

A Hermeneutical Evaluation of the Christocentric Hermeneutic

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Some have alleged that dispensational premillennialists do not focus upon the centrality and glory of Christ because they are too consumed with Israel.¹ They contend that dispensational premillennialists are so infatuated with God's plan for Israel and its restoration that this becomes a hermeneutical key that offsets God's larger plan of redemption.² This is simply not true. As Ryrie notes, hermeneutical concerns drive the concerns of dispensationalist. That leads to distinctions between church and Israel as well as eschatology based upon the data of a consistency of meaning, grammatical details, and the logic of theology's tie with history.³

That same hermeneutic drives the centrality of Christ. Indeed, the charge of lessening Christ is a caricature of the Dispensationalism. Dispensationalists believe that Christ alone is the only way of redemption for Jew and Gentile.⁴ The Messiah is the only hope for Israel (Zech 12:10; 13:1; 14:1–3), the Servant who stands for His people (Isa 52:13–53:12), and the only One who secures the fulfillment of all the promises for the nation (Gen 22:17b-18). This is what drives the need for Jewish evangelism and a commitment of dispensationalists to see Christ legitimately in the OT.⁵ Because dispensationalists insist on a cohesive plan consistent with and compounding from the OT, they insist on understanding that the Messiah is a critical part of the OT.⁶ He is prophesied and promised in the OT and drives the entire storyline for both Israel and the church. In this way, dispensationalists are Christ centered people for we truly believe that Christ is critical for fulfilling the entire plan of God, a plan is encompassed by and articulated in the *entire* Scripture. That magnifies the glory of the Messiah. So the charge of not being “Christ centered” is bogus. We champion Christ.

Having said this, being “Christ centered” denotes more than just exalting Christ. It has taken on a hermeneutical dimension. Just as dispensationalists are accused of making Israel the hermeneutical key, so those who are “Christ centered” have made this concept a hermeneutical key. However, unlike the accusations against dispensationalists, the charge of a Christ-centered hermeneutic is not a faulty allegation. Rather, some uphold that notion.⁷ They contend that Christ

¹ Peter John Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2012), 42–44.

² *Ibid.*, 42–44, 54–56.

³ Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 40.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 107–9.

⁵ Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2010), 9–11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1–9.

⁷ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids,: Baker Books, 1994); Bryan Chapell, “Bryan Chapell on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics,” in *Christ-Centered Preaching and Teaching*, ed. Ed Stetzer (Nashville: Lifeway, 2013), 18–22; Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures*, 1st ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007); Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-*

is the hermeneutical lens on all of Scripture.⁸ Accordingly, the allegation that dispensational premillennialism is not “Christ centered” enough is not only because we have a focus upon Israel as stated above. It is also because dispensationalists fail to read the entire Scripture (OT and NT) as types of His person and work. It is because we fail to see how the clearer texts about Christ and salvation should (re)interpret the significance of OT prophecies.⁹

The question is whether this type of Christ-centeredness is correct. As stated, dispensationalists agree that the glory of God in Christ is paramount and that the Messiah is the only way of salvation and the promises. Such Christ-centeredness is not the issue. Rather, the issue is hermeneutical. Is a Christ-centered hermeneutic warranted? Is this the hermeneutic of Scripture? What are the ramifications of such an approach? Could it actually detract from or distort all that Scripture proclaims? Could it undermine its desire to uphold the glory of Christ from all Scripture? These are questions we must think through and they illustrate the need for proper hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is not merely a theoretical discipline but rather, it carries great consequences only ultimately how we honor our Savior from His Word.

Thus, we need to think through this hermeneutical issue not only to ensure we have properly interpreted prophetic passages but also to ensure we have honored the Messiah who saved us. In the end, we observe that we not only honor Christ in what we proclaim from the Scripture but in the way we have obeyed Him in studying the Scripture. In light of this, I contend that by properly obeying the hermeneutic of Scripture we honor Christ in numerous ways. We honor Him by obeying the way He demands us to study as creating our own way. We honor Him by carefully articulating all that He has to say relative to all Scripture teaches including eschatology. We thereby honor Him by showing how the fullness of Scripture is fulfilled by Him. All the breadth, depth, and weight of Scripture amplifies the majesty of His glory. Hermeneutical obedience then leads to us truly being the truly most Christ centered in every way.

Presentation of the Christocentric Hermeneutic

An Essential Core of the Christocentric Hermeneutic

The Christocentric hermeneutic has quite a few varieties not only throughout church history but also even within the present day.¹⁰ Some have categorized different schools of this hermeneutic based upon geography.¹¹ I will be concentrating on the major strands of a Christocentric approach that are found in the United States. I say this so that I will not be over generalizing the approach. Even within this, there is still great diversity; nevertheless, as I have commented elsewhere, there are at least six characteristics of the movement no matter what

Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012); Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000); Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Model* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999).

