

Finding and Preaching Christ from The Old Testament

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A paper submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements

For the course

BI 12 Old Testament Introduction 2

Covenant Baptist Theological Seminary

March 5th, 2017

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Finding and Preaching Christ in the Old Testament

The redemptive-historical progression is Christ and his disciples' method of interpreting and understanding the Old Testament. This is "is more than drawing lines to connect Old Testament types in Promise Column A with New Testament antitypes in Fulfilment Column B."¹ It is that which "reveals the depth, beauty, interpretive richness, and unity of Scripture, including wonderful ways in which these uses help modern Christians understand their own relationship to Christ and his church within the context of the unfolding redemptive-historical storyline of Scripture."² Sidney Greidanus calls it "the foundational way of preaching Christ from the Old Testament"³; Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, in their three levels narrative (where the top level is how God's plan is worked through his creation; the second level is "God redeeming a people for his name" and the lowest level the narratives that make up the top and second levels) view of understanding the Old Testament call it "the initial creation itself, the fall of humanity, the power and ubiquity of sin, the need for redemption and Christ incarnation and sacrifice"⁴. Sidney also explains that redemption history is also known as "Meta-Narrative or The Story."⁵ This points out how Christ is at the center of God's unfolding plan of salvation for his people. This plan of redemption was unveiled in Gen. 3:15, which reads "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel". The redemptive-historical progression interprets this verse as the first in a series of revelations by God in the Old Testament, about Christ, which is climaxed in his death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. This is the hermeneutical method used by Christ in proclaiming himself to be the Messiah promised in the Old Testament; it was also used by his disciples in the gospels and epistles. In using redemptive-historical progression, Sidney in relation to the narrative concerning David and Goliath explains "He goes to great lengths to show that this story of David and Goliath is

¹ Dennis E Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub, 2007), 17

² G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2012), Page 27

³ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), Page 234

⁴ Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart 91

⁵ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), Page 234

an important part of Israel's national/royal history: Samuel has just secretly anointed the young shepherd David as king over Israel (1 Sam 16). Next (1 Sam 17); the young shepherd-king saves Israel from its arch-enemy by killing Goliath. The message is David; God's anointed King delivers Israel and secures its safety in the Promised Land" ⁶ Sidney in this example places a direct link between David's victory over Goliath and the ultimate victory of Christ over the devil as promised by God in Gen. 3:15. Sidney about this explains "The essence of this story, therefore, is more than Israel's king defeating the enemy; the essence is that the Lord himself defeats the enemy of His people. This theme locates the passage on the highway of God's kingdom history which leads to Jesus' victory over Satan. This history of enmity began right after the fall into sin when God said to the serpent (later identified as Satan): I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel (Gen 3:15)" ⁷

How does this redemptive-historical progressive interpretation work, may be the next question to ask. Sidney explores the redemptive-historical progressive interpretation in the different sections of the canon of the Old Testament. However, before discussing Sidney's exploration, it is important to see how modern liberal theologians (from the 19th century onwards) view the redemptive-historical progression.

How Modern Liberal Theologians view of redemptive-historical progression.

There are some presuppositions (discussed below) that must govern the interpretation of any Old Testament text. One such is the inerrancy and infallibility of the Old Testament. Scholars that have been influenced by the age of the enlightenment (when many, including some theologians, began to advocate rationality, "as the sole criteria for establishing an authoritative system of ethics, aesthetics, and knowledge⁸.")) lack such presuppositions. One such scholar writes, "To keep the Old Testament after the nineteenth century as a canonical document within Protestantism results from a

⁶ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), page 238

⁷ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), page 239

⁸ <http://www.theopedia.com/age-of-enlightenment> last accessed 8th January 2017

religious and ecclesiastical paralysis.⁹” Another liberal theologian agrees, “The relations of Christianity to Judaism and Heathenism are the same; in as much as the transition from either of these to Christianity is a transition to another religion.” Another writes “To the Christian faith the Old Testament is no longer revelation as it has been and still is for the Jews...The events which meant something for Israel, which was God's word, mean nothing more to us.¹⁰” These theologians and others like them are very unlikely to view the New Testament as infallible and inerrant because of the following reasons. The New Testament affirms every doctrine of the Old Testament. So without holding an inerrant and infallible presupposition of the Old Testament, it is very unlikely that their hermeneutics of interpreting the New Testament will be any better. Rudolf Bultman, when commenting on the truthfulness of the New Testament; writes “The mythology of the New Testament, also, is not to be questioned with respect to the content of its objectifying representations, but with respect to the understanding of existence that expresses itself in them.”¹¹

