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TEACHING A CHRIST-CENTERED HERMENEUTIC OF
THE OLD TESTAMENT TO THE MEMBERS OF
REDEEMER CHURCH OF ABILENE, TEXAS

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TEACHING A CHRIST-CENTERED HERMENEUTIC
OF THE OLD TESTAMENT TO THE MEMBERS OF
REDEEMER CHURCH OF ABILENE, TEXAS

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PREFACE

This project was completed with the love, support, encouragement, patience, and prayers of many people that God has graciously chosen to bring into my life. First, all praise and glory must go to the God of the Universe, who chose, in His gracious provision, to save me through the blood of Jesus Christ. His mercy to me is the motivation in my life, ministry, and schoolwork. It is my prayer that this project will be used to advance the cause of His Kingdom and to bring Him glory as Christ is preached from all of Scripture.

I also want to thank my wife, Kristin, who is a true gift from God, and whom I am unworthy to have the privilege to love and lead. I am grateful to get to spend my life with my best friend and helpmeet. She is gracious, kind, supportive, and loving to me in ways I do not deserve, and I am thankful to God for her. I am also thankful for our children: Jacob, Lydia, Caleb, and Andrew. It is my prayer that they grow to love and follow the Lord Jesus, and will be transformed by His gracious saving power. They are a source of comfort and encouragement to me, and they cause me to strive toward increasing sanctification as I seek to teach them the Gospel and model for them what a person saved by God's grace looks like.

I would not be where I am today without the loving support of my parents, Gene and Jeanne Gray. Their love for the Lord and one another was an invaluable resource in my coming to know Christ as Savior and knowing how to love my family well. They continue to be supportive of me in every way, and a great source of wisdom

and advice. I also want to thank my in-laws, Ken and Candi Calhoon, who have truly served as another set of parents who loved me and welcomed me into their family.

Several churches have mentored me and disciplined me through the years, and have my gratitude for their faithfulness to God's Word and for teaching me the Gospel and how to minister to God's people. I first heard the Gospel and believed under the ministry of First Baptist Church of Temple Terrace, Florida. My first full-time ministry position was at Springhill Baptist Church in Fernandina Beach, Florida. Central Baptist Church in Aurora, Colorado, prepared me for the pulpit ministry through the faithful Christ-centered preaching of Dr. Ben Skaug.

This project would not have been possible without the love and support of Redeemer Church of Abilene. Together we have seen the grace of God at work in multiple ways in our church, and I pray that we will see much more in the coming years. The church family has been a great encouragement to me and they have graciously allowed me time away for seminars, study, and writing. It is my prayer that the church body will be strengthened and encouraged by the content of this project, and that we will be driven to trust, follow, and worship God more deeply because of what we see in His Word.

I am eternally grateful to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professors for all they have instilled in me in the process of completing two degrees at this institution. Multiple faculty members have spent time teaching and discipling me, and I am grateful for the investment they chose to make in my life and ministry. I am thankful for the class time with Dr. Jim Hamilton in the Applied Theology program, and

for the insight and friendship of Dr. Russell Fuller and the feedback he has provided me in this project.

It is my prayer that this project will spur my church family on to see that Christ is the point of all the Scriptures and that all the promises of God find their “yes and amen” in Him. I pray this will cause our hearts to draw near to Him and to glorify Him with every part of our lives. May Jesus’ name be glorified by this project.

Jason E. Gray

Abilene, Texas

December 2016

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to teach a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament to the members of Redeemer Church in Abilene, Texas.

Goals of the Project

This project sought to accomplish three goals that served as the criterion for the overall effectiveness of this project.

The first goal of this project was to evaluate the participants' knowledge of a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament. This goal was measured through a survey that assesses the participants' knowledge of a Christ-centered hermeneutic to the Old Testament.¹ This goal was considered successful because at least twenty participants filled out the survey.

The second goal of this project was to develop a teaching series that would instruct the participants on a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament. An eight-week teaching series was developed during a four-week preparation period for the purpose of instruction. This goal was measured by using an evaluation rubric that was administered by a review panel composed of five church leaders to determine the clarity,

¹See appendix 1, "Christ-centered Hermeneutic Survey."

content, and faithfulness to Scripture of the lessons.² The panel also verified that the lessons focus on teaching a Christ-centered hermeneutic from the Old Testament. This goal was deemed successful because over 90 percent of the indicators from the evaluation rubric were marked at sufficient or above.

The third goal of this project was to increase the knowledge of the members of Redeemer Church in a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament through the eight part teaching series. This goal was measured by administering a follow-up survey that assessed the growth in knowledge and beliefs of the participants with regard to their understanding of a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament.³ This goal was deemed successful when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference between the initial and follow-up survey scores.

Ministry Context

These goals were accomplished as the project was carried out at Redeemer Church. In order to understand how this project impacted Redeemer Church, it is important to know the context in which the project was carried out and the needs of the church that this project sought to meet. Below is a brief summary of Redeemer Church, followed by a rationale for why this project was beneficial to Redeemer Church.

Redeemer Church of Abilene is a two-year old church plant located in West Texas. Abilene is a city with over fifty Southern Baptist churches, though many of those churches are dying. Abilene is also a city with three Christian colleges and many non-Baptist churches. In this city, Redeemer is among the most conservative churches as an

²See appendix 1, “Lesson Evaluation for Review Panel.”

³See appendix 1, “Christ-centered Hermeneutic Survey.”

elder-led, confessionally Reformed, Baptist church holding to the complete inerrancy of Scripture and a historic statement of faith. In the two years of the church's existence, the church has grown from a small group of about fifty people into a membership of seventy-five people with average attendance of over one hundred each week.

The church has five elders, four deacons, and two full-time staff members. The elders and members of the church take both the Bible and doctrine seriously, as well as their responsibility to communicate the truth of the Bible to those who do not yet trust in Jesus for salvation. A proper understanding of both the Old and New Testament and a strong biblical hermeneutic is valued highly by the church leadership. The elders and staff of the church are heavily invested in expositional preaching and doctrinal teaching for the building up of the body through a proper understanding of the Word of God.

Rationale

Due to the theological and evangelical commitments mentioned above, this project served a valuable role in the life of Redeemer Church. The congregation desires to know Scripture well as an act of worship, but few of the members have been in churches where the Old Testament was taught well, and even fewer were in a situation where Christ was clearly explained as the point and fulfillment of the Old Testament. Some members have never been a part of any church at all prior to Redeemer. Due to those factors, a deficiency exists for many in understanding Old Testament theology and how the Old Testament and the New Testament relate. This project provided a helpful piece of discipleship for the membership as they grow in knowledge of God's word.

Two benefits arose from the teaching of a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament, and provide a rationale for this project. The first benefit is that the people

gained a more full understanding of the entire Bible. The pre-existing weakness in seeing the connections between the Old and New Testaments were sought to be corrected and replaced with a consistent hermeneutic that allows the believers to understand the entire Bible more clearly. This positively impacts the resultant biblical theology that comes from understanding the Old Testament better.

The second benefit is that the people of the church were spiritually more nourished as their study of the Bible was enhanced and strengthened, and thus they are growing in their sanctification. As more of the Bible opens to them, they can expand their study and be enriched by all the wealth of Scripture, not limited to only the New Testament. This benefit has an impact on themselves, in their home, on their evangelistic efforts, and will influence the entire church for the better. Related to this spiritual growth is the impact on worship. It is always a goal of biblical teaching that people grow in knowledge so that they may worship God more fully, for all the glories of his grace. The more that believers know, the more they can recognize God at work, and the more for which they can praise God. It is believed by the leadership of Redeemer Church that this project served the church body in a very positive way for the purpose of spiritual growth in all of these areas.

Definitions

Christ-centered hermeneutic. The model of interpretation that understands that God's redemptive plan is the central storyline of Scripture, and that redemptive plan is all about Jesus' saving a people for Himself. Thus, we can say that Jesus is the central focus of the Word of God, and that everything in the Word, both Old and New Testaments, points to Him. Sidney Greidanus understands it as "exaltation of Jesus of Nazareth as the

fulfillment of God’s Old Covenant promises” and thus “preaching Christ incarnate in the context of the full sweep of redemptive history.”⁴

Hermeneutics. The skill or methodology of interpreting Scripture. Donald Fairbairn gives this definition: “Hermeneutics is the macrolevel task of placing a given passage in the context of the book in which it falls, the group of writings of which it is a part, the Bible as a whole and the various traditions for interpreting the Bible.”⁵

Inerrancy. The belief that the Bible, in its original manuscripts “does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.”⁶ This doctrine is derived from the fact that God Himself is the author of the Bible, and thus it is His Words, superintended by the Holy Spirit through human authors, and is free from error on any subject on which it speaks because of its divine origin.⁷

Limitations and Delimitations

This project faced two limitations. First, the project had a fifteen-week time frame for the project, which limited the number of lessons and length of study. The end point of the project measured growth of knowledge within this framework only, though more study and lessons would undoubtedly serve the people better than just fifteen

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

⁵Donald Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 109.

⁶Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 90.

⁷For a deeper treatment on the definition of inerrancy and the theology behind it, see “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21, no. 4 (December 1978): 289-96.

weeks. Second, this project was dependent upon members of the church to participate voluntarily in the study and fill out the surveys accurately before and after the project.

I placed three delimitations on this project. First, the project was limited to a total of eight lessons. The wealth of biblical material on this subject could create an indefinite number of lessons, yet within the timeframe and considering the endurance of the people, the project was limited to those eight lessons. Second, the lessons themselves were thorough, but not exhaustive, of the biblical material. The content of the lessons focused on demonstrating the model of a Christ-centered hermeneutic through the preaching in the book of Acts and then modeling that hermeneutic by applying it to the various genres of the Old Testament. Third, these lessons were given to a smaller segment of the church population as they were taught during small group Bible study time on Sunday mornings as opposed to being part of a Sunday morning sermon series.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this project included the development of eight teaching lessons, formation of a review panel, evaluations by the review panel, and a survey to the members of the church. During a four-week preparation period, the eight-week teaching series was developed, and a review panel evaluated the eight lessons. The pre-project survey was also developed during this period and was administered to the participants before the first lesson was taught. After the eight lessons, the same survey was re-administered, and the differences in answers provide the basis for determining an increase in knowledge. This post-project survey evaluation took place over the course of three weeks.

This methodology was carried out for the purpose of meeting the three goals

previously mentioned in this chapter. The first goal was to evaluate the participants' knowledge of a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament. This goal was measured through a survey that assessed the participants' knowledge of a Christ-centered hermeneutic to the Old Testament. The survey consisted of 25 statements and was administered to 27 participants prior to the first lesson of the teaching series being taught. The survey employed a six-point Likert scale where the participants were asked to mark their level of agreement with the statement on a scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The results of the survey were used to evaluate the completion of this goal and to compare against the post-series survey.

The second goal of this project was to develop a teaching series that would instruct the participants on a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament. This goal was measured by using an evaluation rubric that was administered by a review panel composed of several church leaders to determine the lesson's clarity, content, faithfulness to Scripture, consistency with the project topic, and whether the lesson presented the validity of a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the lessons. The lessons were discussed prior to being taught to the church members. If lessons were not be deemed successful by having 90 percent of the indicators marked at sufficient or above, then they were edited and were resubmitted to the review panel. The lessons were improved until all five indicators were marked at sufficient or above, to thus exceed the pre-project expectations for success.

The third goal of this project was to increase the knowledge of the members of Redeemer Church in a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament through an eight part teaching series. This goal was measured by administering a follow-up survey

that assessed the growth in knowledge and beliefs of the participants with regard to their understanding of a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament. The survey employed a six-point Likert scale, with potential responses ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The completed surveys were analyzed to determine the percentage of participants who responded along the six-point scale to each statement. The results from the post-project survey were compared to the results from the pre-project survey, and the differences in the responses demonstrated an increase in knowledge, through their levels of agreement or disagreement with each statement. This goal was deemed successful when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference between the initial and follow-up survey scores.⁸

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to teach a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament to the members of Redeemer Church of Abilene, Texas. This project was carried out over the course of fifteen weeks and sought to accomplish the three main goals stated above. The goals were accomplished through the preparation of eight lessons, which were evaluated by a review panel, and the development and administration of pre-project and post-project surveys. The data collected in those surveys was used to measure these stated goals, and thus fulfills the purpose of the project.

⁸All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR A CHRIST-CENTERED HERMENEUTIC OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Introduction

One of the most difficult aspects for Christians in understanding their Bible is how to read the Old Testament. Considering that the Old Testament is roughly seventy percent of God's revealed word to his people, that is no small problem. The task of theologians and pastors, if they are going to serve the church well, is to believe, implement, and teach a hermeneutic that makes sense of the Old Testament for believers, and is reflective of how the biblical authors themselves understood and taught the Old Testament.

The thesis of this chapter is that the book of Acts, in accordance with the words of Christ Himself in John 5 and Luke 24, provides a biblical understanding and model for a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament. An evaluation of the sermons of the apostles throughout the book of Acts, focusing directly on three sermons given by Peter in Acts 2, Stephen in Acts 7, and Paul in Acts 13, proves this thesis. Those sermons provide an example for believers in how to read, understand, and preach the Old Testament with a Christ-centered understanding. This model, however, does not originate with them or come from their own judgment; rather, they are divinely instructed by Jesus, who understood that all of the Old Testament was fulfilled by, and pointing to, himself. The fact that Jesus instructed the disciples on such an understanding is recorded clearly in

two locations: John 5:36-47 and Luke 24:13-27. Because of Jesus' instruction, the disciples understood the hermeneutical method, which led to a Christ-centered reading of the Old Testament. Through the apostles' sermons in the book of Acts believers can see this methodology applied in their preaching.

Jesus Teaches a Christ-Centered Hermeneutic (John 5 and Luke 24)

One of the most difficult tasks for preachers, and all students of Scripture, is to know how to read the Old Testament in light of the finished work of Christ. It might be tempting for some to leave the Old Testament in the realm of Jewish literature, but that is to take a large portion of God's self revelation and relegate it to the inconsequential, or at the very least, to consider it less important than the new. Such thinking devalues God's revelation and leaves the text shrouded in mystery of understanding, but remaining shrouded in mystery is not God's purpose in revealing himself. Rather, he wants to reveal the truth of who he is and how he works. It is his goal to communicate so that people are drawn to him, through his word.

The Old Testament provides believers with necessary background information, a large portion of redemptive history, and asks the questions that can be answered only in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. John Calvin wrote, "We ought to read the Scriptures with the express design of finding Christ in them. Whoever shall turn aside from this object, though he may weary himself throughout his whole life in learning, will never attain the knowledge of the truth."¹ No proper understanding of the Old Testament ends with Malachi and fails to find its full understanding in Jesus Christ. Reading the Old

¹John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* (repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 218.

Testament apart from Christ removes the key to understanding. This is Jesus' entire point in John 5 as he interacts with the Jews who are opposing him. The Jews do not honor him, they do not listen to him, and they do not see him as the Messiah. Jesus' sharp rebuke to them in verse 23 is clear: "whoever does not honor the Son, does not honor the Father who sent him." This is a striking statement to those who say they honor the Father, Yahweh. They hold his words in high esteem and they worship him, but Jesus tells them that they refuse to listen to what God has actually said; if they did they would honor him as the Son, and would follow him.

Jesus goes on to provide witnesses for his identity as the Son who has been sent from the Father. His own testimony might be rejected (5:31), but God sent John the Baptist to bear witness to the truth (5:32–33). Even Jesus' works provide a testimony to who he is (5:36). However, there remains an even greater testament to his identity and mission in the form of the very Scriptures themselves. For example, John 5:37-39 reads,

And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.

The greatest witness to Jesus' identity as the Son sent from the Father, the Messiah King, are the very Scriptures that the people have been taught since childhood to treasure in their hearts. It is through those Scriptures that the Father himself testifies of Jesus, through his very word. However Jesus reveals his listeners' true heart, they are far from the Father, they do not hear his voice, they do not have his word abiding in them, and they do not really believe the Father. The proof of their rejection of both Jesus and the Father was their rejection of the testimony found in God's word, the Scriptures. The Jews

still revered the word and valued it, but they did not believe it. If they did, they would receive the testimony found therein and believe Jesus. Instead, thinking they had eternal life because they had the Scriptures, they denied the very means of eternal life found inside of those Scriptures.

