an Old Testament text in a Christ-centered way rose from an average of 3.79 prior to the class to an average of 5.15 after the class. Statistically speaking, then, the project was very effective in fulfilling its purpose (see tables A2 and A3 in appendix 3 for further details). These statistical data were supported anecdotally by the comments many of the class participants made to me. I heard comments such as “I leave each class feeling like the two men on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24 must have felt” and “I feel like I can actually connect the dots between the Old and New Testaments now.”

Furthermore, I had the opportunity to actually hear three of the teachers who participated in the class teach an Old Testament text just a few weeks after the class was completed. It was obvious that they were putting what they had learned into practice. All three of them faithfully expounded the Old Testament text, and all three of them

responsibly and clearly showed how the Old Testament text they were teaching was rightly fulfilled and ultimately understood in Jesus Christ. The experience of hearing those three teachers further affirmed that this project had been effective in fulfilling its purpose.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Three primary goals guided this project. The first goal was to evaluate adult Sunday School teachers' current levels of understanding and confidence in expositing Old Testament texts from a Christ-centered perspective. In order to meet this goal, a pre-project survey was developed, consisting of ten questions (see appendix 1). The first six questions all had to do with a teacher's knowledge level of understanding the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way. The last four questions had to do with a teacher's confidence level in teaching an Old Testament passage in a Christ-centered way. The survey was mailed to all 20 adult Sunday School teachers, in hopes that 75 percent of them would complete and return the survey. This goal was successfully met, as 90 percent of the teachers completed and returned the surveys. These pre-project surveys provided a baseline for measuring the teachers' average knowledge level (4.09 on a 6-point scale) and average confidence level (3.79) prior to the project's implementation. In addition, they offered a measurement of comparison for the same survey to be administered after the completion of the project.

The second goal was to develop content for a ten-week class that seeks to explain (1) the unity between the Old and New Testaments (2) the basic storyline of the Old Testament (3) the Christ-centered nature of the Scriptures (4) a basic method of expositional teaching and (5) specific ways to point out an Old Testament text's fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Once the content for this class was developed, I sent the outlines for each class session to a panel of experts and asked them to evaluate the content of those outlines to ensure that they were both biblically sound and practically

beneficial. This panel of experts, three professors and two pastors, were given a week to review the outlines and provide an honest assessment of them based on their expert opinion. They used a survey (see appendix 2) to measure their agreement or disagreement with the quality and practicality of the class content. All five men strongly agreed that the content of the class was biblically sound and of practical benefit (see table A1 in appendix 3), meaning this goal too was successfully met.

The third goal was to teach the content described above to adult Sunday School teachers during a ten-week class on Sunday evenings. This goal was measured by re-administering the initial survey to the participating teachers to determine whether the time spent in the class resulted in helping them develop a better understanding of the Old Testament and its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, as well as a greater confidence in teaching the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective. A *t*-test for independent samples was used to determine if there had been a positive, statistical significance between the pre-project and post-project surveys. The results of each independent *t*-test revealed a statistically significant increase for every question on the survey (see table A3 in appendix 3). In other words, the equipping of adult Sunday School teachers to expisit the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way made a statistically significant difference resulting in an increase in both the average knowledge level ($t[17]=4.096, p<.004$) and the average confidence level ($t[17]=5.028, p<.0002$). Therefore, since the class content was taught in the allotted ten-week time period, since more than 40 percent of the adult Sunday School teachers participated in the class and completed the post-project survey (90 percent actually participated and completed the post-project survey), and since the statistical results of the pre-project and post-project surveys revealed a clear increase in both knowledge levels and confidence levels, this third goal was successfully met as well.

Strengths of the Project

While a number of strengths could be mentioned for a project such as this one, I will limit my discussion to only seven. First, this project addressed a very real need, both in our church and in the church at large. Generally speaking, Christians today struggle with the Old Testament. They are not sure what to make of it or how to understand it or even if it is worth reading at all, and when it is read or taught, too often it is done in such a way that Christ is largely absent from view. Therefore, a genuine need exists for Christians to grow in their understanding of the Old Testament and for Bible teachers to be able to exposit Old Testament texts confidently from a Christ-centered perspective. This project goes a long way toward helping meet that need.