Manner and Extent to Which the Old Testament bears witness to the Person and Work of Christ

G.K Beale gives five presuppositions that “underlie the NT writers’ interpretation of the OT.”¹² He explains further that “it is within the framework of these five presuppositions that the whole OT was perceived as pointing to the new covenant eschatological age, both via direct prophecy and indirect prophetic adumbration of Israel’s history.”¹³ In explaining how these five presuppositions form the basis of the redemptive-historical progressive thinking of Christ and the New Testament Beale continues, “The matrix of these five perspectives, especially the last four, is the lens which NT authors interpreted OT passages¹⁴.” One thing the liberal theologians referred to in the previous paragraph and others like them believe is that the Old Testament is not infallible or inerrant. As a result, they are incapable of preaching Christ from the Old Testament or indeed the whole Bible,

⁹ John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (New York: Abingdon, 1967) 65 (secondary quote)

¹⁰ "The Significance of the Old Testament for the Christian Faith," in B. W. Anderson, ed., *The Old Testament and Christian Faith* (New York: Harper, 1963), 8-35, 31. Cf. von Campenhausen (note 3), 1, "For Christianity the Old Testament is no longer a canonical book in the same sense as it once was for the Jews."

¹¹ *Neues Testament und Mythologie* (1941), as translated by Schubert M. Ogden (1984)

¹² G. K, Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2012), page 96

¹³ G. K, Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2012), page 97

¹⁴ G. K, Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2012), page 98

because their presupposition of the Old Testament will govern how they interpret the New Testament.

The five presuppositions identified by G.K Beale and Sidney Greidanus are used in seeing the redemptive-historical progressive interpretation in action. Missing from these presuppositions are two fundamental doctrines which are 1) The infallibility and inerrancy of the Old Testament and 2) The deity of Christ. However, all New Testament authors are united in their affirmation of both doctrines, and the five presuppositions are based on these assumptions.

The first presupposition is the assumption of corporate solidarity or representation¹⁵ or “Corporate Personality¹⁶.” This is explained by Wheeler Robinson that “the whole group was considered a person” that “the isolated individual having no standing apart from the larger body. . . . This idea found favor in studies of the ‘I’ of the Psalms, where the first person singular sometimes seems to be an individual and at other times a whole community. . . .”¹⁷ The corporate solidarity or representation is common in the Old Testament. Examples include Genesis 1:26-27, where God’s statement about creating man in his image refers to all humans from Adam. This is confirmed in Gen. 9:6, where a man being created in the image of God is the reason for instituting the death penalty for murder. Num. 18:6-24, a person from the tribe of Levi could become a priest, by virtue of his relationship to Levi, who was individually commissioned to become a priest. All Egyptians suffered under the ten plagues even though an individual Egyptian may not have mistreated the Israelites in any way. Then God punished the Israelites and held them corporately responsible for the sin of Achan. Finally, Nehemiah confessed the corporate sin of Israel as his personal sin. This assumption of corporate solidarity can be seen in Paul’s exposition of man’s corporate solidarity for Adam’s rebellion in Eden (Rom. 5:12) whereby all humans become guilty before God because of Adam’s sin. Verse 19 imputes Christ’s righteousness to His people again; Christ corporately represents His people as righteous.