Jesus' words are simultaneously a rebuke for their unbelief and rejection, as well as a call to return to the Scriptures to see him as the point of the entirety of the Bible. The Scriptures themselves bear witness to him. Their response might very well be "But you are not in those words, you are not old enough to have been present in the Scriptures."² The culmination of Jesus' response to their rejection of his argument is found in verse 45 where he tells them that Moses is their accuser, and not him. In this statement Jesus holds up the very Law they say they search diligently as what reveals him clearly. Their error is failing to listen to that Law, and thus Moses will accuse them for failing to see Jesus as the Messiah. The concluding words in verse 47 provide a solemn reminder of the continuity of the words of God found in the Old Testament and the New Testament, and the danger of ignoring them: "If you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

In John 5, one reads that Jesus sees the Old Testament Scriptures as pointing to him, and in some way being foundational to the reception of any of his words being true. He identifies the Scriptures as not just a witness to his identity, but also as a judge to

²This is the actual response a few chapters later in John 8:54-58 in a similar conversation where Jesus claims the Father will glorify him and accuses the Jews of not knowing God at all. He tells them that their father Abraham rejoiced that he would see Jesus' coming. Their response was that Jesus is not old enough to have known Abraham. He responds, "Before Abraham was, I am," a statement of his deity. They then attempted to kill Jesus. The Jews' inability to understand Jesus' identity and to trust the testimonies of God concerning his identity is a major theme throughout John's Gospel.

those who refuse to see that they speak about him.³ The fact that Jesus told the people that they had rejected Moses is an especially biting critique considering their supposed veneration of him and his writings. Arthur Pink writes,

They would have been ready to die for what Moses taught. And yet here is the Son of God solemnly declaring that these Jews did not believe Moses, and furnishing proof by showing that if they had really believed Moses' writings they would have believed in Christ, of whom Moses wrote.⁴

Jesus clearly believes that Moses' words, which at the very least would be indicative of the Pentateuch, are speaking of him. If the people were to read those words and believe them, then they would see Jesus as the Messiah. The people looked to Moses as an authoritative source, and if he testified to Jesus as Messiah, then the people should trust him and believe, but they did not believe Jesus or Moses. According to Kostenberger, the reason Moses would accuse the one who rejects that understanding is that Moses, "as the lawgiver, knew the Law's true purpose. Rather than being an end in itself, the law served to point to Christ."⁵

The words of Jesus provide much instruction for the modern reader with regard to hermeneutics. D. A. Carson sees this passage as pointing to a Christ-centered hermeneutic when he says that Jesus' words provide "a comprehensive hermeneutical

³Christians know that failing to identify Jesus as Messiah is damning, but does this passage also speak to the spiritual damage of failing to listen to the testimony of Moses, and ultimately God, in not seeing Christ as the point of the Old Testament? Does a rejection of such an understanding in some way diminish our understanding of Jesus, and of God's Word? These are large questions that fall outside the purview of this project.

⁴Arthur Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John* (1945; repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 284.

⁵Andreas Kostenberger, "John," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 443.

key” to the Old Testament.⁶ Carson explains that, “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 his resurrection.”⁷

Graeme Goldsworthy communicates the same idea, but in a simpler way: “the meaning of all the Scriptures is unlocked by the death and resurrection of Jesus.”⁸

Jesus words in John 5 clearly show that he understood the Old Testament Law to be speaking of him, however, in Luke 24 he expanded that lesson and imparted that “hermeneutical key” by which all the Scriptures are “unlocked” to his disciples. As two disciples were travelling to Emmaus, Jesus appeared to them while keeping them from being able to recognize him. As they are together discussing the events of Jesus’ death and the rumors of his resurrection, these disciples, despite the fact that they witnessed many miraculous events and heard Jesus’ teaching, doubted that he had actually been the one to redeem Israel because of his death (24:21). Jesus’ response to them was one of rebuke for being slow to believe. The interesting aspect of the rebuke was that it was not given because they did not believe the testimony of the women regarding Jesus’ resurrection, but rather because they refused to believe the word of God that had foretold his life, suffering, death, and resurrection. Jesus then said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!” (24:25). Their error was failing to understand that the prophets, and the rest of Scripture, spoke of Jesus.

⁶D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 263.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 54.

Jesus did not rebuke them and leave them in their error. Instead, he followed up on his rebuke by giving them the hermeneutical key that was necessary to see him as the redeemer of Israel. Luke records this idea: “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (24:27). There is a comprehensive nature to Jesus’ teaching as he explains to them not just from the writings of Moses, but from “all the Prophets,” and “all the Scriptures.” Darrel Bock explains Jesus’ methodology by writing, “He went through the entire Scripture, front to back.”⁹ The scope, all the Scriptures, is clear, but so is the subject of those Scriptures: Jesus himself. That the Scriptures teach of Jesus is not a mere coincidence to Jesus, but the very point of the Scriptures. The entirety of the Scriptures is saturated with the presence of Jesus, from beginning to end. Jesus wants the disciples to see this and believe.

Jesus’ teaching moment for the disciples communicates not only that he is the point of the Scriptures, and that they should see him as their fulfillment, but also that they would understand how to see him therein so that they could follow his model and teach others to do the same thing. Bock explains how Jesus taught the Scriptures to the disciples:

In making this point, Jesus appeals to two types of prophetic fulfillment. Texts that are directly prophetic refer only to Jesus, while typico-prophetic texts reflect patterns that Jesus reenacts and escalates to show their fulfillment or their eschatological inauguration at a new level.¹⁰

Despite the fact that many believe Scripture teaches about Jesus in various ways, in

⁹Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1917.

¹⁰Ibid. 1918.

differing genres, and in various forms of prophetic fulfillment and typology, the inarguable point of Jesus' words is that the disciples were taught that every part of the Old Testament was intended to point to Jesus. This was not offered up by Jesus as a minor theological point but as a foundational truth that informed how they understood all that came from God before them, and all that would be written afterwards.

The unmistakable truth derived from Jesus' words to these disciples, and by extension to all future disciples, is that the proper understanding of all Scripture is to view it through a Christ-centered lens. A failure to do so is actually a rejection of the words of Jesus, which is deserving of his rebuke regarding unbelief. This point is driven further home by Luke's words in 24:45: "Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." Jesus himself enabled them to have a proper understanding of his Scriptures, meaning that this hermeneutic is both Christ-taught and Christ-empowered.

Jesus' words in both John 5 and Luke 24 serve as the backdrop for understanding how the disciples would read the Scriptures and preach them in the days that followed Jesus' ascension into Heaven. Jesus left them with a hermeneutical blueprint on how to understand the Scriptures. They had two options: either they should understand the Scriptures like those who did not believe and had not been taught by Jesus, or they should understand the Scriptures like those who believe in Jesus and have been taught by him, and thus believe that all of the Scriptures pointed to him. The only faithful option is to read the Old Testament in its entirety through a Christ-centered hermeneutic. That is precisely what is found throughout the book of Acts in the sermons preached by Jesus' disciples. Three major sermons stand out in the book of Acts and serve as examples of how to apply a Christ-centered hermeneutic and for the modern-day

believer to follow. An examination of Peter's sermon in Acts 2, Stephen's sermon in Acts 7, and Paul's sermon in Acts 13 will demonstrate the necessity of the Christ-centered hermeneutic.

Peter's Sermon in Jerusalem on Pentecost (Acts 2:14–41)

Not long after Jesus instructed the disciples on how to read the Old Testament and enabled them to be able to understand it, he then instructed them to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit would indwell them and empower them to be witnesses of Jesus into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.¹¹ In Acts 2 we read of the account of the coming of the Holy Spirit, which led immediately to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus at Pentecost by Peter. This sermon is the first post-resurrection, recorded communication by a disciple that Jesus was the Messiah.

In this sermon, Peter put into practice the hermeneutic that was taught by Jesus to the disciples. It appears that he was already reading the Scriptures in this way, as his words in Acts 1 concerning the death of Judas and the need to replace him with another disciple make clear.¹² But after the Holy Spirit came and empowered Peter and his fellow disciples, the game changed. Now was the time for public proclamation and the application of a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament in preaching the

¹¹Luke 24:48-49; Acts 1:4-8.

¹²In the account of Acts 1:13-26, one reads that Peter, believing that Scripture must be fulfilled, called for them to replace Judas in verse 20. He did this based on his reading of two Old Testament passages: Ps 69 and Ps 109. Peter seemed to see their fulfillment, not in the immediate context of David/the Psalmist, but rather fulfilled in the life of Christ's church. These were prophecies that were fulfilled because Christ had come and because Judas betrayed the Christ. Peter was reading the Old Testament through the lens of Christ and so he saw their actions at that moment as playing a role in finishing the task, and thus the Psalms fulfilled in Jesus.

Gospel to the Jews and others gathered in Jerusalem.

In Acts 2:12, Peter begins the sermon by answering the question on the minds of the people, “What does this mean?” The people had just heard Jesus’ disciples speaking in a myriad of languages that were clearly unknown to them as Galileans, even though the hearers could understand them perfectly in their native tongue. Peter answers their question in Acts 2:17–21 by pointing out that this phenomenon is the fulfillment of prophecy as recorded in Joel 2:28–32. The promise in Joel 2 was that God would come and redeem his people, restoring what the locust destroyed and providing for them by filling their wine vats and threshing floors. Those signs of abundance and blessing would come so that “you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God and there is none else” (Joel 2:27). In order that the people might know that God is in their midst, he gave them the signs of his presence, as recorded in Acts 4:28–32. These signs are what Peter references in his sermon. The disciples were not drunk with wine, as some suggested, their speaking in tongues was actually the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy which focused on the signs of God coming into the midst of his people.

Not only was God present among the people, but he also came bringing salvation. Joel declared in verse 32, “everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” It is here that Peter most pointedly reads the prophecy through a Christ-centered hermeneutic: the Lord on whom people must call, and through whom they must be saved, is Jesus Christ. In the immediate context of Joel 2, the promise of deliverance was a temporal deliverance from impending judgment. I. Howard Marshall notes that “it retained this sense for Peter, but the reference to being ‘saved’ broadened out in the early church to include all the present blessings experienced by those who were convinced that

they would also be delivered from the final judgment.”¹³

Peter understood both judgment and salvation in light of Jesus. The hermeneutic, when applied to the text of Joel chapter two, helped Peter evaluate what was happening in the coming of the Spirit and communicated the Gospel of Jesus clearly to the people in Jerusalem. After explaining Joel’s prophecy Peter proceeded to preach Jesus’ identity and works as seen primarily in his crucifixion, as well as the hearers’ guilty role in Jesus’ execution. In Acts 2:24, Peter speaks of God raising Jesus from the dead because it was impossible for Jesus to be held by death. Yet again, Peter sees in the resurrection of Jesus the fulfillment of Old Testament allusion and prophecy. He quotes David from Psalm 16, but he does not simply connect the passage to Jesus through typological fulfillment. Rather, he claims that David is speaking directly of Jesus when he wrote Psalm 16, saying in verse 25, “David says concerning him,” with the “him” being a reference to Jesus, or the Christ. Peter expands on this idea by explaining to the people that even though David wrote this, it could not have been written about himself because he most certainly died and his body is in the grave to that day. David must have been talking about someone else whom God would keep from corruption. Peter applied the Christ-centered hermeneutic to the passage by indicating that David ultimately spoke of Christ.

It was likely the common view of the Jews at that time that David was considered a patriarch, at least in some sense. Peter makes the point directly in this

¹³I. Howard Marshall, “Acts,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D.A. Carson. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 535-36.

passage.¹⁴ This is important to note because it is the background that informs Peter's reading of the Psalm with this hermeneutic. Even though he could have simply asserted this is about Jesus, he actually provided theological basis for reading the Psalms in this manner. In Peter's estimation, David had received a promise from God that his offspring would sit on the throne forever. Peter tells the Jews, "God swore an oath to him" (v. 30), meaning that this promise was sure and could not be broken. The problem: David was dead and was in a tomb, and all knew that to be true; so how can that be fulfilled in him? The oath was fulfilled in someone else, the offspring of the Patriarch David who received that oath. As Simon Kistemaker writes, "David himself does not fulfill the words of Psalm 16:10, but he speaks prophetically about someone else."¹⁵ This someone else is Jesus, David's offspring. Peter states this plainly in verse 31; "he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption."

The disciples were proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus, and Peter had provided the prophetic backstory from Psalm 16 to the resurrection. But Jesus had not just been raised from the dead; he had ascended to the right hand of the Father. The ascension formed the basis for the audio-visual demonstration the people had witnessed from the disciples which was a fulfillment of Joel 2. Peter said in Acts 2:33, "Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the

¹⁴Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 126. This is the only NT text that calls David a Patriarch. The term is usually reserved for Abraham or one of the twelve sons of Jacob. Within the context of head of the family and the first in a promised lineage, it makes sense historically and theologically.

¹⁵Simon Kistemaker, *Acts*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 98.

promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.” The ascension was proof of the resurrection and the basis for all that the people were experiencing that day.

Peter’s proof of this claim came from the Psalms. Quoting from Psalm 110 he said “for David did not ascend to the heavens, but he himself says, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’” (110:34-35). Peter read the Psalms and recognized that David was not speaking of himself but of someone else. He knew that David was speaking about Jesus. It is Jesus who is sitting at the right hand of the Father and whose enemies serve as a footstool, so Peter is able to connect the passage and understand that David was once again speaking of Jesus. David cannot be speaking of himself, for, as Peter says in verse 34, David did not ascend to the heavens. Kistemaker explains, “should anyone in Peter’s audience question whether the first psalm refers to Christ, the second psalm citation proves without a doubt that Jesus has ascended and sits enthroned in heaven.”¹⁶

Peter ends his sermon that is filled with Old Testament references read in light of a Christ-centered hermeneutic the only way he can, with an appeal to trust in Jesus. If Jesus has been resurrected and has ascended, as prophesied by David, and if the accompanying signs worked by the Spirit in his coming among the disciples is proof of God’s presence, then the call in Joel 2 must go out to those in attendance: everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. This is the ultimate goal of Peter’s sermon, to preach Christ from the Old Testament, and to preach of the salvation that comes to those who call upon his name. If Jesus is the one spoken of in Psalm 16 and Psalm 110,

¹⁶Kistemaker, *Acts*, 101.

then he is the Lord whose name must be called upon to avoid judgment and receive blessing. Peter's sermon ends with these words: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36).

Stephen's Sermon before the Jewish Council (Acts 7:1–53)

Acts 6 records that the number of disciples multiplied greatly and that even a great number of priests came to faith in Christ. The disciples chose from among themselves men to serve the church as deacons. Among them was Stephen who was said to be full of grace and power and who did great works among the people of Jerusalem. Those who opposed the church singled out much of their aggression on Stephen and accused him of speaking "blasphemous words against Moses and God" (6:11). Interestingly, their accusation of blasphemy was leveled at Stephen because they understood him to be saying that "Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us" (6:14). Whether that was a complete fabrication, or simply an exaggeration or misunderstanding, the fact that they seek to attack him on his understanding and teaching of the Old Testament might shed some light on what they thought of his Old Testament hermeneutic.

In light of their attack on his understanding of the Old Testament, it is not shocking that Stephen focused his attention towards teaching the council about Jesus from the Old Testament. Unlike Peter's sermon in Acts 2, which was based on direct citation of multiple Old Testament texts, Stephen focused on the big picture of the Old Testament and explained how the Gospel was present in the larger narrative. Eckhard

Schnabel observes, “Most of the speech is a summary review of Israel’s history, similar to historical summaries in the Old Testament and in later Jewish texts that demonstrate the relevance of the narrated history.”¹⁷ However, Stephen’s recounting of Israel’s history is done through the lens of Jesus as the Righteous One whom the prophets foretold (7:38). That aspect makes Stephen’s sermon polemical and distinctly Christian, because he connects the pattern of unbelief seen throughout the Old Testament to a rejection of Jesus.

Stephen started by telling the story of Israel’s history beginning with Abraham when he lived in the land of the Chaldeans. God sent Abraham from there to the Promised Land, the land that Stephen connects to the council as “this land in which you are now living” (7:4). He goes on to remind them that the promise of the land was actually given to his offspring, as Abraham received not even a foot’s length of the inheritance. Neither did Isaac or Jacob, who lived in tents on the land, but did not own the land itself. At the end of verse 7, Stephen shows his reverence for “this place” by showing the council that he understood the promise of God to mean that the people of God would worship God in that place. In bringing up this point, Stephen prioritized worship of God by the people of God, especially in response to the people being redeemed by God from slavery so that they could worship Him.

As Stephen moved forward in the sermon, he backtracked to Abraham and the patriarchs and reminded the council of the covenant of circumcision (7:8). Rather than glorifying the patriarchs at that moment, he instead spoke of their jealousy of Joseph. He also spoke of their sinful action of selling Joseph into slavery, effectively seeking to kill

¹⁷Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 362.