Second, this project demonstrated and affirmed the unity of the Bible, which is significant for at least two reasons. First, having the unity of the Bible demonstrated and affirmed reinforces a high view of Scripture. It strengthens a person's confidence in the authority, verity, and inerrancy of the Bible. Second, having the unity of the Bible demonstrated and affirmed also helps someone make sense of the individual parts of the story in light of the whole. It connects the dots and points people forward from the Old Testament to the New Testament. It also provides a better sense of context when people are reading in any particular place in the Bible.

Third, this project magnified Jesus Christ in the hearts and minds of those of us who participated. Numerous times in the class as a narrative thread was traced from the Old Testament to its fulfillment in Christ or as an Old Testament person or event was shown to be a type of Christ, audible expressions of joy, wonder, and appreciation were heard. It was not uncommon for someone in the class to be moved to tears as he or she reflected on the beauty of the Savior and how the Bible tells his story. Classrooms are not always the most conducive contexts for worship, but the truth of God's Word fulfilled in God's Son and driven home by God's Spirit turned that particular basement classroom at First Baptist Church into a context for worship week after week.

Fourth, this project actually made people want to read and study the Old Testament. Comments and questions from class members throughout the ten weeks revealed an obvious engagement with the Old Testament. Furthermore, the discussions in class showed that a newfound interest and acquaintance with the Old Testament was growing. No longer was the Old Testament viewed as irrelevant or unnecessary but as a viable part of the Christian canon, worthy of time and attention.

Fifth, this project increased the confidence of Bible teachers. Class participants left after the ten weeks with new knowledge, a new method of exposition, and a new appreciation for teaching the Bible. More importantly, they left encouraged that they could put what they learned into practice, giving them a better sense of confidence in the important task of teaching God's Word.

Sixth, this project strengthened the church's overall biblical fidelity. As more and more Bible teachers grow in their trust in the authority and unity of the Scriptures, as well as their knowledge of the Bible and their confidence in teaching it, that has a trickle-down effect on all those who sit under their teaching. Thus, the more lecterns from which faithful and responsible Bible teaching occurs, the better the overall health of the church.

A seventh and final strength of this project is the ease with which it can be reproduced. Although it was designed specifically for my ministry context, the nature of the project is such that it could be used in almost any church or ministry setting where training for Bible teachers is needed. Personally, I could adapt it easily and teach it again at another time down the road or even in another setting. In addition, any other qualified person could take the content, adapt it to their schedule and setting, and it could be utilized easily by them as well.

Weaknesses of the Project

Three primary weaknesses of this project come to mind. First, there was a procedural weakness in the use of the 6-point Likert scale on the pre-project and post-

project surveys. Many of the participants remarked that they found the six categories of agreement or disagreement to be either confusing or unhelpful. They strongly preferred a different means of measurement. Though I understand their frustrations and agree that there may be very thin lines between some of the categories, I still believe the results of the surveys provided an accurate assessment of pre-project and post-projects levels of knowledge and confidence.

Second, there was a biblical or theological weakness in leaving the Old Testament's wisdom literature largely out of the discussion in the content of the class. Examples from the wisdom literature were certainly used and passages were definitely referenced, but they were admittedly fewer than passages from Old Testament narratives, history, law, or prophets. Two major factors contributed to this absence. One was time. I only had ten weeks in the class and only about an hour for each session, and not everything can be covered in that amount of time. The other factor was that the wisdom literature does more illustrating of the redemptive narrative rather than advancing it forward. One of the primary emphases of the class was seeing and understanding how the redemptive narrative advances from Old Testament to New Testament. That being the case, the wisdom literature received a lesser degree of attention.

Third, there was an educational or practical weakness in the design of the class by not allowing more time to practice the expositional method in the class itself. Again, time was the major factor here, but it would have been preferable for the participating teachers to have another week or two in order to practice some aspects of the expositional method that they learned in a safe environment where they could receive helpful feedback.