¹⁵ G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2012), 96

¹⁶ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 197

¹⁷ W O E Oesterley and T H Robinson, *Hebrew Religion. Its Origin and Development*, SPCK, London, 1937, p 263

The second presupposition is Christ represents the true Israel¹⁸. There are several instances where this has been the case. In his second Oracle, Balaam refers to the children of Israel as “them” in describing how God brought them out of Egypt. (Num. 23:22), but in the next Oracle, he refers to the Israelites as “Him” for the same exodus event. (Num. 24:8). This he repeats in his fourth Oracle (Num. 24:14). What is striking in the fourth Oracle if read to the end of the chapter is that Balaam goes on to make some other prophecy that is descriptive of the future Messiah. For example in verses 17- 19, he makes statements such as “A star shall come out of Jacob”, “A sceptre shall rise out of Israel” and “Out of Jacob, one shall have dominion”. As we progressively look at Balaam’s oracles, a clear picture of the Messianic King emerges. This king will be in corporate solidarity with historical Israel, experiencing a new eschatological Exodus.”¹⁹ (More minor work)

The third presupposition is history is unified by a wise and sovereign plan, so that the earlier parts are designed to correspond or point to the later parts (cf., e.g. Matt 5:17; 11:13, 13:16-17)²⁰. Sidney calls this “the way of analogy.”²¹ This can be seen in the continuity of the Old and New Testaments. Sidney explains this as, “the new testament writers using analogy to establish the continuity and progression in God’s dealings with Israel and through Christ with the church²².” He continues later that “not only does analogy show that Jesus in the New Testament continues God’s redemptive work in the Old Testament, but analogy can also emphasize the correspondence between Israel and the church.²³”. The continuity of the Old and New Testaments is to understand the immutability of the ultimate author of both Testaments. The immutability of God is described in some scriptures in both Testaments as one who "cannot repent" (Num. 23:19b), who "does not change" (Malachi 3:6), who is “the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8). This indicates that the description of both Testaments as Old and New does not depict a change in God. Both Testaments may be described as two sides of the same coin or two sides of the same page where the narrative of the person and work of Christ is depicted. The Old Testament forecasts or

¹⁸ G. K, Beale, Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2012), page 96

¹⁹ <http://www.gospelstudygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/corporate-solidarity-in-OT.pdf> page 14

²⁰ G. K, Beale, Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2012), 96

²¹ Sidney Greidanus, Preaching Christ from the Old Testament. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 220

²² Sidney Greidanus, Preaching Christ from the Old Testament. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 221

²³ Sidney Greidanus, Preaching Christ from the Old Testament. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 222

narrates the coming of Christ, while the New Testament reveals who Christ is. The New Testament was not written to accommodate a change of God's mind; rather it shows Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament promises. The Lord himself made this very clear in Matt. 5:17-18 where he explains, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For truly I say to you until heaven and earth pass away, not [h]the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished". Another basis of continuity is to view the theologies of both Testaments as being in harmony with each other. The Old Testament anticipates the New Testament; while the New Testament completes the Old Testament. Sidney Greidanus makes this point when he explains that "we ought to start with continuity of a unified history of redemption which progresses from the old covenant to the new, and a single scripture consisting of two testaments." ²⁴ He explains the harmony of both as, "both parts of the Christian Bible; both reveal the same covenant-making God; both reveal the gospel of God's grace; both show God reaching out to his disobedient children with the promise, "I will be your God, and you will be my people" and both reveal God's acts of redemption."²⁵

Another basis of continuity is to view both Testaments as possessing equal authority over God's people. Sidney explains this, "Analogy concentrates on locating the continuity of both Testaments (my emphasis), the parallels, between what God is, and does for Israel, teaches Israel, or demands of Israel, and what God in Christ is and does for the church, teaches the church, or demands of the church."²⁶ Paul views the Old Testament as the authority on the New Testament church, by alluding to Gen. 2:24 and Exod. 20:14 in Ephesians 5:32, regarding the marital union between a husband and his wife. Edmund Clowney comments on this when he writes, "Paul shows the priority of God's love in Jesus Christ when he addresses Christian wives and husbands (Eph. 5:22-33). He is not confusing the figure with the reality; he is pointing us to the love of God from which all human love must spring. ²⁷ Another basis of continuity is that both Testaments emphasize the need for spiritual birth, brought about by the grace of God as the basis of salvation. The circumcising of the heart of

²⁴ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 45

²⁵ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 46

²⁶ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 263

²⁷ Edmund Clowney *the unfolding mystery discovering Christ* 107

the Israelites and their descendants by God to “to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut. 30:6); the promise of God to “give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezek. 36:26) are scriptures that describe the new birth which Christ explains to Nicodemus in John 3:3-8. As Gregory Grogan explains,