Joseph because of their hatred for him. Yet God was with Joseph and used him in to save all of Israel from famine (7:9-19). Stephen wanted to remind the council that God saves his people, even when his people actively seek to get rid of the one whom God was going to use to save them.

Stephen moved on to the story of the life of Moses and his impact on Israel. Even though Moses was an Israelite, he was brought up in Egypt, instructed in their wisdom, and was mighty in word and deed. He had love for his Israelite brothers that led him to defend an oppressed man by striking down his Egyptian oppressor. Stephen recounted that “he supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand” (7:25). Rather than receive Moses as the savior, they rejected him by saying “who made you a ruler and judge over us?” (7:27). Moses was forced to flee to the wilderness in Median.

Despite this setback, years later God brought his savior back to Egypt. Stephen said to the council, “This Moses, whom they rejected, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge?’, this man God sent as both ruler and redeemer” (7:35). Stephen was building a theology of a savior while not revealing his full intention to the council. Instead, he let the suspense build and layered the picture of God using a rejected redeemer to save a people through the stories familiar in the people’s own history.

In verse 37, Stephen reminded them that God had promised that a prophet would come who would be like Moses. This prophet would serve as a redeemer, and as verse 36 says, he will be performing signs and wonders. He would also be speaking “living oracles” to the people (7:38). The reference to “living oracles” is best understand to be a reference to Exodus 19 and the giving of the very words of God in command and

covenant form to the people.¹⁸ Yet, just as he was rejected and run off by the Israelites before, even as he delivers God’s word to the people, he is again rejected. Stephen states, “our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned to Egypt” (7:39). The people did not listen to God’s man and instead turned to false gods and those who sought to oppress them. The people made literal false gods to worship as a sign of their rejection, not only of Moses, but of the God of Moses. In response, God turned away from the people.¹⁹

The final section of Stephen’s Old Testament history transitions from the time in the wilderness to the time of King David. He does this by providing a contrast between the tent of Moloch and the wilderness tabernacle (7:43–44). The tent of Moloch served as a representative location of false worship, while the tabernacle represented the location of God’s dwelling and His work among the people. Those who worshipped Moloch and Rephan suffered the judgment of God, while those who trusted God were like David who sought out the dwelling place for God. It is here that Stephen reminded the council of a truth they had forgotten: “the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands” (7:48). Bock notes that since “God cannot be confined to such a locale, so they should not give too much importance to the temple.”²⁰ This would be offensive to the council, who already opposed Stephen on grounds of his supposedly disparaging comments about the temple. Yet this thought is actually found in Scripture, as illustrated by Stephen’s quotation of Psalm 11:49–50: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool. What

¹⁸Bock, *Acts*, 297.

¹⁹Here Stephen quotes directly from Amos 5:25–27.

²⁰Bock, *Acts*, 302.

kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is my place of rest? Did not my hand make all these things?”

It is at this point that Stephen revealed the larger plan of his Old Testament theology and history lesson. He tied these truths together and applied them to the council of Jews which questioned him. Stephen said in verse 51: “you stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.” In this statement, Stephen connected the council to those unbelieving Jews that rejected the prophets. Specifically he references Joseph and Moses as rejected prophets, but by extension his comment brings in the entirety of the prophets dismissed by those who did not believe. This accusation was offensive to those who thought of themselves as being on God’s side. The Jews, especially this council, thought they were focused on worshipping God, but as Stephen pointed out, worship should be offered by those who have been redeemed by God. Those on the council are more like those who turned back to Egypt after redemption than those who sought to worship God like Abraham did. They thought they were the descendants of Joseph, but they were more like his brothers who sought to kill the one who brought salvation. They thought they were the descendants of Abraham and Moses, but instead they were actually like those who turned back to Egypt, Moloch, and Rephan instead of turning to God. The council was busy fighting Stephen over the proper location to worship God, while at the same time they denied the very words of God that spoke of the whole earth being his footstool. How did they miss the fact that He could not be contained in a house?

Stephen rebuked them as being unbelievers who killed those who brought the word of God to them. It is in this way that he used the Old Testament to preach Christ to

the Jews. Whereas Peter used Old Testament passages that he read as written directly about Jesus by David, Stephen uses typological fulfillment and thematic connections to show that Christ is pictured in the Old Testament. Joseph and Moses serve as “types” of Christ in that their lives demonstrated how God used saviors or redeemers to rescue his people from slavery and distress. Their lives show how unbelievers will reject and seek to kill the redeemers sent from God. They serve as examples of saviors in temporal situations, but also point to a larger fulfillment in Christ as the Savior or Redeemer who will rescue his people from the ultimate slavery and distress: sin and God’s judgment for sin.²¹

In a similar way, the unbelievers among the people of Israel throughout the Old Testament also serve to point to ultimate rejection of God. Just as the unbelievers sought to kill Joseph, Moses, and the prophets, so they sought to kill Jesus. Stephen makes that clear by saying, “they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered” (7:52). Stephen connected the guilt of unbelievers in the past that rejected God and his prophets to these devout Jews who are guilty of the same thing because they killed Jesus. Like Joseph’s brothers, they rejected Jesus out of jealousy and sought to have him killed. Unlike Joseph’s brothers, however, they succeeded. They rejected God who had come in the flesh and, by turning to false idols, they now faced the wrath of God just as their fathers

²¹There are many ways to approach seeing Christ in the Old Testament, and the topic has produced many books and much discussion. The best three books I have read that walk through the methodology of preaching Christ from the Old Testament, and have informed my thinking, are Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Dennis Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2007); and Edmund Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003).

did. Stephen read the history of Israel, and theological themes present in their history, through a Christ-centered hermeneutic in order to point to Christ and connect the actions of the people at that moment to the actions of known unbelievers in the past.²²

Paul's Sermon in Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:15–41)

Present at Stephen's sermon was a devout Pharisee named Saul who was determined to destroy the church. Despite Saul's intentions, God saved him, changed his name to Paul, and then sent him on a mission to preach the truth of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. There are several of his sermons recorded in the book of Acts, and much could be drawn about his theology and hermeneutics from his letters to the church at Corinth or Rome. Specifically, his sermon recorded in Acts 13 serves a unique role in that it is a sermon that was delivered to the synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia. This sermon gives a look into how he would specifically deal with Old Testament texts and how they related to Christ. As a Pharisee, and a trained teacher of Israel, he had as much, if not more, in-depth knowledge of the Scriptures than any of the other disciples. It was precisely this knowledge of the Old Testament that led Paul to embrace Jesus as the promised Messiah, to teach a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament, and to leave behind any sort of hermeneutic that might lead him to reject Jesus as the Messiah, as many of his kinsmen did.

Several passages reveal this truth, but one in particular stands out. In Acts 13:15 the rulers of the synagogue read from the Law and Prophets and then asked Paul

²²It is also worthy of note that the result of the sermon was the killing of Stephen. It seems that the council was not satisfied with only killing the Righteous One, but also his servants. Ironically, Stephen had rebuked them for resisting the Holy Spirit and persecuting the prophets like their fathers, and here they are guilty of it once again.

and his companions to share with the people.²³ Paul's address to the people walked through the history of Israel much like Stephen did but much shorter and with more direct identification of Christ throughout the sermon rather than just at the end. In a few sentences Paul's ranged from speaking about Israel in Egypt to Israel receiving David as king (13:16–22). Paul used 1 Samuel 13:14 to emphasize that David was "a man after my heart, who will do all my will." God's favor with David was extended by a promise that his offspring would sit on his throne forever (2 Sam 7:12–13). This promise is important because the Jews knew that it was connected to the Messiah. Paul immediately connected this promise from 2 Samuel 7 with Jesus Christ. This was not just a spiritual connection, but also a physical one. Both Matthew 1 and Luke 3 record the lineage of Jesus and reveal that he is from the physical lineage of David. Paul used this knowledge, and the promise of an eternal reign of the king, to reveal to the people that the Messiah had come, and that this promise was fulfilled in Jesus.

Paul's purpose all along was to reveal that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior for whom the people were waiting. The use of the term "savior" may be of unique relevance to his audience. Kistemaker writes, "His listeners applied the word savior (deliverer) to the judges who ruled Israel (e.g. Judg. 3:9); to God who in time led his people out of exile (see Isa. 45:15); and to the coming Messiah."²⁴ Knowing that they would understand his usage of the word "savior," he led them through Israel's history, however quickly, specifically touching on the Davidic promise, so that they could read the Old Testament like he did, as pointing to Jesus as Savior. He read the theme of "savior" as

²³Bock makes note that it was common practice for people to offer a homily or exposition of the passage that was read in the synagogue. Bock, *Acts*, 451.

²⁴Kistemaker, *Acts*, 475.

fulfilled in the Messiah, and he saw the line of the Messiah as promised to David as running straight to Jesus.

Paul goes on to tell the people that this message of a Savior and his salvation has come to them as sons of the family of Abraham.²⁵ But such salvation is not automatic for them just because they are of the physical family. Just as John the Baptist preached a message of repentance to Israel (13:24–25), even so this Savior demanded repentance and belief.

This created a problematic scenario for the people in Pisidian Antioch as they knew that Jesus preached, and was killed, in Jerusalem. How could the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem have not seen this? How could they have killed him? Paul answers that question by saying that they were fulfilling the prophetic word about those who would kill the Savior. Paul finds this ironic considering their knowledge. He says in verse 27, “because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, (they) fulfilled them by condemning him.”

Paul believed that their inability to read the Scriptures properly contributed to their inability to recognize Christ and caused them to end up killing him. It wasn't their familiarity of the Scriptures that was the problem; they read them all the time. It was their inability to understand the Scriptures. The implication is clear: had they understood the Scriptures properly they would have seen Jesus for who he was. Not only was Paul reading the Scriptures through a Christ-centered hermeneutic, he was telling his readers of the danger of failing to do so. He was issuing a warning to those who merely read the Scriptures publicly that if they did not understand them to be pointing to Jesus, they too

²⁵Paul's writings (Rom 1 and 2) demonstrate that he did not believe the Gospel came only to the Jew, but to the Jew first. That is his meaning here as well.

would be in error like those in Jerusalem who killed him.

Paul stated that when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him off the tree and buried him in a tomb. This was yet another fulfillment of Old Testament scriptural predictions.²⁶ Despite the evil intentions of these men, even in this fulfillment of prophecy God did not leave Christ in the grave. Paul clearly stated that “God raised him from the dead . . . and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people” (13:30–31). The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was a crucial truth for the people because Paul saw it as the fulfillment of a promise made to the fathers long ago. He read Psalm 2 through a Christ-centered hermeneutic and saw that the “son” who was begotten by God is Jesus and that his resurrection (linked to being “begotten”) was promised in Psalm 2 and has now been fulfilled “to us their children” (13:32–33).

Paul appears to sincerely desire that these God-fearers would see that the Old Testament was speaking directly about Jesus, because, after stating that Psalm 2 spoke of Jesus’ resurrection, he buttressed that point with two more scriptural references that people might not immediately connect to Jesus. He quoted from Isaiah 55:3 in verse 34 by saying, “I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David,” and from Psalm 16:10 in verse 35: “you will not let your Holy One see corruption.” David Peterson explains Paul’s mindset in using the two passages from Psalms, writing, “Linking together the promises from Psalm 16:10 and Isaiah 55:3, we see that the Messiah’s deliverance from death and decay in one of the ‘holy and sure blessings promised to David’ and that this

²⁶Bock, *Acts*, 454. Bock mentions several OT predictive statements referenced here: Deut 21:22; Isa 52:13-53:12; Pss 22, 69, and 118.

means salvation for Israel too.”²⁷ Those promises were not about David, after all, Paul says in verse 36 that David died, was buried, and saw corruption. These passages are about Jesus, the Holy One who was raised from the dead.

Jesus being raised from the dead is not only the fulfillment of Old Testament promises in the past, but it is the means of blessing for people at that moment too. Paul applied these passages to his hearers by declaring, “let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses” (13:38–39). The idea of freedom in this verse is one of justification, where those who believe are declared “righteous” before God.²⁸ God has been “savior” for the people throughout Israel’s history, now God’s begotten son, the Messiah, serves as “savior” by setting those who believe free and making them righteous.

While those who believe receive salvation and freedom, those who refuse to believe will suffer calamity, and Paul desires their salvation. Paul leaves them with a warning in verses 40–41. Referencing Habakkuk 1:5, he says that those who scoff, or do not believe, will perish. Paul warned them that they will die in their sins if they refuse to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead and is the Messiah. God is doing a mighty work, and they must believe it. Failing to do so is death. Paul’s application at the end of the sermon demanded that people see the Old Testament as fulfilled in Jesus and in their response to him.

²⁷David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 393.

²⁸Schnabel, *Acts*, 584.

Conclusion

Despite their varied styles of preaching, it is clear from these three examples of sermons in the book of Acts that the disciples took Jesus' hermeneutic of the Old Testament to heart. They read and preached the Old Testament through the lens of Jesus' identity, as well as his life, death, and resurrection. Peter's sermon on Pentecost used direct Old Testament references that spoke of Jesus. Stephen provided a grand, big picture, Old Testament history and theology that used typology and thematic connections to point to Christ. Paul used a bit of both methods to preach Christ thematically, and specifically to preach Jesus and the Gospel to those who needed to hear and believe.

Regardless of their individual application of the hermeneutic, it can be clearly demonstrated from the preaching in Acts, that when the disciples read the Old Testament, they did so through the lens of Jesus. They did not see the Old Testament as simply Israel's history or as a book of moral lessons. Rather they understood Jesus to be the point of the Old Testament, and taught the Gospel of Jesus from all the Scriptures. It is fair to conclude that the modern day preacher should follow the words of Jesus, and the example of the apostles, and preach the Old Testament through a Christ-centered hermeneutic.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES OF A
CHRIST-CENTERED HERMENEUTIC OF
THE OLD TESTAMENT

Introduction

Chapter 2 discussed and proved the biblical expectation of teaching the Old Testament from a Christ-centered understanding. That chapter also demonstrated the Christ-centered hermeneutic utilized by the apostles themselves through the sermons in the book of Acts. On that foundation, this chapter will provide a brief definition of both hermeneutics and what is meant by Christ-centered hermeneutics. Second, several arguments offered today in opposition of that method will be discussed. Third, this chapter will offer multiple ways of employing a Christ-centered hermeneutic to preach Christ from the Old Testament.

**Brief Definition of Hermeneutics and
Christ-centered Hermeneutics**

Prior to any discussion on hermeneutics, it will be of value to define the term. Donald Fairbairn writes, “Hermeneutics is the macrolevel task of placing a given passage in the context of the book in which it falls, the group of writings of which it is a part, the Bible as a whole and the various traditions for interpreting the Bible.”¹ Fairbairn provides a complementary definition of exegesis saying it is, “the microlevel task of understanding

¹Donald Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 109.

a particular passage of Scripture accurately in its original context.” These two definitions, taken together, provide a helpful working definition of the task that is often called hermeneutics, or simply the practice or discipline of interpretation.² The Christian reader does this task through the aid of the Holy Spirit, with the goal of knowing God’s word and, for the preacher, communicating it to God’s people.³

A Christ-centered hermeneutic can be defined simply as seeing all Scripture pointing to and glorifying Jesus Christ. Even though it is doubtful whether anyone would deny this hermeneutic for the New Testament, given that the Gospels and Epistles clearly teach Jesus, the question still remains whether this hermeneutic applies to the Old Testament. As was discussed in chapter 2, Jesus’ claim in Luke 24:25-27 that Moses and the prophets spoke about him reveals that he considered himself as the focal point and end goal of the entirety of the Old Testament. Though some might dismiss Jesus’ statement as hermeneutically inconclusive, his words in Luke 24:44-48 show a clearer picture of this hermeneutic when Jesus is teaching all the disciples before his ascension.⁴

“These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything

²Robert Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 17.

³The concept of Spirit-led interpretation often gets neglected in discussion of hermeneutics, but it is imperative for proper understanding of the biblical text. Grant Osborne writes, “Hermeneutics, when utilized to interpret Scripture is a spiritual act, depending on the leading of the Holy Spirit. Modern scholars too often ignore the sacred dimension and approach the Bible purely as literature, considering the sacral aspect to be almost a genre.” Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 22.

⁴Daniel Block says, “This is not a declaration that Jesus went through the Scriptures and showed how each text spoke of Him, but that he explained to them all those texts that spoke of Him.” Daniel Block, “Daniel Block on Christ-centered Hermeneutics,” in *Christ-centered Preaching and Teaching*, ed. Ed Stetzer (Nashville: LifeWay, 2013), 6-7.