What I Would Do Differently

If I were completing this ministry project again, I would do two things differently. First, I would add a few more weeks to the class in order to give more

opportunities to practice the expositional method in the class itself. In particular, I would grant the participants hands-on opportunities to work with different Old Testament genres so that they would have more experience and exposure with different kinds of texts. Although this was done by way of discussion in the class, there was simply not enough time for much hands-on practice. In addition, I would put them in groups so that they could learn from one another and see how others approach a particular text. And I would consider giving them a chance to present a teaching outline to the class to receive feedback on it. I believe these additions would reinforce the skills they learned and increase their confidence levels even more.

Second, I would teach the class during the fall months rather than the winter months. I realize that there is no perfect time to hold a voluntary class and that there will always be obstacles. However, the winter months offer a few challenges that are less likely during the fall. One is winter weather, which provided threats a few weeks but never actually prevented us from meeting (though I suspect it did keep some people from coming those nights). The other is the prevalence of sickness during the winter months. In addition to those seasonal challenges, it just seems that people are more apt to come consistently during the fall months. Maybe it is because of the weather, or maybe it is due to some other factor. If I were teaching the class again, I would likely plan to teach it during the fall months rather than the winter months.

Theological Reflections

As I reflect theologically on my project, six lessons deserve to be mentioned. First, understanding the story of the Bible, or the Bible as a story, is vital to understanding the Bible. Until people understand that the Bible is ultimately one book with one author telling one story, then it will likely remain something of a disconnected collection of moral lessons that fails to capture their hearts and minds, but when the grand story is seen and when all the individual stories are seen in light of the grand story, then a

fire for the Word is kindled that rarely, if ever, goes out in that person's heart. That is what I got to see happen for a number of people in doing this project, and that is always a joy to behold.

Second, recognizing the unity of the Bible reinforces a high view of Scripture. I mentioned this briefly above, but it is worth stating again here, because I found this to be true not just for those who participated in the class but for me personally as well. As I researched and wrote chapter 2, and as I taught each week during the class, I found my own confidence in the authority and truthfulness of the Bible strengthened and affirmed. I was reminded afresh of how beautifully the biblical narrative tells one, grand redemptive story from Genesis to Revelation, which only served to reinforce for me every aspect of an evangelical doctrine of Scripture. Then I witnessed the same sort of thing happening for so many of the participants in the class. I saw their confidence in the Word and their hunger for the Word take on new levels as they began to see in even clearer ways the beauty and unity of the Bible.

Third, when it comes to the Bible, proclamation is to be prioritized over analysis. Perhaps a better way to put it is, analysis should always serve proclamation. It is all too easy for preachers and teachers to get so focused on analysis that our noses never rise out of the book, but that should never be the case when the book being analyzed is the Bible because that particular book proclaims a person; the Bible proclaims Jesus Christ. Therefore, right analysis of the Bible should lead to joyful proclamation of Jesus. Time and time again throughout this process, whether it was sitting in a seminar with Jim Hamilton or writing chapter 2 or preparing for one of the class sessions, I found myself thinking, "I cannot wait to proclaim this truth about Jesus so that others can see it too and rejoice." I heard teachers in the class on more than one occasion say, "I can't wait to teach this when I get to [that Old Testament book]." The truths of the Bible are meant to

be proclaimed so that the God of the Bible is glorified. I knew that before, but it was powerfully illustrated to me through this experience.

Fourth, Christ-centered proclamation is the only way the Bible, whether Old or New Testament, should be proclaimed. Again, this is something I certainly knew and believed prior to this project, but my time with Jim Hamilton, my research for chapters 2 and 3, and my time in the Bible itself has burned this conviction even deeper into me. And hopefully, it is a conviction that is now shared by all those who participated in the class.