⁸ Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 54, 84.

⁹ Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 138–39.

¹⁰ Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 76–99; Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 70–92.

¹¹ This approach contrasts Goldsworthy and Greidanus from Australia versus those from America (Chapell or Johnson) versus Dutch theologians.

variation one encounters.¹² I would suggest there are at least six emphases that comprise the *sina qua non* of Christocentric hermeneutics.

1. The Christocentric approach fundamentally desires to present every text in its relation with the person and work of Christ.¹³

2. The Christocentric approach stresses the unity of Scripture. Because of this, it is sometimes called a redemptive-historical hermeneutic (however, some use the term without referring to a Christocentric model).¹⁴

3. The Christocentric approach emphasizes the theology of Scripture. It contrasts “moral models” which preach narratives as purely examples of ethical behavior. As opposed to morality, the Christocentric view desires to preach doctrine and theology, a theology of Christ and the gospel.¹⁵

4. The Christocentric approach stresses the need for grammatical-historical interpretation as a foundation for their method. It contrasts itself with allegorical systems in the early church as well as in recent history. To them, Rahab’s red scarf as a symbol of Christ’s blood is an illegitimate interpretation and use of a text.¹⁶ As we will further discuss, while they desire to proclaim a theology of Christ in every text, they desire to do so with some sort of expositional base.¹⁷

5. At the same time, the Christocentric approach acknowledges the need to move beyond grammatical-historical hermeneutics to a theological method. It contrasts itself with a Christotelic approach which abides within a grammatical-historical framework. The Christotelic view upholds the original meaning of a text while acknowledging a text’s implications may ultimately link with Christ.¹⁸ The Christocentric method views this as not enough.¹⁹ To them, Christ is *in* every text. He is somehow the *topic* of every passage. Scriptural texts prefigure Christ’s work or intentionally show who Christ is or is not.²⁰ Some caution here is required for not every supporter of the Christocentric hermeneutic agrees on exactly how this works.²¹ Nevertheless, they agree that a Christotelic/grammatical-historical approach is not sufficient.

¹² Parts of this paper are drawn from Abner Chou, “A Hermeneutical Evaluation of the Christocentric Hermeneutic,” *Master’s Seminary Journal* 27 (2016): 113–39. See fuller discussion on the nature of the hermeneutics of the Christocentric hermeneutic there.

¹³ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 279; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 203–5.

¹⁴ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “Walt Kaiser on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics,” in *Christ-Centered Preaching and Teaching*, ed. Ed Stetzer (Nashville: Lifeway, 2013), 14–15; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 203–5; David Murray, “David Murray on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics,” in *Christ-Centered Preaching and Teaching*, ed. Ed Stetzer (Nashville: Lifeway, 2013), 9.

¹⁵ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 294; Murray, “David Murray on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics,” 9.

¹⁶ Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 88.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 279–85; Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 75–79.

¹⁸ Daniel I. Block, “Daniel Block on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics,” in *Christ-Centered Preaching and Teaching*, ed. Ed Stetzer (Nashville: Lifeway, 2013), 6.

¹⁹ Murray, “David Murray on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics,” 10; Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 24–30.

²⁰ Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 24–30; Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 76–79; Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 11. Although some might want to qualify how one sees Christ in every text, Greidanus sums up the sentiment well: “Since the literary context of the Old Testament is the New Testament, this means that the Old Testament must be understood in the context of the New Testament. And since the heart of the New Testament is Jesus Christ, this means that every message from the Old Testament must be seen in the light of Christ.” (51).

²¹ See discussion in Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 76–99.

6. The Christocentric approach emphasizes its *Christian* nature. It is Christian because it focuses upon the gospel and so is at times called gospel centered preaching. It is Christian because it derives from the apostles and so is at times called apostolic preaching.²² To them, Christ-centered teaching is what makes teaching Scripture distinctively *Christian*. Accordingly, language of preaching and teaching the Bible as Christian Scripture is also adopted.²³ To be clear, just because one uses such language or terminology does not automatically mean he engages in the Christocentric hermeneutic. Nevertheless, such phraseology is found in the movement.

The Christocentric Approach Relative to Meaning and Significance

Having stated these characteristics, seeing how they play out as one interprets Scripture is instructive. One can characterize this in the hermeneutical terms of meaning and significance. Concerning meaning, as stated above (see particularly point 4), they desire to interpret texts per a grammatical-historical hermeneutic. They desire to uphold authorial intent. Hence, past allegories of Rahab's red scarf or the formation of Eve as a prophecy of the church are rejected.²⁴ They recognize past abuses of the system and desire that Christological assertions be anchored in what the text actually says. Hence, meaning is authorial intent and the Christocentric hermeneutic is committed to that.