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.”

Iain Duguid writes, “This is a summary of Jesus’ master class in Old Testament interpretation.”⁵ Jesus was not teaching a one-time lesson and only showing the few places that spoke of him; he was showing them how they were to understand the scriptures that they held dear for so long. Duguid continues, “The focus of his teaching was not on a few “messianic” texts here and there, but rather the entire Old Testament.”⁶

When Luke writes, “He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,” it appears that prior to him teaching them this hermeneutic they did not have the ability to understand the Scripture properly. Though they understood the language used and the historical events present in the Old Testament, they did not have the key to make it all fit together and understood as God had intended them to understand it. Jesus had to give that key to them, and this key was for them to see him as the point of the story.

A Christ-centered hermeneutic is following the pattern set forth by Jesus and implemented by the apostles in the book of Acts and the Epistles. This hermeneutic prepares the reader to see the Bible as a whole story, from Genesis to Revelation, with one author, one story, and one hero. If one were not to see Jesus at the center of Scripture, one could not understand Scripture at all. The Pharisees themselves had a solid grip on a historical-grammatical understanding of the Old Testament, but their problem was their inability to see Jesus at the center and as the fulfillment of it all. Duguid writes, “The

⁵Iain Duguid, *Is Jesus in the Old Testament?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2013), 8.

⁶Ibid.

heart of the message of the Old Testament is a witness to Christ.”⁷ A Christ-centered hermeneutic is the methodology to read the Old Testament like Christ commanded, with him at the center.

Arguments against a Christ-centered Hermeneutic

Disagreements with the Christ-centered hermeneutic come from a variety of sources, most are not seeking to do any sort of damage to the biblical text or to the preaching of the Gospel. There exists an intramural debate among evangelical scholars as to both the validity of a Christ-centered hermeneutic and the application of such a hermeneutic if it is valid.⁸ As this section of the chapter deals with arguments against the hermeneutic, it must be stated that this is done out of respect for other Christians seeking to understand Scripture more clearly.

Two Key Arguments against a Christ-centered Hermeneutic

Though some scholars simply disagree with this hermeneutic, other scholars suggest that a Christ-centered methodology is both dangerous and problematic for good theology. Daniel Block writes about multiple dangers that he sees in this hermeneutic, and raises several issues that demand a response from proponents of this hermeneutic.⁹ Two of his arguments are representative of the basic disagreements from those who reject

⁷Duguid, *Is Jesus in the Old Testament?*, 9.

⁸See G. K. Beale, ed., “The Right Doctrine for the Wrong Text?” (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994). In this book, Beale has collected articles from people across the spectrum of evangelicalism that hold to various positions with regard to Christ-centered hermeneutics, the New Testament usage of the Old Testament, and the accuracy of the Apostle’s understanding and usage of the Old Testament text.

⁹Block, *Daniel Block on Christ-centered Hermeneutics*, 5-8.

the Christ-centered hermeneutic.¹⁰

A Christ-centered hermeneutic demands too much of the text. The first objection Block mentions is that a Christ-centered hermeneutic demands too much of the text. He writes, “On the surface it may appear spiritually edifying, but it exegetically fraudulent to try and extract from every biblical text some truth about Christ.”¹¹ Block’s contention is that the text itself does not intend for readers to see Christ in every passage, so to place that expectation on a passage is unfair to the text itself, as it demands more than the author of the text intends to say. Not content to simply disagree with such a hermeneutic he finds the position dangerous, claiming that it is “hermeneutically irresponsible to say that all Old Testament texts have a Christocentric meaning or point to Christ.”¹²

Block does offer an alternative approach that he feels does not demand too much of the text, the “Christotelic” approach. His short explanation of his position is that every Old Testament passage plays “a significant role in God’s great redemptive plan that leads to and climaxes in Christ,” and Block goes on to say that it would be an improvement to the hermeneutic if we interpreted the Old Testament “Christotelically

¹⁰I recognize that there are more objections than these two, but for the sake of space I am purposefully limiting the discussion to these two, as I feel they are representative of the dissent and that smaller objections can be placed within these two. I also understand that when the topic spreads to actual delivery of the hermeneutic in preaching, that even more questions can be raised about the proper methodology. Some of those will be addressed later in this chapter, but still others may be beyond the scope and space of this project.

¹¹Block, *Daniel Block on Christ-centered Hermeneutics*, 6.

¹²Ibid.

rather than Christocentrically.”¹³ His use of the term “Christotelic”, popularized by Peter Enns, describes an understanding of the Apostles use of the Old Testament that saw Christ as the end, *telos*, of the Old Testament and even of Israel. In this view, Christ is not “in” the Old Testament as much as he is the “end result” of the Old Testament.¹⁴

While one can agree in theory with a “christotelic” approach, I think it does not go far enough.¹⁵ It undersells what Christ himself speaks of in Luke 24 and does not appear to be the way Paul uses the Old Testament when he identifies Christ “as” the rock in the wilderness from which the people drank (1 Cor 10:4). Christ is described there not just as the end, but as being present within the event described in the text. Such a shortcoming also unintentionally limits our understanding of Christophanies if we cannot see him “in” the Old Testament.

The Christotelic approach also limits the ways one can read and preach Christ as the point of the Old Testament to only one way, the “end result.” Yet a Christ-centered hermeneutic embraces multiple ways that Christ can be understood to be present in the Old Testament.¹⁶ David Murray notes that such a view would also struggle to do justice

¹³Block, *Daniel Block on Christ-centered Hermeneutics*, 6.

¹⁴Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005).

¹⁵In the case of Enns, a “Christotelic” approach has gone too far. In *Inspiration and Incarnation*, Enns comes to some troubling conclusions. He accuses the New Testament writers of engaging in “eisegesis” of Old Testament texts inserting meaning foreign to the original writers (113-65). He also appears to give in too much to critical scholarship with regard to the text itself, denying Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (51-52) and giving in to “problems” that have been explained in multiple locations by harmonization (90-91).

¹⁶These “multiple ways” will be addressed later in this chapter.

to the faith of Old Testament saints in the Messiah. He asks, “Did they have any faith, any Messiah-centered faith? And what about the original readers, the Israelites? Did they have any saving faith in the promised Messiah? What did they find in the passages to create, cultivate, and nourish saving faith?”¹⁷

The Christotelic method is unable to adequately handle the complexities of the way the New Testament writers use the Old Testament or to handle the multiple ways Christ can be spoken of in regard to the Old Testament. It is too narrow a viewpoint, and does not alleviate the pressure allegedly put on the text by the Christ-centered view. Rather, the Christ-centered hermeneutic allows the text to unfold in a variety of ways, including a Christotelic way.¹⁸ A Christ-centered hermeneutic starts with the immediate context of a passage, but it does not end there. The hermeneutic extends to the larger canonical context, as well as the passage’s place within redemptive history.¹⁹ As Edmund Clowney states,

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

¹⁷David Murray, “David Murray on Christ-centered Hermeneutics,” in *Christ-centered Teaching and Preaching*, ed. Ed Stetzer (Nashville: LifeWay, 2013), 11.

¹⁸Richard Gaffin writes, “There can be no objection to “Christotelic” in itself. But Scripture is Christotelic just because it is Christocentric. It is Christotelic only as it is Christocentric, and as it is that in every part, the Old Testament included. Or, as we may, in fact must put the issue here in its most ultimate consideration, Christ is the mediatorial Lord and Savior of redemptive history not only as its end but also from beginning to end. He is not only its omega but also its alpha, and he is and can be its omega only as he is its alpha.” Richard Gaffin, “WRF Member Westminster Theological Seminary Responds to Clair Davis’s Comments Regarding the Retirement of Doug Green,” accessed August 3, 2015, <http://wrfnet.org/articles/2014/06/wrf-member-westminster-theological-seminary-responds-clair-daviss-comments#>.

¹⁹For examples of this, see again chap. 2, where the sermons in the book of Acts provide multiple methodologies of being faithful to a Christ-centered hermeneutic.

context, the context of God's purpose in revelation. We do not ignore the specific message of the text.²⁰

Thus it cannot be said that a Christ-centered hermeneutic demands too much from the text, rather it allows the multi-faceted aspects of the text to be on full display. Such an approach does not limit the text, but rather allows it to speak in a variety of ways including, and necessarily, a distinctly Christ-focused way. This hermeneutic does not demand too much of the text at all, but rather it calls us to “preach Christ as the text presents him.”²¹

A Christ-centered hermeneutic obscures the intent of the author. A second objection to a Christ-centered hermeneutic is that it obscures the intent of the original author. This is perhaps the most common objection against this hermeneutic, and it comes from both liberal scholars and those who take an overly literal approach to Scripture. The objection is raised in this way: a particular passage has one meaning, the meaning assigned to it by the human author in his immediate context, and the only way to ascertain the meaning of the passage is to read it as the human author intended you to read it, with the meaning he intended to give it. The goal of hermeneutics then is to ascertain that one meaning and that meaning alone, and any interpretation that suggests something that would not be on the mind of the human author is viewed as invalid.

Such a view is often highly nuanced, and argues against the multiple meaning understanding of Scripture. A multiple-meaning understanding is perceived to be illegitimate and forced onto the text by the interpreter. Walt Kaiser promotes this view

²⁰Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003.), 11.

²¹Ibid.

and explains his position by saying, “Only one verbal meaning is to be connected with any passage of scripture unless the writer of the text gives literary and contextual clues that has several aims in view for this exceptional passage.”²² Kaiser further suggests, “That single, verbal meaning of the human author may be ascertained by heeding the usual literary conventions of history, culture, grammar, syntax, and accumulated theological context. And if it cannot be ascertained by these means then it cannot be ascertained at all.”²³ Kaiser strongly believes that there is only one meaning. In fact he claims, “Nowhere, then, does Scripture support the view that the Bible has a multi-track concept of meanings. If the human author did not receive by revelation the meaning in question, then exegetes and readers have no right to identify their meanings with God.”²⁴

The argument against Christ-centered hermeneutics from this perspective is that meanings contrary to the original author’s intent are being imported into the text, or that multiple meanings beyond the scope of the original author are being unfairly applied to the text. Kaiser would find such practice illegitimate, and both he and Block see those who follow a Christ-centered hermeneutic guilty of such a practice.²⁵

The first response to this argument is that it over-simplifies the issue and

²²Walter C. Kaiser, “The Single Intent of Scripture,” in *The Right Doctrine From the Wrong Text? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*. ed. G. K. Beale. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 66. His hermeneutical perspective can be found in Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward and Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981).

²³Kaiser, *The Single Intent of Scripture*, 67.

²⁴Ibid, 69.

²⁵Block, *Daniel Block on Christ-centered Hermeneutics*, 8. Block uses the example of the Proverbs saying, “Few Proverbs in the book of Proverbs speak of Jesus; the author’s intent in gathering these collections was to help a righteous person make his way through life.” He agrees that the human author’s meaning is the only meaning that can be ascribed and to go beyond that is to err hermeneutically.

places a lot of faith on the ability of the reader to discern the one proper meaning. Though latitude is given for the human author to have multiple meanings, the discernment of the existence of those meanings and what those meanings actually are is left totally to the discretion of the reader. Though the intent of Kaiser and others appears to be to protect from fanciful and allegorical readings of the text, it does not actually provide such protection from error at all. It assumes an ability to get into the mind of the human author infallibly, and it also requires a type of literalism that does not seem to be applied by any of the New Testament authors as they read the Old Testament.

Moreover, such a viewpoint denies the wide variety of interpretive tools we have been given that help us understand the multiple facets of a text. Murray writes, “When constructing a Christ-centered sermon from an Old Testament text, we must bring more than one tool to the task.”²⁶ One cannot limit one’s self to only one approach, when a variety of tools are at one’s disposal for the task. As Murray says, “I firmly believe that Christ is in every passage of Scripture, but He’s not in every passage in the same way.”²⁷ There is an expectation of the interpreter to put in adequate time and work with varied tools in order to understand a passage rightly.

The larger problem with this critique of the Christ-centered hermeneutic is the emphasis on the intent of the human authorship of Scripture over the intent of the divine author whose Spirit moved the men to write the text in the first place. 2 Peter 1:21 states, “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” The human author’s intent is subservient, or under

²⁶Murray, *David Murray on Christ-centered Hermeneutics*, 10.

²⁷Ibid. This is why it is of vital importance to have multiple ways of seeing Christ in the Old Testament. Those ways are delineated later in this chapter.

the control of, the divine author's intent. The expectation that the biblical author has one primary intent in a passage is correct, but opponents often miss which author's intent is in focus. The author controls the meaning of the text, this is true, but the author whose meaning the interpreter is seeking to gather is not the human, but the divine. The intention of the human author is not irrelevant, but it is superseded by the divine author's intent. The divine author is not limited by his knowledge of events, nor is the divine author locked in by time. The divine author knows perfectly how his plan of redemption through Christ will unfold, so it is not without reason that the Christ-centered interpreter will look to connect events and words with Christ himself.

In no way does this downplay the role of the human author in the process of recording the Word of God. Rather, it reminds us that ultimate responsibility for the text, and thus ultimate meaning of the text, rests with the one who has ultimate authority *over* the text. The triune God, as author, assigns the meaning of the text, and our attempts to bypass his meaning, even if accidental, in the attempt to get to the human author's meaning is ultimately fruitless. There is no need to isolate the human author away from the divine, less we inadvertently deny the verbal inspiration of Scripture. The human author's meaning will not be, and cannot be, at odds with the divine author. Phillip Barton Payne highlights this point: "Ultimately God is the author of Scripture, and it is his intention alone that exhaustively determines its meaning. Therefore, the exegete should not necessarily restrict the meaning of the text to what he feels can be demonstrated to be the intention of the human author."²⁸

²⁸Philip Barton Payne, "The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author's Intention," in *The Right Doctrine From the Wrong Text?*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 70.

To what extent, then, does the human author play a role? His task is to faithfully record the events as brought to memory by the Spirit, or of things that will come to pass as spoken by the Spirit. What the human writer records is without error and is completely truthful because he is inspired by the Holy Spirit. But that does not mean that the human author has perfect understanding or a complete grasp of the scope of all he has written. Tremper Longman explains, “God’s intention may surpass the conscious intention of the human author.”²⁹ To be clear, the divine author is never at odds or contradictory with the human author, it just reflects an understanding that might not be fully grasped by the human author. Longman states that it is “an extension” of the human intention.³⁰ This is of great importance, especially when encountering New Testament uses of the Old Testament. If Peter quotes from Hosea, the same Holy Spirit that guided Hosea to write is guiding Peter to quote him, and his usage of that quotation will absolutely carry the full meaning intended by the Spirit. This understanding is not in contradiction to Hosea’s words, even if Hosea would not have Peter’s more full understanding at the time he wrote. Peter is not changing the meaning; he is just expressing the fuller intent of the divine author.³¹

The apostles, as well as all who are in Christ, share a privileged place within redemptive history where they, through “the lens of Christ,” can look back at the Old

²⁹Tremper Longman, *Making Sense of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 28.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹A more full explanation of this can be found in: Douglas Moo, “The Problem of Sensus Plenior,” in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 179-211.

Testament and read it as both pointing to, and culminating in Christ.³² Such an understanding allows a Christ-centered hermeneutic to be employed, not arbitrarily, but in light of believers' unique place in history. Dennis Johnson notes, "The apostles were (and their successors should be) profoundly aware of the privileged vantage point in the history of redemption."³³ Jesus told the apostles in Matthew 13:17 that "many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it." The apostles, in turn, told their hearers the same message.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. (1 Pet 1:10-12)

In response to these biblical truths, Johnson adds, "Because they realized that even the prophets themselves could not, in their own time and place, plumb the depths of the promises that the Spirit spoke through them – the Apostles refused to leave their listeners in the condition of Israel in the time of Moses, David, or Isaiah."³⁴ That is also the task of the modern interpreter, scholar, and pastor. Today's listeners cannot be left in the condition of Israel, without the information provided by Jesus. Not only have the New Testament authors made the connections to Jesus, but they have modeled for interpreters how to read all Scripture in light of Jesus' advent. Christians know not just the end of the

³²Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens: A Christ-Focused Reading of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012). Williams examines Scripture book by book, using the "Jesus lens" to explain the Old Testament.

³³Dennis Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ From All of Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2007), 160.

³⁴Ibid.

story, but the one who fulfills all the promises made in the Old Testament. For that reason, modern preachers must preach Jesus Christ as the point of all the Scriptures.