Fifth, more biblical immersion leads to better biblical awareness. Immersion in the Bible makes one more aware of the allusions, symbols, and themes the biblical authors employ. In other words, the more one reads in the Bible, the more one sees in the Bible. But one has to be immersed enough in the story to see and pick up on the allusions and echoes that the biblical authors use, and the only way to do that is to read the Bible often and widely. Thus, this project reminded me that the best way to learn biblical theology is not to read books about the Bible or commentaries on the Bible, as helpful as those may be, but the best way to learn biblical theology is to read the Bible itself.

Sixth, biblical theology can help stem the tide of biblical illiteracy. I believed this before, but it was confirmed by this project. One of the reasons that people are not reading and understanding the Bible, including those in the church, is because they are not able to make sense of the meta-narrative of Scripture, but having Bible teachers who are able to help them connect the dots and see the larger story that is weaved from beginning to end will go a long way to increasing not only their knowledge of the Bible but their desire to read it for themselves.

Personal Reflections

Personally, this experience has increased my own love for the Bible, and for the Savior whose story it tells. As previously mentioned, my time with Jim Hamilton and

my time researching for chapters 2 and 3 went a long way to knowing and understanding the Bible better and therefore loving Christ more. The more ways I saw Christ fulfilling the Old Testament, the more beautiful the story became, and the more thankful for Christ I became. That particular aspect of my experience is invaluable, and it made every effort and every sacrifice worthwhile.

I also found my love of teaching renewed through implementing this project. I spent the first three years after seminary in a bi-vocational pastorate, where my other job was teaching at a Christian school. I had almost forgotten how much I enjoy being in a classroom setting and getting the opportunity to see people learn. Though I teach on a fairly consistent basis in my ministry now, for some reason this class felt more like the kind of teaching occasion I enjoy so much. It reminded me of why I wrestled for a while over whether God was calling me to proclaim the Bible from behind a church pulpit or behind a seminary lectern.

Finally, this project reminded me once again how blessed I am to have an encouraging and supportive wife, as well as an encouraging and supportive church family. There is simply no way I would have made it to this point without the assistance and support of my wife. She has made as many, if not more, sacrifices to see me through to the end. Words cannot express my gratitude for her. Many men and women in our congregation have faithfully prayed for me throughout this process and have frequently asked me how I am doing, and those who participated in the class went above and beyond to show their interest and concern in my work; and they were always willing to do whatever they could to be of help to me. I could not have asked for a better ministry context in which to implement this project. This experience has provided just one more reason, among so many others, why I am grateful the Lord has placed me among the dear saints at First Baptist Church, Jackson, Tennessee.

Conclusion

As mentioned in chapter 1, one of the surest signs of the revitalization of First Baptist Church is the way the Word of God is becoming central in every aspect of the life of the church, but if that centrality is to be maintained, the Word has to be handled well, whether that is in the pulpit or in a Sunday School classroom or in some other smaller group Bible study. My aim in this project, then, has been to help maintain the centrality of the Word in our church by better equipping our primary adult Bible teachers, since they influence our other adults' views of the Word through their weekly teaching in Sunday School. It has been a joy and a privilege to implement this project toward that end, and my prayer is that it will be of long-lasting benefit to our church, for the glory of God.

However, the benefit of a project like this should not be limited to our church alone. This project can benefit a church of any size or demographic. It provides a model for equipping Bible teachers to be Christ-centered expositors of the Old Testament. So, may the Lord use it to benefit any and all who choose to read it and make use of it in their own context.

APPENDIX 1

PRE-PROJECT AND POST-PROJECT SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your knowledge and confidence in teaching the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective. This research is being conducted by Justin Wainscott for the purposes of a ministry project at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. In this research, you will be asked to answer the following questions both before and after a class is taught to equip you to exposit the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Please respond to the following statements regarding your knowledge of the Bible in general and of the Old Testament in particular.