“Just as men of all ages are saved on the basis of the objective work of Christ, so they are saved also by the subjective work of the Spirit. However, there is an important difference between the work of these two divine Persons. The work of Christ was effected in a great historical event—the cross—although we must remember the importance of His life as giving value to His death, and His resurrection as the divine seal upon it. The work of the Spirit, however, is a distributive one, being effected by Him in the hearts of all kinds of men at many different periods in history. The one was climactic and finished while the other is occasional and distributive. However, different in nature as they are, it is important to notice that the one depended upon the other—and Pentecost is the evidence of this. It is the fact that in the economy of God it was necessary to demonstrate the dependence of the Spirit’s work upon that of the Son which gives Pentecost its special place of importance. It is difficult to see how it could be shown that Christ’s work was the objective ground of the Spirit’s work without some singular exhibition of the Spirit’s activity after the finished work of Christ and yet close enough to it for men to read the lesson of it. In short, Pentecost has evidential value.”²⁸

So the continuity of both Testaments is possible because God, the author of both, is able to bring to pass what he has promised because of His sovereign providence in governing the events that drive such continuity.

The fourth presupposition is the age of eschatological fulfillment has come in Christ²⁹. Sidney calls this “promise fulfillment”.³⁰ Jesus Christ himself points to the Old Testament as bearing witness to Him as the Savior. There are so many instances of Christ making this claim that only the obvious ones are explored. In Luke 4 he claims fulfillment of Isaiah 61. In John 5:39-40 he rebukes those who opposed him of searching the scriptures from which they know they will find eternal life, yet these scriptures that they search, testify of him. In Luke 24:25-27 he rebukes the two disciples on the way to Emmaus as “foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” 27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning

²⁸ Geoffrey W. Grogan, “The Experience of Salvation in the Old and New Testaments,” *Vox Evangelica* 5 (1967): 16-17

²⁹ G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2012), 97

³⁰ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 206 - 212

Himself in all the Scriptures” His reference to scriptures in both passages was the Old Testament, a point he made clearer to other disciples in verses 44-47. The Apostles also wrote that several scriptures in the Old Testament bore witness to the person and work of Christ. Paul in Gal. 3:8 identified Christ as the fulfillment of the promise God made to Abraham in Gen. 12:3 and in Rom. 1:2-3 where he identifies Christ as the great descendant of David promised in 2 Samuel 7:12-16.

The fifth presupposition is that later parts of scripture interpret earlier parts³¹. Sidney calls this “Longitudinal Themes,” which is also known as progressive revelation, which is defined as God revealing himself and his plans for His creation in more detail and greater clarity as more of the scriptures are written. That is, more information about God’s plan is available in later writings. This does not mean that the earlier information is of inferior quality because all scripture is inspired by God. Rather it means that more discernment may be needed in correctly understanding more initial revelation. The Old Testament bears witness to the work and person of Christ. However, the witness borne is not of such clarity as to find in any Old Testament text revelation giving precise information about Christ as revealed in the New Testament. G. K. Beale describes progressive revelation, “Old Testament passages can be understood more deeply in the light of the developing revelation of later parts of the Old Testament and especially of the New Testament. The Old Testament authors had a real understanding of what they wrote but not an exhaustive understanding.³²” For example, theologians are divided as to the meaning of Gen. 3:15³³ (here, he correctly determines that the Messianic view is the most appropriate. He writes, “A most likely explanation is that the author of the Torah offered a hint of a coming redeemer in Gen. 3:15 and then used the rest of the Pentateuch to identify him as the future Messiah”). Also, the meaning of “Let us” in Gen. 1:26 in relation to the person and work of Christ³⁴ (here, Fesko correctly determines that “the best option is an adumbration of the Trinity.”³⁵). However, there is no disagreement among evangelical Theologians about scriptures such as John 1:1,14 where the deity

³¹ G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2012), 97

³² G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 27

³³ Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic*, Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010). 131-135

³⁴ J. V Fesko *Last things first: Unlocking Genesis 1 – 3 with the Christ of Eschatology* (Tain, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2007), 40-43

³⁵ *Ibid* 43

of Christ is affirmed. This is why it important to allow later revelation to interpret earlier revelation correctly. Graeme Goldsworthy explains, “Progressive revelation requires that we must always allow God’s later and fuller words to explain the meaning of the earlier and less explicit words.”³⁶