Five Methods of Employing a Christ-centered Hermeneutic

A call to believe the hermeneutic of the Christ and the Apostles without some sort of help in employing the method is ultimately fruitless. The task is more involved than just jumping straight to Christ after simply reading an Old Testament text and explaining its context.³⁵ Though Christ is always the point of the Scriptures, it does not mean that he is the point in every passage in the same way every single time. What follows is a list, drawn from Sidney Greidanus, of a variety ways of preaching Christ from Old Testament passages.³⁶ This list is not exhaustive, but it does provide a helpful starting grid from which to apply a Christ-centered hermeneutic to the Old Testament.³⁷

³⁵One of the most helpful resources I have found in preaching Christ from the Old Testament has been Edmund Clowney's rectangle. With this resource Clowney helps preachers avoid the pitfalls of both allegory and moralism in their preaching, both of which are prevalent mistakes in preaching of the OT. Clowney's rectangle is vitally important to both avoid errors and also preach truly Christ-centered and textually faithful sermons. See Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 32. This rectangle is also found in appendix 3.

³⁶Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999). Greidanus lists six ways to see Christ in the Old Testament; I will be discussing five of those "ways" in this section.

³⁷Other authors offer additional ways of seeing Christ in the OT and provide examples of applying them. Three excellent resources for this are Christopher J.H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992); David Murray, *Jesus on Every Page: 10 Simple Ways to Seek and Find Christ in the Old Testament* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013); and Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). One of the most helpful, and detailed, assessments of how the NT uses the OT is G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012).

Redemptive-Historical Progression

One of the major ways to understand and preach Christ from the Old Testament is by looking at a passage, as well as its theology and themes, and placing it where it fits within the redemptive-historical progression. “Redemptive historical progression links Christ to Old Testament redemptive events which find their climax in him.”³⁸ Primarily, this method is used to show how various redemptive events in the Old Testament are connected to Jesus and how Jesus is the fulfillment, or the final installment, of redemptive history. This particular “way” could be seen as the large, grand narrative of Scripture, with Christ as the hero, and that all of the subsequent ways that will be discussed are connected, in a variety of ways, to the flow of redemptive-history.

Greidanus refers to Matthew’s use of redemptive-historical progression to show Christ as the successor of the royal line, which had received God’s wondrous promise of eternal rule over the entire earth, as an example of a way to find Christ in the Old Testament.³⁹ God promised in 2 Samuel 7:16 that David’s throne would be established forever, and he promised Abraham in Genesis 12:3 that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed. These were promises of coming redemption in the Messiah, the unfolding of God’s redemptive plan that would extend to the end of the earth through that Messiah. Matthew, in the genealogy at the beginning of his Gospel, links Jesus to the fulfillment of both promises, and the final climax in that redemptive plan of God by calling him both the son of David and the son of Abraham.

Luke, in both his Gospel and the book of Acts, uses redemptive-historical

³⁸Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 204.

³⁹Ibid.

progression and tells of other apostles and preachers who do the same. Luke speaks of Jesus ushering in the Kingdom of God, a redemptive-historical event, which is the end result of the Law and the prophets that existed until John (Luke 16:16). In Acts, the sermons of Peter and Stephen connect Jesus to God's overarching redemptive plan that pre-existed time. Peter, in Acts 2:23, describes the death and resurrection of Jesus as being done "according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God." Stephen, in Acts 7, traces a more direct line of redemptive-history from Abraham to Christ. In Acts 13, Paul uses the redemptive-historical line of kings and concludes that the end result of the picture of Messiah in kings has a line that runs from the request of a king all the way to Jesus, whom Paul describes by saying, "of this man's posterity God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised" (Acts 13:16-41). In each of these examples, Jesus is seen as the culmination of God's plan of salvation, though that plan may be described in various ways and through various pictures.

Promise-Fulfillment

The second way that Greidanus sees New Testament writers communicating Christ from the Old Testament is through "promise-fulfillment."⁴⁰ This method is closely linked within redemptive-history, but is different in that it describes how God gives promises in the Old Testament and brings them to fulfillment at a later date, namely in Jesus Christ.

The term "fulfillment" can be a complicated one, and can bleed over in its usage to other "ways" that will be discussed, namely typology. But simply put, throughout Scripture, promises are made by God that can only be ultimately fulfilled in

⁴⁰Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 206.

Christ. The model of promise-fulfillment is seen in how God works in numerous ways with people throughout the Old Testament. God makes promises, and then he fulfills the promise. Some were filled immediately, like the promise of a son to Abraham and Sarah, providing the model for the promises God makes that were awaiting the coming of Jesus as the fulfillment. Luke 4 tells of Jesus reading the scroll in the synagogue from Isaiah 61 about the coming Servant of God. When Jesus finishes reading it, he declares, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” In Luke 22:37, Jesus tells the disciples that he will be numbered among the transgressors, citing Isaiah 53:12, and then says, “For what is written about me has its fulfillment.” Jesus sees the statement as fulfilled in his suffering. The Apostles follow the same methodology. Peter at Pentecost sees the events unfolding around him as the fulfillment of Joel 2:16-17, and in Acts 3:18 he sees the actions of the people who killed Jesus as the fulfillment of the words of the prophets who spoke of the suffering of the Messiah.

Typology

Related to promise-fulfillment is another way of seeing Christ in the Old Testament, typology.⁴¹ Greidanus connects and differentiates typology from promise-fulfillment, by saying, “typology functions within redemptive history because God acts in redemptive history in regular patterns.”⁴² There exists a similarity of redemptive acts that are not similar by accident, but by divine plan of God to point to Christ. Typology is dependent on the existence of redemptive-history, and presupposes that God has a

⁴¹The most developed and complete book on the subject of typology is Patrick Fairbairn, *Typology of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1989).

⁴²Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 212.

salvation plan that he can bring to completion as well as the ability to fulfill all promises that he makes. As the New Testament is read, one can see how the writers were able to identify analogies between God's present acts through Christ and his past redemptive acts seen in the Old Testament. "New Testament typology is thus essentially the tracing of the constant principles of God's working in history, revealing a 'recurrent rhythm' in past history which is taken up more fully and perfectly in Gospel events."⁴³ In fact, it is because the New Testament writers believe that Jesus has ushered in some aspect of the Age to Come "already" in messianic fulfillment that they see all past acts of redemption as shadows, pre-figurations, and types of the "not yet" that is still to come. In that way, typology is characterized by analogy and escalation.⁴⁴

Several examples of this are seen in the New Testament. Jesus himself sees Jonah as a "type" of Christ in Matthew 12. Jesus is sent to the Jews in the same way that Jonah is sent to the Ninevites, and Jesus connects Jonah's time in the belly of the fish to his time in the grave. That is connection by analogy, but then through escalation Jesus says that he is "something greater than Jonah" (12:41). Jesus also does the same thing with the bread and wine connected to his body and blood and the New Covenant in Mark 14:24.

The most explicit use elsewhere in the New Testament is when Paul uses the word "typos" in Romans 5:12-19 to declare the Adam was a "type" of the one who was to come, Jesus. The analogy here is that both Adam and Jesus serve as heads over their respective peoples, both seen as new creations. The two are pitted against one another in

⁴³R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: An Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and to His Mission* (London: Tyndale, 1971), 39.

⁴⁴Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 213.

“antithetic typology” so that the escalation of the analogy can be highlighted even more clearly. In this case, death is spread through Adam’s sin, but Jesus’ faithfulness spreads life to those who belong to him. The typology of Adam helps bring to light the greatness of Jesus and his salvific work.

Simpler examples of typology also exist, notably in the Epistles of Paul, without detailed explanation. The type is simply asserted and believed, such as when Paul refers to Jesus as the “Passover lamb” in 1 Corinthians 5:7. There is no description of Passover or detailed explanation of how Jesus is like the lamb. The typological relationship is built into past understandings of sacrificial lambs, and Jesus is seen as the antitype of that long-existing type in the Old Testament.⁴⁵

Analogy

A fourth way to see Christ in the Old Testament is through the method of analogy. This is similar to typology, but it is done by highlighting “the continuities in history by casting later events and persons more or less in the image of earlier events and persons.”⁴⁶ Examples of this from the Old Testament include Genesis linking the salvation of the world in 41:57 by Joseph’s actions to Noah saving mankind from the flood in Genesis 6. Noah and Joseph are connected, not by typology, but by analogy. Likewise, Moses’ small ark (basket) is analogous to Noah’s big ark. Greidanus says, “The use of analogies between earlier and later events and persons enabled the Old

⁴⁵The book of Hebrews uses typology extensively. Despite using *typos* only once, the idea of a copy, sketch, shadow, and symbol are used to describe the same idea. (See 8:5, 9:9, 9:23, 9:24, and 10:1.) All of this is done within the context of redemptive-history (see 1:1-2).

⁴⁶Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 220.

Testament writers to emphasize both the continuity and progression in God's dealings with his people."⁴⁷

In the New Testament, one of the most prevalent analogies connects Israel and the church. Elizabeth Achtemeier correctly writes, "The analogy between the Old Israel and the new, has as its sole basis the salvation history, in which the church is understood as the realization of that new people of God, created in Christ, which was promised in the Old Testament."⁴⁸ This analogy is often difficult to parse out, but in various ways throughout the New Testament the relationship between God, Israel, Christ, and the church are described via analogy. God redeems Israel, but also redeems the church through Jesus. God promises a Messiah to Israel, and that Messiah is Jesus. Both Israel and the church are described as belonging to God, and bridal imagery is used to speak of language connecting Israel to God and the church to Jesus. Peter uses Old Testament imagery of Israel to speak of the church. Salvation language in the Old Testament, such as "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" from Joel 2:32 is used to describe salvation in Christ for those who believe in Romans 10:9, 13. The overlapping of such language is yet another example of analogy that permeates the New Testament's use of the Old Testament, particularly in pointing to Jesus.⁴⁹

Longitudinal Themes

A final way that Christ can be seen in the Old Testament is through the

⁴⁷Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 221.

⁴⁸Elizabeth Achtemeier, *The Old Testament and the Proclamation of the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), 122.

⁴⁹Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 221-22.

identification of longitudinal themes. These themes are identified through redemptive history, but connect multiple historical events as God progressively reveals more of himself and his will as he works out his eternal plan.⁵⁰ The New Testament writers utilize this method by extending Old Testament themes to Christ, reinterpreting them in light of Christ and his works. Jesus modeled this for them in the Sermon on the Mount, when he took Old Testament laws and reiterates, deepens, and expands many of the themes.⁵¹ “Everywhere the New Testament seizes hold of the key themes of the Old and gives them new meaning in Christ.”⁵²

Themes throughout the Old Testament are appropriated and connected to Jesus by New Testament writers. Themes such as blood, ransom, redemption, substitution, and slavery are easily connected to Jesus and his work on the cross. Other themes such as authority, power, kingship, and judge are utilized as well. Sometimes, a theme like sacrifice, can run from the Old Testament, find fulfillment in Jesus’ work, and then be applied by Paul when he calls believers to be “living sacrifices” (Rom 12:1) or Peter when he calls the church “a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2:5).⁵³

Conclusion

There is little debate about the call to preach Christ from Scripture. Christians

⁵⁰Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 222.

⁵¹Ibid, 223.

⁵²John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1967), 140.

⁵³See Vaughan Roberts, *Life’s Big Questions: Six Major Themes Traced through the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012). Roberts utilizes longitudinal themes understood through redemptive-history to teach about Christ and the Gospel.

everywhere agree that Jesus must be preeminent and the focus of Christian preaching and hermeneutics. Even those that struggle to actually preach Christ, but only touch on Christian themes, agree with the idea that Christ should be the subject matter of what is taught.

The discussion actually centers on how to preach Christ, specifically how to preach Christ from the Old Testament. It seems reasonable that when there is doubt about what methodology to follow, that believers should look back to Scripture itself and ask what the practice of Jesus and his apostles was. Greater than any current practice, or popular practice from the last 500 years, is the methodology taught and practiced in Scripture. It is clear that both Jesus and the Apostles saw the Old Testament as pointing to him, and thus we should not ignore the Old Testament, nor make it a dry history book about a middle-eastern people several millennia ago. As Albert Mohler writes, “Every single text of Scripture points to Christ...from Moses to the prophets, He is the focus of every single word of the Bible. Every verse of Scripture finds its fulfillment in Him, and every story in the Bible ends with Him.”⁵⁴ If that is true, then being faithful to Scripture demands us to have a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament that leads us to communicate to others that Jesus is not just the Lord in the New Testament, but in all the Scriptures.

⁵⁴Albert Mohler, *He is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 96.

CHAPTER 4
PROJECT DETAILS AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter provides the details of how the project was carried out at Redeemer Church of Abilene, Texas. The project lasted a total of fifteen weeks and was made up of several components: a preparation phase, lesson evaluations, pre-project surveys, an eight-week teaching series on a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament, post-project surveys, and data compilation. In what follows, each component is described, focusing on the preparation phase and the teaching series.

Week 1 – Week 4

The preparation phase of the project lasted four weeks. This phase involved the development of the teaching series material, as well as the advertising of the teaching series to the church to recruit participants for the project. The first task in the development of the teaching series was to narrow down the focus of the lessons to teach the basics of Christ-centered hermeneutic. The topic is broad, and with only eight lessons to teach, it was necessary to limit the material covered to an exegetical basis of the hermeneutic, along with practical lessons on how to think through and apply the hermeneutic. The majority of the lessons were focused on exegesis of texts to demonstrate the hermeneutic, while only the last few weeks of the lessons were spent on practical ways of implementing the hermeneutic.

The second task was to have a small group of spiritually mature leaders in the church examine and evaluate the lessons to make sure they kept with the overall intention of the project and also met the need for the congregation practically. This team looked at the lesson outlines and approved what was taught to the participants. They evaluated the lessons on the basis of clarity, content, faithfulness to Scripture, if the lesson promoted or advanced the overall project topic, and whether the lesson presented the validity of the Christ-centered hermeneutic. If the lessons were not considered sufficient or exemplary by the panel, they were edited and re-submitted. All of the lessons passed the review panel's examination before being taught.¹

After approval of the lessons, the project surveys were finalized and prepared for the participants to determine their level of agreement with regard to Old Testament theological and hermeneutical information. The surveys were designed so that the participants would take them before and after the eight lessons to test their knowledge before and after the project. The results of the pre-project and post-project surveys are discussed in chapter 5. The survey consisted of 25 questions about basic Old Testament structure, genre, events, and interpretation. The goal of the 25 questions was to assess a broad range of Old Testament knowledge and to provide a baseline for growth of knowledge and insight, for comparison after post-project surveys were completed. This survey helped complete the first goal of the project.²

After several weeks making the church congregation aware of the upcoming

¹The lesson evaluation survey used by the leadership team is provided in appendix 1 of this project.

²The survey that is used both before and after the teaching series is found in appendix 1. The results of the surveys are found in appendix 2.

class and encouraging members to participate, the class was added to the church's Sunday morning Bible Study schedule. The class was designed to meet for one hour for eight consecutive weeks.

Week 5 – Week 12

This project had three main goals. The first goal was to evaluate the level of knowledge of the Old Testament, particularly of a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament, of the members of Redeemer Church. The second goal was to develop a teaching series that would instruct the participants on a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament. The third goal was to increase the knowledge of the members of Redeemer Church in a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament through this teaching series. Surveys and evaluations were given in order to measure the success of these goals. The primary component of the fifteen-week project was the eight-week teaching series that was taught during weeks 5 through 12. This teaching series was the primary means of accomplishing all three goals of the project.

Week 5 – Lesson 1

At the initial class, a total of 27 participants attended and completed the pre-project survey to test their baseline knowledge of Old Testament theology and hermeneutics. After the pre-project surveys were administered, the introductory lesson of the teaching series was taught to the participants. This lesson primarily gave an summary of what would happen in the next seven weeks of class, but it also provided a basic overview of the Old Testament. This overview was given to help communicate a framework for the study that would take place over the next eight weeks for those who

lacked basic familiarity with the structure of the Old Testament. Some of the basics taught in this introductory class had to do with number of books, genre of books, authors, time periods, and how these various books fit together within a timeline of events. Participants were also introduced to as basic model for Christ-centered interpretation of the Old Testament.

This first week's lesson was not only beneficial to produce the pre-project survey results, but also to help frame the entire study. A time for questions and answers was provided for both the project and the topic of Christ-centered hermeneutics. The participants were encouraged to spend devotional time in the Old Testament for the next eight weeks, as a way to enhance their knowledge of the Old Testament and apply any techniques that they might learn through the class time.