1. I have an adequate knowledge of the major stories, people, and events in the Old Testament.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
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2. I could easily put the major stories, people, and events in the Old Testament into chronological order.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
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3. I have a good grasp of the basic storyline that runs throughout the Old Testament.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
----------------------	----------	----------------------	-------------------	-------	-------------------

4. I can explain how the small, individual stories fit into the big, overarching story that runs throughout the Old Testament.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
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5. I see the unity between the Old and New Testaments and have a good understanding of how the story begun in the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
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6. I am able to articulate the ways in which the major stories, people, and events of the Old Testament find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Please respond to the following statements regarding your confidence in teaching from the Old Testament and doing so in a way that faithfully points to the text's fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

1. I am as confident teaching from the Old Testament as I am teaching from the New Testament.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
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2. I am confident in my ability to teach others how and where an individual Old Testament passage fits in the basic storyline of the Old Testament.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
-------------------	----------	-------------------	----------------	-------	----------------

3. When I teach from the Old Testament, I find it easy to "connect the dots" between the Old and New Testaments.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
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4. I feel confident in my ability to teach others how an Old Testament passage is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
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APPENDIX 2

EXPERT PANEL EVALUATION SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your assessment of the content of class sessions designed to equip adult Sunday School teachers to exposit the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective. This research is being conducted by Justin Wainscott for the purposes of a ministry project at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. In this research, you will be asked to answer the following questions before the class is taught. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Please respond to the following statements regarding your assessment of the content of the outlines for the class sessions designed to equip adult Sunday School teachers to exposit the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective.

1. The content for this class clearly explains the unity between the Old and New Testaments.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
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2. The content for this class demonstrates a clear explanation of the narrative flow of redemptive history.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
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3. The content for this class is faithful to the Bible's own understanding of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
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4. The content for this class provides a method of exposition that is faithful and responsible.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
----------------------	----------	----------------------	-------------------	-------	-------------------

5. The content for this class faithfully and responsibly teaches others how to exposit an Old Testament text in a Christ-centered way.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
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6. The content for this class will prove genuinely helpful for adult Sunday School teachers.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
----------------------	----------	----------------------	-------------------	-------	-------------------

7. I would feel confident recommending this content to be taught in my own church.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
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APPENDIX 3
SURVEY RESULTS

Table A1. Results of expert panel evaluation of class content

	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5	Average
Question 1	6	6	6	6	6	6
Question 2	6	6	6	6	6	6
Question 3	6	6	6	6	6	6
Question 4	6	6	6	6	6	6
Question 5	6	6	6	6	6	6
Question 6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Question 7	6	6	6	6	6	6

Table A2. Teachers' knowledge level and confidence level averages

	Pre-Survey Average	Post-Survey Average	t Stat Average	p value Average
Knowledge Level	4.09	5.19	4.096	0.0045
Confidence Level	3.79	5.15	5.028	0.0002

Table A3. Pre-survey and post-survey results

	Pre-Survey Average	Post-Survey Average	t Stat	p value
Knowledge Q1	3.88	5.11	3.715	0.001718
Knowledge Q2	3.61	5	4.033	0.000861
Knowledge Q3	4.44	5.11	2.748	0.013704
Knowledge Q4	3.61	5	4.930	0.000126
Knowledge Q5	4.94	5.66	2.852	0.011007
Knowledge Q6	4.11	5.27	6.298	0.000008
Confidence Q1	3.88	5.17	4.067	0.000895
Confidence Q2	3.52	5.11	5.839	0.000025
Confidence Q3	3.76	5.11	5.276	0.000075
Confidence Q4	4	5.23	4.932	0.000149

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, JACKSON, TENNESSEE TO BE CHRIST-CENTERED EXPOSITORS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015
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The purpose of this project is to equip adult Sunday School teachers to exposit the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective. Chapter 1 presents the purpose, goals, context, rationale, definitions, limitations, and research methodology of the project.

Chapter 2 provides biblical and theological support for teaching the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective by arguing that the New Testament demands such an interpretive perspective.

Chapter 3 discusses theoretical support for teaching the Old Testament from a Christ-centered perspective. Specifically, four means of support are discussed: (1) literary (2) historical (3) cultural and (4) educational.

Chapter 4 describes the details of the actual ministry project, including a week-by-week synopsis of how the project was implemented.

Chapter 5 offers an evaluation of the purpose and goals of the project, including what I would do differently, along with theological and personal reflections.

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