He continues,

“Again I must stress that while earlier expressions help us understand the later, it is the later fulfillment which must interpret the real significance of the earlier expressions. This means, of course, that the earlier expressions point to things beyond themselves that are greater than the meaning that would have been perceived by those receiving these earlier expressions”.³⁷

Genesis 1:26 is the first scriptural reference to the Godhead as triune. That is, God revealed to be singular, but revealed in more than one person. The two words, “Let us” following after, “God said,” is a reference to the triune God, including Christ. Matthew Henry, believing this to be the case writes, “The three persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, consult about it and concur in it, because man, when he was made, was to be dedicated and devoted to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.” His view is shared by John Gill, who commences by rejecting the views of those who argue the words as reference to God consulting with the earth or angels writes, “but they are spoken by God the Father to the Son and Holy Ghost, who were each of them concerned in the creation of all things, and particularly of man”. Several New Testament scriptures allude to this verse that Christ created man. Such scriptures include; John 1:3 which informs us that nothing was made without him, who in the beginning was God and who became flesh and dwelt among us. Col. 1:16 assures us that. “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.”

Many theologians believe Genesis 3:15 to be the initial reference of prophecy to the work of Christ, this verse is sometimes referred to as *protoevangelism*. It follows after Eve’s answer to God’s question, "what have you done?" God begins the punishment with the serpent, which was used by the devil to deceive Adam and Eve. It contains a promise of perpetual conflict between the

³⁶ Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 123.

³⁷ Ibid

woman's seed and the serpent's seed, which will climax in the bruising of the heel of the woman's seed and the head of the serpent's seed. Commenting on this theme, Matthew Henry writes, "War is proclaimed between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. It is the fruit of this enmity, which is a continual warfare between grace and corruption, in the hearts of God's people." Here, Henry speaks of the perpetual conflict between both seeds. Then later, he continues by looking at the climax of this conflict, "A gracious promise is here made of Christ, as the Deliverer of fallen man from the power of Satan. Here was the dawn of the gospel day: no sooner was the wound given than the remedy was provided and revealed. This gracious revelation of a Saviour came unasked and unlooked for." Christ would deliver man from Satan's dominion through the crushing of his head. This would be a permanent mortal blow to the serpent's seed. This is the revelation that Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah and other earlier patriarchs had of the coming Messiah. Heb. 11:13-16, describes this fact in very clear terms, "13 All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. 14 For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. 15 And indeed if they had been [l]thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had the opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not [m]ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them." Verse 13 informs us that they died in faith without seeing the promises. The only real promise for these patriarchs is found in Gen. 3:15. The basis of their faith is the future expectation they had possessed before the Old Testament was written.

Typology: Typology is defined as a relationship between types and antitypes, whereby a type is foreshadowing an event, institution or person, which is completed by the antitype. God in His providence brings about or allows an event to take place in the Old Testament, which prefigures or foreshadows Christ or his work of redemption. There are specific requirements needed for an event, institution or person to qualify as a type. Richard Barcellos gives four requirements necessary for describing such as a type. They are as follows,

A type is a historical person, place, institution, or event that was designed by God to point to a future historical person, place, institution, or event. Second, that to which types point is always greater than the type itself. In other words, there is some sort of escalation in the anti-type. Third, types are both like and unlike their anti-types. There is both correspondence and escalation. Fourth, anti-types tell us more about how their types function as types.³⁸

Moses as a type of Christ meets the 4 requirements described by Barcellos. An Old Testament text which specifically identifies Moses as a type of Christ is Deut. 18:15, which reads, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him”. The apostle Peter in Acts 3:22-24 identify Christ as the fulfillment of this verse. The keywords which make Moses a type of Christ from this verse can be found in the first phrase, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you.” Moses is an historical person; even the most liberal theologians believe this to be true. Jesus Christ is greater than Moses as scripture testify, for example in Heb. 3:1-6. Jesus Christ and Moses mediated on behalf of people. However, Moses did so as God’s servant and as a fellow creature, as those for whom he interceded, while Christ mediated on behalf of His people as God’s Son and fellow Creator and as the second person in the triune Godhead. Finally, Moses was mediator over a covenant that required obedience from man and hence was doomed to fail (Heb 8:13), while Christ was mediator over a covenant where His obedience determined its fulfillment and result. Hence its success is guaranteed (Heb. 8:6, 8-12).