Week 6 – Lesson 2

The second lesson was the first of four exegetical lessons to communicate the biblical foundations, and the apostolic example, of Christ-centered hermeneutics. The lesson focused on two texts. The first, John 5:36-47, focuses on Jesus' teaching that the Scriptures testify about him. The Scripture of which Jesus speaks is the Old Testament Scriptures, meaning that the focus of the entirety of the Old Testament is about testifying to the nature and person of Jesus Christ. The weight of Jesus' argument was that a failure to grasp that the Scriptures pointed to him was damning to those who knew the Scriptures well but still rejected Jesus. It was proof that they did not know God or the Scriptures. This point helped the participants see the need both understand the Old Testament well, as well as see God's plan to use it to point people to Jesus.

The second of the two verses in this lesson was Luke 24:13-27. In this passage,

Jesus teaches two disciples on the way to Emmaus that the entirety of the Old Testament speaks of him. Specifically, Jesus mentions that Moses and the Prophets speak of him, and from that starting point, he taught the disciples, through interpreting the Scriptures for them, all of the things concerning himself. This passage was instructive for the participants because it means that even within the various divisions of the Old Testament, each section speaks of Jesus. This passage provides both a big picture argument of the Old Testament Scripture being about and pointing to Jesus, and also genre-specific references pointing to Jesus. The feedback and discussion during this lesson was tremendous, as these were eye-opening passages for many participants. The lesson concluded with a time for questions from the participants on the topic of Christ-centered hermeneutics, as well as a short discussion with regard to the role of the Holy Spirit in the process of interpretation of Scripture.

Week 7 – Lesson 3

The third lesson was the first of three lessons given to provide exegetical foundations for a Christ-centered hermeneutic and to demonstrate the implementation of this hermeneutic in the preaching of the disciples in the book of Acts. This lesson was focused on Acts 2:14-41, which was Peter's sermon at Pentecost after the disciples received the Holy Spirit. The primary thrust was showing the participants how Peter utilized the lessons he learned from Jesus in John 5:36-47 and Luke 24:13-27 and put them into practice in his very first public sermon.

The goal in this lesson was to show how Peter's sermon provides other believers with a model on how to handle the Old Testament, and especially on how to preach Christ from the Old Testament. I wanted participants to trust that a Christ-centered

hermeneutic was not only the hermeneutic modeled by the apostles, but also one which is a natural flow from Jesus' words. I also wanted them to see that it is the right way to handle the Scripture, as it is the way the Apostles handled Scripture and communicated it to their hearers.

Peter's sermon in Acts 2 provided a perfect example for the members of the church on how passages in the Old Testament find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Peter uses multiple quotations from the Psalms and says that they are speaking directly of Jesus. The class spent time in Psalm 16 and Psalm 110, the source of those quotations, and discussed the original context of the Psalms and how Peter could understand that they were written about Jesus, even far before his birth in Bethlehem. Peter minces no words that David wrote those Psalms directly about Jesus, though David made no notation of such intent. Yet, Peter was correct. The focus of this lesson, following Peter's example, was that it is appropriate at times to use direct Old Testament quotations and show how they point to, and directly speak of Christ. This lesson concluded with a question and answer time, and a discussion about how the Psalms pointed to Jesus in various ways.

Week 8 – Lesson 4

The fourth lesson covered Stephen's sermon from Acts 7:1-53. Again, I wanted to reiterate to the project participants that we see from Stephen a modeling of a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament as he responds to the questioning of the high priest and preached to the crowd gathered in Jerusalem. The focus of the lesson was walking through Acts 7 and drawing out principles for how Stephen handled the Old Testament and how he was able to preach the Gospel of Jesus from its pages.

One of the highlights of this lesson was the contrast between how Peter

handled the Old Testament in Acts 2, using direct quotation, and how Stephen uses the overarching storyline of the Old Testament to preach Christ as the fulfillment of the Scriptures. Stephen saw the larger storyline of the Patriarchs and Prophets culminating in the crucifixion of Jesus. Just as unbelievers within Israel opposed the Patriarchs and Prophets in their day, and just as the people of Israel murdered many Prophets in their day, so too did they murder the True Offspring of the Patriarchs and the True Prophet.

I wanted the participants to see how the Old Testament culminating in, and pointing to, Jesus was not just done through direct quotations or specific messianic promises, but that it could also be approached thematically through understanding the redemptive historical storyline. The point of the lesson was to illustrate that the disciples of Jesus, and their immediate successors like Stephen, would read the Old Testament with an eye toward Jesus, and they would then communicate Jesus by utilizing the Old Testament. I ended the lesson this week with a question and answer time over all three passages we covered through the sermons in Acts.

Week 9 – Lesson 5

The fifth lesson continued the study through the book of Acts to see examples of Christ-centered hermeneutics applied by the disciples of Jesus. In this week's lesson, we focused on Acts 13:15-41 and Paul's sermon in Antioch in Pisidia. As we spent time in this passage, I emphasized how Paul's approach in Antioch was a mixture of how Peter and Stephen used the Old Testament in their sermons. Paul weaves direct quotations from the Old Testament, that are fulfilled in Jesus Christ in a variety of ways, within the larger storyline of the history of Israel from slavery in Egypt through the last prophet, John the Baptist.

This lesson emphasized how Paul, not being directly taught by Jesus during his incarnation, still utilized the same hermeneutic of the Old Testament in his teaching of the Gospel. Additionally, we discussed how Paul used preaching from the Old Testament not to reach Jews, those who respected and revered the Old Testament, but to reach Gentiles who had no direct interest in the Scriptures. He uses the Old Testament promises of resurrection found in Psalm 2, Isaiah 55, and Psalm 16 to teach on the promised resurrection of Jesus and why that is important. Paul also uses a quotation from Habakkuk 1:5 to show how these promises apply and are beneficial for all people, not just the Jews. This example allowed me to emphasize the practical benefits of preaching from the Old Testament and tie in a lesson on why the Old Testament is not just a history book for an ancient people, but divinely inspired promises that point to a resurrected Savior. This lesson was largely exegetical, but segued nicely to future lessons that would emphasize very practical application of the principles that the participants were learning.

Week 10 – Lesson 6

The sixth lesson was focused on communicating practical helps for students as they attempt to employ a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament in their own studies. The previous weeks laid the groundwork, and the next three lessons, starting with lesson six, built on that foundation. My main goal in this lesson was to teach one very helpful structure that would enable them to think through specific Old Testament passages. I gave the students the framework that Edmund Clowney teaches in his book, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*.³ He offers what others commonly refer to as the

³Edmund Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 32.

“Clowney rectangle,” to serve as a tool to help students of Scripture think through how specific events and symbols in the Old Testament point to Jesus.⁴ This tool is of great help as it gives students a visual aid and a resource to keep with their Bible to help them study passages.

After discussing several examples using the Clowney rectangle, I then had the students break up into groups and assigned them very simple, well-known passages for them to use the Clowney rectangle on their own and share with the rest of the class how to best understand the passage as pointing to Christ. I also had the students show how the passage could also fall prey to either moralism or poor allegory. This time allowed us to discuss many examples of poor use of the Old Testament in preaching and lessons that students had heard over the years. That discussion of what not to do in understanding the Old Testament reinforced the lessons I was trying to teach on the proper use of a Christ-centered hermeneutic.

Week 11 – Lesson 7

In the seventh lesson, I kept the practical focus and taught through five ways that a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament could be employed by a student of Scripture.⁵ My goal in this lesson was for the students to understand that there was not one simple way to employ this hermeneutic, but a variety of ways that texts may unfold in order to point to Christ. This lesson was crucial in helping students see the multi-faceted, multi-dimensional, aspects of the Old Testament and of a Christ-centered

⁴I have included this diagram in appendix 3.

⁵I go into more detail about these five methods of how to appropriately apply Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament in more detail in chap. 2.

hermeneutic.

The five methods I taught were, first, redemptive-historical progression, where Old Testament redemptive events are understood to find their ultimate culmination in Jesus Christ. I gave several examples of this method, including Jesus and his relationship to the Kingdom of God (Luke 16:16). The second method is promise-fulfillment, where we traced covenant or prophetic promises given in the Old Testament into the New Testament where they found their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. I included Isaiah 61 as an example that Jesus himself uses in Luke 4. The third method is typology, where within the redemptive-historical framework, certain events or symbols serve as analogies to point to Jesus. I gave several examples of both people, like Adam or Noah, who served as types, as well as events like Passover. Analogy is the fourth method, and it is similar to typology but is done by highlighting continuities in history by casting later events and persons more or less in the image of earlier events and persons. The best example of this is the correlation between Israel and the church. The last method is longitudinal themes, like blood, ransom, or substitution that are appropriated and connected to Jesus.

After teaching those five methods, and giving examples of each, I asked the students to find other examples of those methods and to share them with the class. This exercise sparked discussion about the five methods and gave participants experience in thinking through how to connect passages in their own minds. This exercise was invaluable in helping the students truly grasp the Christ-centered hermeneutic. My goal for this lesson was that the students would start to think through the entirety of Scripture and see how the pieces connect together to form a cohesive whole with Jesus as the center and driving force behind it all.

Week 12 – Lesson 8

The last lesson explored the various genres of Scripture, such as history, prophecy, and poetry. Each genre brings about unique challenges in seeing how they connect to Christ. I gave various examples from each genre and utilized the methodology that had been taught in previous lessons. This lesson served to summarize and bring together the entirety of the previous seven lessons.

I then challenged the students to ask difficult questions of the entirety of the hermeneutic and to bring up any troublesome passage, either previously discussed or new to the class. Upon the completion of lesson 8, the post-project survey was administered to the participants. This survey was identical to the survey given at the beginning of the teaching series.

Week 13 – Week 15

After the post-project survey was administered in week 12, the data from the two surveys was compiled and analyzed in order to measure whether the participants sensed a growth in knowledge and understood the Old Testament more and if they grasped the reality and importance of a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament. The data was collected and analyzed over a three-week period, with the results of the data discussed in chapter 5. The completion of these post-project surveys helped accomplish the first goal of this project, and provided me the ability to test if the third goal was accomplished.

Conclusion

The project was conducted over a period of fifteen weeks, and the teaching

lessons were designed around teaching an exegetical and practical method of teaching a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament. The lessons were reviewed and approved before teaching, and the pre-project surveys were administered prior to the teaching series. The post-project surveys were administered after the teaching series, and the data was compiled in order to evaluate the goals of the project. The results of the surveys are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the different aspects and overall effectiveness of the project, examining the purpose and three stated goals of the project. Each of these goals incorporated a means of measurement, including pre-project and post-project surveys. The data provided by these instruments is utilized as support for the goals of the project being reached. The project's strengths and weaknesses are examined as well as a consideration of what could have been done differently, if the project were done again. Finally, this chapter provides an opportunity for theological and personal reflection on the overall project.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose and Goals

The purpose of this project was to teach a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament to the members of Redeemer Church of Abilene. This project had three main goals. The first goal was to evaluate the participants' knowledge of a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament. The second goal was to develop a teaching series that will instruct the participants on a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament. The third and final goal was to increase the knowledge of the participants on a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament. I examine the purpose and each of the goals below.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project was to teach a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament to the members of Redeemer Church. The idea behind this purpose was to address what I perceived as a deficiency among the church body with regard to how to best understand the Old Testament in light of Jesus Christ. This project was developed to help the church grow in their knowledge of Christ and their knowledge of the scriptures. My intent was to communicate with the people a Christ-centered hermeneutic, as it is taught and modeled in the New Testament, and for the people to then apply that hermeneutic in their personal Bible study. I have an additional hope that this increase in knowledge of both the Old Testament and Jesus will create more passionate followers of Jesus and more devoted students of his word.

Within the surveys administered, there were two statements that most closely reflect the purpose of the project that the participants were asked to state their levels of agreement along a 6-point Likert scale. Question 23 states, “I believe Jesus Christ is the key to understanding the Old Testament.”¹ Only 59.2 percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed with that statement before the project. However, after the project, 100 percent of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. This demonstrates an increase in knowledge in line with the purpose of the project.

In order to reflect not only their agreement with a Christ-centered hermeneutic, but also their comfort level in being able to communicate it, Question 25 states, “I know that the Old Testament points to Christ, and I know exactly how to explain and communicate that to others.” Before the project only 11.1 percent agreed or strongly

¹The data presented from this point forward is found in appendix 2.

agreed with the statement. Worse than that, 37 percent either disagreed or strongly disagree with the statement. That revealed not only an ignorance of the hermeneutic but also a severe discomfort with communicating it. After the project, 70.5 percent either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, and no one disagree with it in any way. The increase on these two questions demonstrates that the purpose of teaching a Christ-centered hermeneutic to the members of Redeemer Church was accomplished. The three goals that were set were designed to move the project toward accomplishing its purpose. In what follows, I evaluate each of these goals.

Goal 1

The first goal of the project was to evaluate the participants' knowledge of a Christ-centered hermeneutic. A pre-project survey was administered to measure the participants' knowledge. This 25 question survey included a broad range of statements with regard to beliefs about the Old Testament and understanding of how to interpret various aspects of the Old Testament, that were ranked on the six-point Likert scale. The goal for participation was twenty people, and that goal was exceeded with twenty-seven people filling out pre-project surveys.

The starting point of base theological knowledge was good with 100 percent of participants marking "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statement, "I believe the Bible is God's Word," in the pre-project survey. That was definitely an encouraging response and provided a good foundation on which to teach material on this subject. Additionally, 81.5 percent marked "agree" or "strongly agree" that they "understand the purpose of the Bible as a whole." There were also questions about genres in the Old Testament that helped provide a baseline understanding of Old Testament knowledge of the

participants.²

Statements dealing specifically with understanding and interpretation of the Old Testament were not as strong as the statements noted above. Only 59.3 percent marked “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, “I know the overall purpose of the Old Testament,” while 51.9 percent marked “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement that they “understand why God gave the Law.” Sadly, only 48.1 percent marked “strongly disagree” or “disagree” with the statement, “the Old Testament teaches that people can be saved by keeping the Law.” On the bright side, only 7.4 percent marked “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement “the Old Testament does not apply to Christians today,” and only 18.5 percent “agree” or “strongly agree” with the idea that “prophecies in the Old Testament only apply to Israel.”

The results were a mixed bag when it came to the participants’ responses to the statements about how the Old Testament relates to the New Testament. When presented with the statement, “the Old Testament is about Law, the New Testament is about grace,” 25.9 percent marked “strongly disagree” or “disagree,” while 22.2 percent marked “strongly agree” or “agree.” That indicates a wide range of beliefs on the issue of Law and grace. Fortunately, only 14.8 percent “agree” or “strongly agree” that “God has one plan of salvation for Israel and a different plan for the church.”

Lastly, on the statements about Jesus’ relation to the Old Testament, the pre-project responses showed there was a lot of space for increasing knowledge through the project. On the statement, “I think Jesus is clearly evident in the Old Testament in multiple ways,” though 85.1 percent marked “agree” or “strongly agree,” the question

²The responses to all 25 questions are available in the appendix section.

was vague enough that most people knowing the topic of the project might mark that way and thus might slant the results a bit. With regard to the statement on understanding how Jesus fulfilled Old Testament law, but not knowing what it means exactly, only 7.4 percent either strongly agreed or disagreed, and 44.4 percent of responses were in the “somewhat agree” or “somewhat disagree,” leaving me to conclude that there was a lack of surety on this issue. The two statements that most clearly show the room for improvement are the ability to “explain clearly how Christ is present in every genre (major section) of the Old Testament” where 51.9 percent marked “strongly disagree” or “disagree” and the statement about the confidence of people to “explain and communicate to others” how the Old Testament points to Christ. That statement had only 11.1 percent of participants respond with “agree” or “strongly agree.”

In conclusion, the first goal of evaluating the level of knowledge of participants was successful. The survey provided enough data to draw conclusions with regard to the baseline level of knowledge. This data, along with the post-project survey results, allowed me to evaluate growth in knowledge over the course of the project.

Goal 2

The second goal of the project was to develop a teaching series that would instruct the participants on a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament. The curriculum was developed during the four-week preparation phase and was then taught over an eight-week period. Each lesson was intended to work together to present both an exegetical defense of the existence of a Christ-centered hermeneutic in the teaching of Jesus and in three sermons from preachers in the book of Acts, as well as provide practical instruction for how to read and interpret the Bible in the same way. In some

ways, this was an impossible task in a mere eight-week series, but the purpose of the project was to teach the ideas, not to create scholars. It is my hope that this series started people down a path of lifelong learning on the topic of Christ-centered preaching, as it will take that long to come close to grasping the fullness of what is present in the Old Testament.

Each of the eight lessons was submitted to a review panel made up of church members that reviewed the lessons and provided feedback during the preparation of those lessons. The criteria by which the review panel provided feedback on each lesson was prescribed through a lesson evaluation sheet.³ There were five criteria that each lesson was judged by clarity, content, faithfulness to Scripture, its promotion or consistency with the overall project topic, and how the lessons presented the validity of a Christ-centered hermeneutic. These criteria were evaluated on a four-point scale of: insufficient, requires attention, sufficient, and exemplary. All of the lessons were discussed, and changes were made until at least three of the five categories for each lesson were rated as “exemplary,” and until all four were at “sufficient” or above. At that point, the lesson was considered profitable and beneficial for the sake of the project. The determination before the project was that this goal was considered successful if over 90 percent of the indicators from the evaluation rubric were marked at sufficient or above. Since all of the lessons were worked on until they met 100 percent at “sufficient” or above, I believe that this goal was met.

The second goal was to develop a teaching series that would instruct the participants on a Christ-centered hermeneutic. Based on the approval of lessons by the

³The Review Panel Lesson Evaluation sheet is provided in the appendix.

review panel and the delivery of the lessons to the participants, the goal was met. The results of the post-project surveys indicate that this was a beneficial and successful teaching series.

Goal 3

The third goal of this project was to increase the knowledge of the members of Redeemer Church in a Christ-centered hermeneutic. The process to determine whether or not this goal was successful was to compare the results of the pre-project survey with the results of the post-project survey. The goal was considered successfully accomplished if the participants demonstrated growth in knowledge from one test to the other.

In order to evaluate growth in knowledge, the survey gave twenty-five statements about Old Testament interpretation to which the participants were asked to respond with their level of agreement according to a six-point Likert scale. These 25 statements touched on the topics of Old Testament structure, genre, theology, and hermeneutics. Sixteen of the statements were given in such a way that the desired responses were “strongly disagree” or “disagree.” For those statements, I considered growth in knowledge to be demonstrated by post-survey responses moving along the scale away from “strongly agree” and towards “strongly disagree.” Nine of the statements were given so that “strongly agree” or “agree” were the desired responses, thus growth was determined to have occurred if responses moved away from “strongly disagree” toward “strongly agree” along the Likert scale.

According to the data received from the post-project surveys, when compared to the pre-project survey results, this project was absolutely successful. All 25 statements saw improvement away from undesirable responses toward responses that would

demonstrate growth in knowledge on the subject of a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament. The entirety of the responses to the surveys can be found in the Appendix, but several observations can be noted, and specific survey responses highlighted, in order to demonstrate the success of this goal and overall project.

On some of the survey statements, the growth in knowledge was modest, but some of that may have to do with the starting point. For example, the response to the statement “I believe the Bible is God’s Word” already had a virtually unanimous response of “strongly agree” in the pre-project survey, so its modest improvement from 88.8 percent to 93.6 percent should be expected. Other statements saw a dramatic increase. With regard to the statement about the primary purpose of the Old Testament being to communicate history of the nation of Israel, the pre-project survey had only 3.7 percent “strongly disagree” or “disagree.” After the project that number rose to 35.3 percent. The complementary statement asked the participants their level of agreement that the primary purpose of the Old Testament was to teach and prepare for Jesus Christ, to which 81.4 percent selected either “agree” or “strongly agree” in the pre-project survey. That increased to 100 percent after the project.

Another example of strong positive growth was on the statement, “I think Jesus is clearly evident in the Old Testament in multiple ways.” The pre-project survey revealed that 29.6 percent of participants chose “strongly agree,” the post-project survey saw that number rise to 94.1 percent. A similar statement saw the same type of growth in knowledge also, as those that marked “strongly agree” on the pre-project survey to the statement “I believe Jesus is the key to understanding the Old Testament” rose from 19.2 percent to 88.2 percent.

Perhaps my proudest example of the dramatic increase from before the project to after the project was the statement about the participant's ability to explain and communicate that the Old Testament points to Christ. This statement saw an increase from 11.5 percent who marked "agree" or "strongly agree" to 70.6 percent. This particular example of growth in knowledge shows that they did not simply agree with what was taught, but that it resonated enough with them, and was planted deeply enough, that they grew in knowledge enough to be able to communicate that with others. I believe it is that level of comfort in teaching others that truly demonstrates knowledge of the subject matter. That alone demonstrates success on Goal 3 of the project, but combined with growth in desired responses on all twenty-five statement, this demonstrates to me that the lessons accomplished the desired purpose of teaching a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament and seeing the knowledge of the participants on that hermeneutic increase.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Project

This project was conducted over fifteen weeks at Redeemer Church in Abilene, Texas. At the conclusion of the eight-week teaching series, I discussed the overall project, the lessons, and the surveys with several members of the church to gain insight and receive feedback. This feedback helped me think through areas where the project was beneficial and strong, and areas that were weak and could have been improved. Additionally, the post-project surveys provided some insight of strengths and weaknesses of the project.

The overall results of the post-project survey demonstrated growth in knowledge of the subject matter generally. These results were discussed earlier in this

chapter and showed not only that there was an increase in knowledge in multiple areas of specifics in the Old Testament and theology, but also that the participants' basic understanding of both redemptive history and Old Testament structure was increased. The result was a better understanding of how the Bible fits together and how the Old and New Testaments are connected. This strength is particularly encouraging, as it was one of my main intentions in selecting this topic for a project. I wanted to see the knowledge of the people grow on how to read the Old Testament through a Christ-centered hermeneutic, as stated in Goal 3. It appears that the people even perceived their own growth, and thus it can be said that this particular goal and outcome was a strength of the project.

Participants also commented that the individual lessons were of great value to them, both in providing new information and also in helping them devotionally. I would attribute that to the fact that each lesson was primarily exegetical and not theoretical. The lessons were largely exposition of biblical texts, and I believe that spending time walking through passages of scripture and connecting them to the larger theological picture helped people to see how devotional reading of the Old Testament has a larger purpose. There was definite inclusion of bigger theological and hermeneutical ideas, but I made the intent of the project to teach people where they are in their knowledge and not to make this too academic and too ethereal. I wanted to make sure that people could walk away knowing more about the Old Testament and also applying the hermeneutical principles we discussed in their own reading. The feedback of this helping people in their devotional reading of the Bible shows that this intention was successful.

Another strength of this project was the amount of content that was covered in

a relatively short amount of time. This topic is a very broad one with many avenues to travel down and many passages that could be covered. I tried to cover the broad topic and hit on major genres and themes, and at the same time I attempted to tie the themes to specific passages of Scripture. I believe this helped keep the project focused, which was necessary, yet it also allowed the lessons to touch on bigger themes.

Another strength that was mentioned specifically was the benefit of the lesson where I explained Edmund Clowney's rubric for teaching a Christ-centered understanding of an Old Testament symbol or event.⁴ Many participants have remarked in the weeks following this particular lesson that the visual provided in that lesson has helped them understand the Old Testament better, and more specifically how to see Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament symbols and events. That lesson also sparked many discussions about how to preach Old Testament passages and to evaluate teaching of the Old Testament. The common refrain of those conversations was that people were now able to think through why a moralistic or allegorical conclusion of those symbols and events was deficient in grasping the full meaning of the passages.

An additional strength of the project was focusing on the specific examples of preaching found in the book of Acts. The teaching lessons were not limited to those passages, but with the main three lessons coming from there, it provided a historical and apostolic basis for the claims of the hermeneutic. I believe the topic could have been presented convincingly and taught well without focusing on those examples, but those provided biblical weight through demonstration that the Apostles put into practice Jesus' model of understanding the Old Testament. Several participants noted that seeing it put

⁴Clowney's diagram can be found in appendix 3.

into practice by the disciples provided a more convincing argument that the hermeneutic was biblical and their example should be followed. This is one of the reasons that I felt strongly about modeling it from the book of Acts and calling people to follow the only actual model of preaching Old Testament texts we find in Scripture. It is especially gratifying that others also saw this as a strength of the project and teaching series.

A few participants mentioned that they felt one strength of the project was the lesson structure itself. I intentionally left time during each lesson to discuss particular passages and to put into practice the model that I was teaching. There were times where the participants were called to explain passages and to work in groups through passages to explain their meaning in light of Christ. After teaching through the Clowney model, I then had the participants work through familiar Old Testament passages and explain both the right way to apply a Christ-centered hermeneutic and explain ways that people might misunderstand the passage and fall into errors of allegory or moralism. Allowing feedback and questions and providing opportunities for application were definite strengths of this project.

There were a few weaknesses of the project as well. One of the most glaring weaknesses, and something I would change if I could do it over again, was the vagueness of a few of the questions in the survey. There were several questions that caused people to ask for clarification before they could answer them and that is not helpful for finding accurate results and determining if there was a growth in knowledge. In my attempt to ask a wide array of questions about Old Testament theology and hermeneutics, it is possible that I did not clearly define what I was asking. I believe that if I were to alter some questions it would have been of great benefit to the project.

Another weakness noted by some participants was that there was not any “take home” work, and some felt that could have benefited the participants by allowing them to practice at home, or prepare ahead of time for the next lesson. I agree that would have been a beneficial element of the lesson plan and would have made this an overall more beneficial project for the participants. It would not have been hard to add in some suggested passages to study during the week, or to provide homework where participants could practice applying the hermeneutic on their own. This was done in the later lessons during the class time, but it could have been a great way for people to put the hermeneutic in practice during the entire eight-week series.

I also perceive an additional weakness, though it was not mentioned by any of the participants. That weakness is shortsightedness on my part to complete the project and not to maximize the lessons for a greater benefit for individuals and the church as a whole. I had in my head the idea that this would be a smaller group of participants to help discussion, but I realize that may not have been a wise limitation placed on the project. I could have changed the structure of the project’s plan to include the entire church membership and I did not. If I could go back and change that, I would. I also think the lessons could have integrated more devotional work or homework for the benefit of the participants, and thus this could have had a more discipleship mindset. I was so focused, for better or worse, on communicating the information and helping people think correctly, that I may have ended up neglecting additional ways that this project could have helped the church body.

In conclusion, this project had many strengths and weaknesses. Having discussions with both the small group who evaluated the lessons and participants to hear

their feedback was invaluable. It is not easy to hear how things could have been done differently, but it was necessary to seriously consider how beneficial this project was for the church family. The vast majority of the feedback was positive, and I trust that this was honest feedback and not just gracious treatment for their pastor. Despite the weaknesses mentioned above, and the even more multiple weaknesses of the teacher, I believe this project managed to attain its stated purpose and goals.

What I Would Do Differently

Having discussed the strengths and weakness of the project, it is appropriate to determine what would be changed if this project were done again. The very first change I would make in the project would be to clarify questions present in the pre-project and post-project surveys. I do not believe the questions were bad, but I do believe they would have been more beneficial for the students and for my own data if several of the questions were clarified, specifically by simplifying the statements to which the participants were stating their level of agreement. I also might have chosen a different scale by which to rate the participants' level of agreement in order to more clearly delineate responses.

In thinking through the feedback of the participants and my own reflections of the project, I would have packed more application into the eight-week timeframe. Though time was given for this during the class time, I would have utilized the six days in between lessons to help the participants continue learning and applying the lessons. This was an oversight and a missed opportunity to help the participants learn in their own personal study and through personal application of the hermeneutic. One of the stated goals of the project was to increase the knowledge of the participants, but I believe it would be even more beneficial practically for the church to help make the project a bit

more discipleship oriented so that people see the immediate impact for their own personal study more than just learning a better hermeneutic and understanding the Old Testament better, though those are worthy goals.

Another way I would do this project differently would be through creating a meeting time for these lessons to be taught that could have included the entire church membership. Before the project started, I decided to limit it to a smaller group of participants and to conduct this class during the Bible Study hour on Sunday mornings. I believe that was a mistake and that it limited the larger benefit this project could have been for the entire church. A better choice would have been to do this project during a Sunday evening, church-wide meeting time and to encourage the entire church to participate. Additionally, I could have spent more time promoting and advertising for the class to encourage attendance and participation among the church body.

In conclusion, I believe the project in its current form was of great benefit to the church body, but there is definite room for improvement and areas that could be changed to have made the project better for the church. It is my goal moving forward to not let this project be the only exposure the church membership has to this topic, so I believe that several of these areas of potential change can be implemented for future classes on this subject.

Theological Reflections

This project provided many opportunities for theological growth and understanding, among both the participants and the teacher. There is no way to fully deal with all of the theological concepts and implications on this topic in an eight-week study, but I believe this project did start the process of deeper study of the Old Testament and

how to read the Old Testament in light of Christ and the New Testament. Much of the theological work done in this project can be seen in chapters 2 and 3, but several reflections on the theology in the project, and its ongoing impact, can be offered here.

First, the project started with a basic understanding of the Old Testament structure, literary genres, and overarching theology. It is my hope that the project helped renew a desire to study the Old Testament by understanding it more clearly. The pre-project survey, conversations with participants, and anecdotal observations about contemporary church life show that little focus is placed on the Old Testament in many evangelical churches. Those same resources suggest that the lack of focus on the Old Testament is due to a lack of understanding of the Old Testament. It is my conclusion that if pastors and teachers could explain how the Old Testament fits together within itself, as well as how it points to Christ, that it will renew an interest and love for the Old Testament as God's word, and as valuable for the Christian life. This project renewed in me a love for the Old Testament and a love for teaching the Old Testament. The elders of the church responded to the project by encouraging me to spend even more time in exegesis of the Old Testament and preaching Christ from the Old Testament. That is a very encouraging development from this project.

Second, this project discussed important aspects and principles of hermeneutics. For some participants, this was the first time they even heard the word hermeneutics. For others, it was a chance to lay significant groundwork for a biblical hermeneutic of the Old Testament. The project itself is about hermeneutics so it makes sense that this was a large part of discussion and practice of the lessons. Participants were given the chance to put into practice the principles demonstrated and taught, and that

helped show the practicality of the lessons. Personally, the project reinforced to me the need for strong hermeneutical principles, not just for pastors, but also for all Christians. Being able to listen to participants talk through a passage and explain how they would have interpreted the passage wrongly, if not for the project, was extremely gratifying. I am even more convinced of the Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament after spending time writing and teaching this project.

Third, this project required a significant amount of time spent in exegesis in the book of Acts, both for me in writing chapter two, and for the participants as I taught through the passages covered in that chapter. The book of Acts was incredibly instructive for me in seeing the example of preaching from the Apostles and early believers. I was struck early on by how much contemporary Christians esteem early church practice as ideal in church polity and theology, but yet do not seek to emulate early church practice in preaching and hermeneutics. The book of Acts gives us a glimpse into how the first preachers of the Gospel after the resurrection understood the Old Testament and how they pointed to Jesus. If we want to employ the hermeneutic that Jesus taught the disciples in Luke 24 and John 5, then these preachers are the ones to read and emulate. This mindset has changed my entire perspective on how to read the book of Acts. I now see how instructive this historical book can be for us two thousand years later. This project has helped me both understand the larger hermeneutic better, and helped me understand the passages that undergird the hermeneutic in a more detailed way.

Finally, this project has introduced me to an incredible amount of new theological resources on this subject that I was not aware of before beginning to write and teach for this project. I have grown in my understanding of hermeneutics as a discipline,

and in the various streams of thought within orthodox, conservative theology on how to best understand and interpret Scripture. There were a number of resources of which I was previously unaware of that help explain a Christ-centered hermeneutic from both an academic and practical level. Those resources will be of great value to me as I continue to learn more and seek to implement the hermeneutic in my teaching and preaching. I also found that multiple participants were interested in further study on the subject. The multiple new resources I encountered during the course of this project not only served me, but also served the discipleship of members of my church family. For that reason alone this project will have a long lasting theological impact at Redeemer Church.

Personal Reflections

One of the main reasons that I chose the topic of teaching a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament was because this was a topic that had benefited me so greatly that I wanted to deepen my own understanding and share that benefit with the church family that I love. Through both the study and the implementation of this project, I have grown and been blessed. I want to offer a few personal reflections on the subject matter and project in order to demonstrate some of those areas of growth.

When I was younger, I felt like the Old Testament was a book about a people disconnected from myself. They were a people that existed long ago, in a land far away, and with a history and theology completely separate from my own. That viewpoint left me closed off from the Old Testament and discouraged my study of it. I found the Old Testament boring and of no real value to me personally beyond a few simple life lessons that I might learn from its characters and a small insight into the character of God in dealing with Israel. I knew that it was important, but I had no idea why it was important. I

trusted it as God's word, but I did not understand its purpose at all.