Some guidelines for preaching Christ from the Old Testament

Johnson identifies three characteristics of Old Testament scriptures that have been adopted when preaching from the Old Testament. These are 1) Provide physical events and institutions with representative spiritual meaning; 2) Portray future redemptive events in imagery drawn from what God’s past deeds in creation and salvation and 3) Recognize how this Old Testament text, “testifies to the incompleteness of the redemption accessible through its institutions, directing the longing of God’s people to a qualitatively superior future salvation/saviour.”³⁹ G. K. Beale gives seven

³⁸ Richard Barcellos BT12 Lecture notes (2016/2017), 17

³⁹ Dennis E Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub, 2007), 219.

guidelines which he calls, “the nine-fold approach to interpreting the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament”⁴⁰. Sidney Greindus outlines seven ways of preaching Christ from the Old Testament⁴¹, some of which include some of his version of the Old Testament presuppositions of New Testament. The ethos for every guideline given is that each sermon must end with Christ. For example a sermon on Saul’s disobedience in 1 Sam. 15 must explain the evil committed by the Amalekites and its potential effect on the fulfilment or non fulfilment of the promise God made to Abraham in Gen. 12:1-3, that is, non fulfilment would mean that there will be no Christ to redeem the world, if the Amalekites had succeeded in destroying the children of Israel. A sermon on Esther 2 – 3 will look at how God’s providence in making Esther queen, and thwarting Haman’s plot against the Israelites as God’s providential work in ensuring that Christ’s coming to the world through Abraham’s seed is fulfilled.

Using the third guideline in preaching Christ from Gen. 3:15 Sinclair Ferguson explains how two New Testament authors (Paul and John) presupposed Christ as being the fulfillment of the promise contained in Gen. 3:15. He writes,

“Of course Satan is not mentioned by name in Genesis 3—a point of some hermeneutical interest in itself—but when Paul writes that ‘the God of peace will bruise Satan under your head shortly’ (Rom. 16:20), and John sees in Revelation 12:9 that the serpent has grown into a dragon, it is clear that the New Testament writers thought of Genesis 3:15 as a reference to the coming Messiah, and to his conflict with Satan. The war about which the book of Revelation speaks then merely climaxes an antithesis and antagonism that has run through the whole of Scripture. It is a Library of Military History, with Genesis 3:15 and Revelation 12:9-20:10 as the bookcase. Not only so, but it follows that the whole of Old Testament Scriptures trace the outworking of this promise of God until it is consummated in Jesus Christ, and finally publicized throughout the universe in his triumphant return.”⁴²

Any preaching of Christ from the Old Testament must be done by following the redemptive-historical progression method of interpretation. The presuppositions discussed above need to be the basis of preaching Christ. Certain things need to be borne in mind. These include, 1) the whole Bible is the word of God, and there is no new revelation about Christ apart from what the Bible reveals. Hence the sermon cannot comprise of any new revelation apart from the Bible. Several

⁴⁰ G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2012), Page 42

⁴¹ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 308

⁴² Sinclair Ferguson, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* 2013 accessed January 8 2017.

<https://www.monergism.com/preaching-christ-old-testament>

scriptures inform us that the Scriptures have now been complete. Examples include 2 Tim. 3:15-16; Heb. 1:1-2 and Rev. 22:18-19. 2) We are to avoid making the learning lessons from biblical characters. The primary goal of our sermon should be the glory of Christ. Dr Michael Horton explains this very well in this brief statement, “If our preaching does not centre on Christ from Genesis to Revelation, no matter how good or helpful, it is not a proclamation of God's Word”,⁴³ and 3) The whole Bible is a narrative of Christ as the centre of God’s eternal plan for his people. This narrative has many sub-narratives for example; God’s redemption of the Israelites from Egypt is only a sub-narrative of the God’s promise to Abraham that the world will be blessed through Abraham’s seed.

⁴³Dr Michael Horton Preaching Christ Alone 2013 accessed January 8 2017. <https://www.monergism.com/preaching-christ-alone>

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