It was not until I was introduced to several books that explored a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament that my disposition toward the Old Testament changed. When I saw the larger theological, redemptive-historical, storyline of scripture, I started to see that the people of God were not long ago and far away people, but that these were my spiritual relatives and my forebears in redemption. I started to see that I was not reading about a God who seemed so foreign to the New Testament, but rather I saw a God more fully revealed. The Old Testament began to open up to me. Historical books were no longer a disaffected history of other people; they were the history of my people, and the stories of my God planning and accomplishing salvation that would ultimately culminate in Jesus saving his bride by his blood. Prophetic books were no longer just warnings to other people; they made sense within the covenantal framework of scripture and pointed me toward a perfect Prophet, a perfect Servant, who would save his people from their sins. Psalms about the Savior of Israel became songs about a salvation that I too had experienced and could sing as well.

The result for me was a passion to spend time in the Old Testament, as I saw that it too was a Christian book and not simply one of Jewish origin. In the words of the hymn "Laden with Guilt," in reading the Old Testament I saw my Savior's face revealed on every page. This was not just an academic realization for me, it changed how I worshipped Christ and changed my understanding of theology and the Christian life. One could say this was a life-altering realization for me. It is for this reason that this project is not one that was done simply to gain a degree. This project is a work of love done for a church family that I love and who love me. How could I not share with them an

understanding that changed how I read all of Scripture? How could I withhold from them what impacted me so greatly? I could not, so I devoted the time and energy to this project, for their good.

There were many personal benefits in the implementation of the project as well. First, I was able to spend a great deal of class time with participants that deepened our relationships. I believe, and their feedback indicates, that they benefitted spiritually from the lessons. But I also believe that relationships deepened during this time period where deep issues were discussed. We were able to spend time wading through difficult passages and confronting misunderstandings and areas of theological weakness. Not only were those weak areas strengthened, but also the time spent together in that endeavor built trust in one another and deepened the relationships among the participants. I personally have had multiple discussions with church members where these lessons were discussed in regard to their own personal growth and discipleship. This project has given me another avenue to help disciple and pray for the people in my church family. That is an incredible blessing.

Second, this project has served as a means of pastoral encouragement for me. It is not always easy as a pastor to gauge the growth and discipleship of church members. I often am wondering where people are spiritually and what is going through their heads. This project allowed me to hear and see both of those things, if only on a small scope and on a limited topic. The ability to provide survey questions or to ask questions in the lessons and hear what people think, how they process information, and how lessons impact them on a personal level is extremely helpful. I believe that this project has enabled me to better pastor these people. It is an amazing pastoral encouragement to hear

that your people are growing in faith and that their love for the Lord is increasing because of an impact that you directly had in their lives.

Third, this project has served as a means of personal encouragement to me. The many conversations I have had with people has provided not just a chance for me to hear what they think and believe and to see where they are spiritually, but it has made me more open in those areas as well. That openness has allowed my church family to become a tremendous encouragement to me. The many kind words about lessons or interactions have been personally edifying, and have strengthened me in times that I may feel that I personally am not doing a great job as a pastor or even as a Christian. I have had more direct personal encouragement in the months following this project than every before. That re-ignites a passion in me for preaching and pastoral ministry, and helps me persevere in the faith.

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to teach a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament to the members of Redeemer Church in Abilene, Texas. I believe this was accomplished. This project was the result of many years of study on the Old Testament and of Christ-centered hermeneutics, as well as many months of prayer, discussions, and deliberate preparation. The project was carried out over a fifteen-week period of intense study, writing, teaching, and data collecting. Ultimately, the entire process was a time of intense discipleship, not just for the participants, but for myself as well. I have been challenged through this project, as well as greatly encouraged. My personal ministry, and the life of Redeemer Church, has been positively impacted through the implementation of this project. It is my prayer that both I and the church family will continue to grow in

Christ-likeness and holiness, as we press on in our study of God's word, specifically as we spend time in the Old Testament discovering the many ways that all the scriptures point to Jesus Christ. May Christ be exalted in Redeemer Church.

APPENDIX 1

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Lesson Evaluation for the Review Panel

This evaluation sheet was used to evaluate each of the eight teaching lessons.

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to evaluate the lessons on teaching a Christ-centered Hermeneutic of the Old Testament at Redeemer Church. This research is being conducted by Jason Gray for the purposes of collecting information for a ministry project. In this research, you are providing insight and input for the lessons prepared that will, in turn, be taught to the members of Redeemer Church. 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 lesson evaluation, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Directions: Evaluate the Lesson on the various categories, based on the following scale:
1 = insufficient, 2 = requires attention, 3 = sufficient, 4 = exemplary

1. CLARITY	1	2	3	4
2. CONTENT	1	2	3	4
3. FAITHFULNESS TO SCRIPTURE	1	2	3	4
4. PROMOTES PROJECT TOPIC	1	2	3	4
5. PRESENTED VALIDITY OF CHRIST-CENTERED HERMENEUTIC	1	2	3	4
6. ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK:				

Christ-Centered Hermeneutic Survey

This survey was given to participants before and after the eight-week teaching series.

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to evaluate your knowledge of a Christ-centered Hermeneutic of the Old Testament at Redeemer Church of Abilene. This research is being conducted by Jason Gray for the purposes of collecting information for a ministry project. In this research, you are providing the criterion by which this ministry project will be judged. 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 questionnaire, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Directions: Answer the following questions by circling the answer you feel most accurately represents your level of agreement with the question, based on the following scale: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, DS = Somewhat Disagree, AS = Somewhat Agree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

1. I believe the Bible is God's Word.

SD D DS AS A SA

2. I understand the purpose of the Bible as a whole.

SD D DS AS A SA

3. I know the overall purpose of the Old Testament.

SD D DS AS A SA

4. The purpose of the Old Testament is to give a history of the nation of Israel.

SD D DS AS A SA

5. The purpose of the Old Testament is to teach and prepare for Jesus Christ.

SD D DS AS A SA

6. The Old Testament is predominately a book about morals.

SD D DS AS A SA

7. The Old Testament is a book about laws.

SD D DS AS A SA

8. I understand why God gave the Law.

SD D DS AS A SA

9. I think the Old Testament laws are unfair.

SD D DS AS A SA

10. I think Jesus is clearly evident in the Old Testament in multiple ways.

SD D DS AS A SA

11. The Old Testament is about Law, the New Testament is about grace.

SD D DS AS A SA

12. The Old Testament does not apply to Christians today.

SD D DS AS A SA

13. I know that Jesus said He fulfills the Old Testament Law, but I do not know what that means.

SD D DS AS A SA

14. The historical narratives in the OT are solely about communicating historical events in Israel's history.

SD D DS AS A SA

15. The prophecies in the Old Testament only apply to Israel.

SD D DS AS A SA

16. The prophets completely understood the fulfillment of the prophecies they communicated.

SD D DS AS A SA

17. The Psalms are a collection of songs about David's personal feelings.

SD D DS AS A SA

18. The Psalms are primarily songs of worship for the people of Israel, and not for the church.

SD D DS AS A SA

19. God had one plan of salvation for Israel and a different plan for the church.

SD D DS AS A SA

20. The Old Testament teaches that people can be saved by keeping the Law.

SD D DS AS A SA

21. The wisdom literature in the Old Testament is primarily about communicating how people are supposed to live.

SD D DS AS A SA

22. The proverbs are promises from God.

SD D DS AS A SA

23. I believe Jesus Christ is the key to understanding the Old Testament.

SD D DS AS A SA

24. I can explain clearly how Christ is present in every genre (major section) of the Old Testament.

SD D DS AS A SA

25. I know that the Old Testament points to Christ, and I know exactly how to explain and communicate that to others.

SD D DS AS A SA

Additional Information:

1. I am X years old...

<20 20-35 36-50 51-65 65+

2. I have completed X amount of education...

Some HS HS Tech Some College College Grad School

3. I have been a Christian for X many years...

1-5 years 6-10 years 11-20 years 21-49 years 50+ years

4-Digit Identification Number (last 4 of SS #):

APPENDIX 2
SURVEY RESULTS

Table A1. Pre-project survey results

PRE-PROJECT SURVEY RESULTS						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Question 1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	88.9%
Question 2	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%	11.1%	70.4%	11.1%
Question 3	0.0%	3.7%	7.4%	29.7%	37.0%	22.2%
Question 4	0.0%	3.7%	37.0%	40.7%	7.4%	11.1%
Question 5	0.0%	3.7%	3.7%	11.1%	44.4%	37.0%
Question 6	14.8%	51.9%	14.8%	7.4%	11.1%	0.0%
Question 7	3.7%	7.4%	25.9%	40.7%	22.2%	0.0%
Question 8	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%	40.7%	44.4%	7.4%
Question 9	33.3%	40.7%	14.8%	7.4%	0.0%	3.7%
Question 10	3.7%	3.7%	7.4%	7.4%	48.1%	29.6%
Question 11	14.8%	11.1%	18.5%	33.3%	14.8%	7.4%
Question 12	37.0%	37.0%	14.8%	3.7%	3.7%	3.7%
Question 13	3.8%	38.5%	26.9%	19.2%	7.6%	3.8%

Table A1, continued.

Question 14	14.8%	37.0%	18.5%	22.2%	3.7%	3.7%
Question 15	22.2%	29.6%	25.9%	3.7%	11.1%	7.4%
Question 16	19.2%	38.5%	26.9%	3.8%	7.7%	3.8%
Question 17	7.7%	19.2%	19.2%	38.5%	7.7%	7.7%
Question 18	15.4%	38.5%	26.9%	3.8%	11.5%	3.8%
Question 19	42.3%	30.8%	3.8%	7.7%	3.8%	11.5%
Question 20	23.1%	26.9%	26.9%	11.5%	3.8%	7.7%
Question 21	3.8%	7.7%	7.7%	30.8%	42.3%	7.7%
Question 22	7.7%	30.8%	19.2%	30.8%	3.8%	7.7%
Question 23	3.8%	0.0%	3.8%	30.8%	42.3%	19.2%
Question 24	15.4%	38.5%	7.7%	26.9%	11.5%	0.0%
Question 25	7.7%	30.8%	23.1%	26.9%	11.5%	0.0%

Table A2. Post-project survey results

POST-PROJECT SURVEY RESULTS						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Question 1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%	94.1%
Question 2	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%	23.5%	70.6%
Question 3	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	29.4%	70.6%
Question 4	29.4%	5.9%	5.9%	41.2%	11.8%	5.9%
Question 5	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	17.6%	82.4%
Question 6	70.6%	17.6%	11.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Question 7	35.3%	17.6%	11.8%	17.6%	17.6%	0.0%
Question 8	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%	35.3%	58.8%
Question 9	64.7%	11.8%	11.8%	5.9%	0.0%	5.9%
Question 10	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.7%	0.0%	88.2%
Question 11	47.1%	11.8%	5.9%	5.9%	17.6%	11.8%
Question 12	82.4%	5.9%	11.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Question 13	76.5%	17.6%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Question 14	70.6%	23.5%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Question 15	64.7%	35.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Question 16	29.4%	58.8%	11.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Question 17	52.9%	23.5%	11.8%	11.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Question 18	64.7%	29.4%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Table A2, continued.

Question 19	88.2%	5.9%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Question 20	76.5%	11.8%	5.9%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Question 21	29.4%	29.4%	5.9%	23.5%	5.9%	5.9%
Question 22	23.5%	41.2%	17.6%	5.9%	5.9%	5.9%
Question 23	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.8%	88.2%
Question 24	0.0%	0.0%	17.6%	23.5%	41.2%	17.6%
Question 25	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	29.4%	52.9%	17.6%

Table A3. Differences in pre-project and post-project results

DIFFERENCE IN PRE- AND POST-PROJECT RESULTS						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Question 1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-5.2%	5.2%
Question 2	0.0%	0.0%	-7.4%	-5.2%	-46.9%	59.5%
Question 3	0.0%	-3.7%	-7.4%	-29.7%	-7.6%	48.4%
Question 4	29.4%	2.2%	-31.1%	0.5%	4.4%	-5.2%
Question 5	0.0%	-3.7%	-3.7%	-11.1%	-26.8%	45.4%
Question 6	55.8%	-34.3%	-3.0%	-7.4%	-11.1%	0.0%
Question 7	31.6%	10.2%	-14.1%	-23.1%	-4.6%	0.0%
Question 8	0.0%	0.0%	-7.4%	-34.8%	-9.1%	51.4%
Question 9	31.4%	-28.9%	-3.0%	-1.5%	0.0%	2.2%
Question 10	-3.7%	-3.7%	-7.4%	4.3%	-48.1%	58.6%
Question 11	32.3%	0.7%	-12.6%	-27.4%	2.8%	4.4%
Question 12	45.4%	-31.1%	-3.0%	-3.7%	-3.7%	-3.7%
Question 13	72.7%	-20.9%	-21.0%	-19.2%	-7.6%	-3.8%

Table A3, continued.

Question 14	55.8%	-13.5%	-12.6%	-22.2%	-3.7%	-3.7%
Question 15	42.5%	5.7%	-25.9%	-3.7%	-11.1%	-7.4%
Question 16	10.2%	20.3%	-15.1%	-3.8%	-7.7%	-3.8%
Question 17	45.2%	4.3%	-7.4%	-26.7%	-7.7%	-7.7%
Question 18	49.3%	-9.1%	-21.0%	-3.8%	-11.5%	-3.8%
Question 19	45.9%	-24.9%	2.1%	-7.7%	-3.8%	-11.5%
Question 20	53.4%	-15.1%	-21.0%	-5.6%	-3.8%	-7.7%
Question 21	25.6%	21.7%	-1.8%	-7.3%	-36.4%	-1.8%
Question 22	15.8%	10.4%	-1.6%	-24.9%	2.1%	-1.8%
Question 23	-3.8%	0.0%	-3.8%	-30.8%	-30.5%	69.0%
Question 24	-15.4%	-38.5%	9.9%	-3.4%	29.7%	17.6%
Question 25	-7.7%	-30.8%	-23.1%	2.5%	41.4%	17.6%

APPENDIX 3

CLOWNEY RECTANGLE DIAGRAM

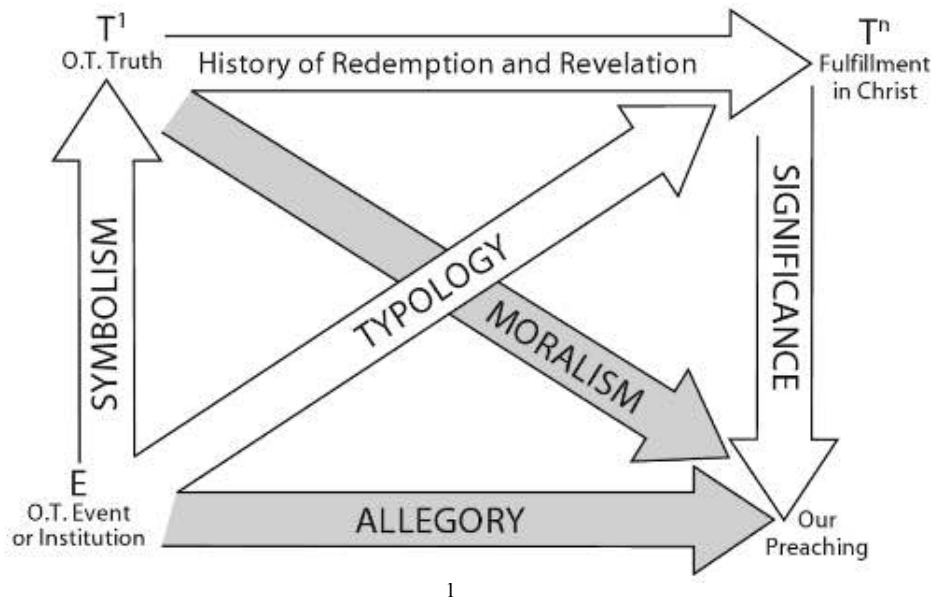


Figure A1. Clowney rectangle

¹Edmund Clowney, *Preaching Christ from All of Scripture*, 32.

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ABSTRACT

TEACHING A CHRIST-CENTERED HERMENEUTIC OF OF THE OLD TESTAMENT TO THE MEMBERS OF REDEEMER CHURCH OF ABILENE, TEXAS

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The purpose of this project is to teach a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament to the members of Redeemer Church of Abilene, Texas. 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 a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament by demonstrating from the preaching present in the Book of Acts that the disciples utilized this hermeneutic following the teachings of Jesus.

Chapter 3 discusses theoretical support for teaching a Christ-centered hermeneutic of the Old Testament. Specifically, answers to arguments against a Christ-centered hermeneutic are addressed, and five methods of employing a Christ-centered hermeneutic are discussed.

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.

VITA

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