That leads from meaning to the issue of significance. Significance pertains to the legitimate range of implications and applications set up for by the author.²⁵ Christocentric hermeneutics suggest a variety of ways to draw out Christological implications of texts. For instance, they speak of how the entire storyline ultimately intersects with Christ. Thus, any story contributes to Christology for it traces the way that God brings about Christ in the fullness of time (cf. Gal 4:4). This is technically Christotelic but Christocentric hermeneutics see this as a legitimate implication of a text. Another paradigm would be the fallen-condition focus; texts are a window into the gospel and point out how one is fallen and needs the gospel which Christ fulfills.²⁶ Analogies based upon similarities and well as contrasts are also potential ways one can show the Christological implications of texts.

Yet another option is typology. This sees that certain persons, events, and concepts of the OT foreshadow realities about Christ. This not only is an implication of a text but in fact part of its meaning. As such, a typological grid is a major paradigm for the Christocentric hermeneutic.

Initially, these frameworks do not appear to be categorically incorrect. Contextually certain stories do play in a grander history of redemption that leads to Christ. Passages do point out that one is sinful and thereby in need of the gospel. Illustrative analogies and even a certain form of typology (Rom 5:14) may take place. The controversy hermeneutically occurs when one places these frameworks on texts which do not seem to "fit" with the implications these paradigms generate. The question is when the authorially intended meaning of the text do not connect well with the significance assigned by the Christocentric hermeneutic.

Here is a list I have compiled elsewhere:²⁷

²² Chapell, "Bryan Chapell on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics," 18–19; Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 62–238.

²³ Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 15–21; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 39–43.

²⁴ Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 76.

²⁵ E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 61–67.

²⁶ Chapell, "Bryan Chapell on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics," 19.

²⁷ See again Chou, "A Hermeneutical Evaluation of the Christocentric Hermeneutic," 118–19.

For instance, a fallen condition focus points to how God's forgiveness of David in the Bathsheba incident shows David's need and dependence upon the gospel.²⁸ He is fallen as we are and needs God's grace in Christ. Wisdom literature points out how we are sinful and how we need the One who embodies wisdom, Christ (Prov 8:22; cf. Col 1:15).²⁹ Analogy (both positive and contrastive) and typology generate some interesting results. The darkness surrounding Abram at the founding of the Abrahamic covenant parallels Christ's own darkness at the cross (Gen 15:12; cf. Matt 27:45).³⁰ Israel's Exodus is a "faint shadow" of the spiritual Exodus believers experience in Christ.³¹ Achan's trouble and punitive death (Josh 7:24–25) correlates with Jesus' own death on a cross.³² Samson's rejection by his tribe mirrors how Jesus would be rejected.³³ Samson's victorious death is a picture of the victorious death of One who would not fail as Samson did.³⁴ David and Goliath becomes a picture of how the ultimate David would vanquish sin, Satan, and death because all of those are derivations of how the Seed would crush the serpent's head.³⁵ Furthermore, just as David's men brought him water that was precious (2 Sam 23:16), so the new David brings us precious water of life (Jhn 4:10–11).³⁶ David's refusal to curse back when cursed (2 Sam 16:5–12) mirrors the Messiah who is also subjected to curse without resistance.³⁷ Naboth's death at the hand of false witnesses (1 Kgs 21:13–14) parallels Jesus' own death with false witnesses.³⁸ Esther's willingness to lay down her own life (Esth 4:16) foreshadows the readiness of Christ to do the same with His own life.³⁹ The admonition in Proverbs to not take bribes (Prov 15:27) can only be truly fulfilled in Christ who can redeem us from our partiality.⁴⁰ After all, Jesus' own redeeming death occurred by bribery (Matt 27:1–20) but overcame such corruption to give us life.⁴¹

²⁸ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 307.

²⁹ Edmund P. Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1988), 175–76.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 50–51.

³¹ Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 298–99.

³² *Ibid.*, 311. Technically, this is part of a greater discussion on how Prov 15:27 interrelates with Christ's life. Nevertheless, the connections between that text, Achan, and Christ are difficult to sustain.

³³ Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery*, 17.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 30. The OT does make a connection between Gen 3:15 with other messianic texts. Interestingly enough, it uses consistent language to do so (cf. Num 24:17; Ps 68:21; Ps 110:5–6; Hab 3:13). In other words, one cannot merely see the crushing of the head and make the association. The bar of proof must be higher since the OT itself has formulaic language to indicate a messianic reference.

³⁶ Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery*, 159.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 162.

³⁸ Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 311. See above, Johnson appeals to Naboth as part of a chain of texts dealing with bribery and links that with Christ's death which redeems the believer from such corruption.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 279.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 311. Johnson technically here appeals to other stories in the Old Testament that involve bribery to prove his point. The question is whether Prov 15:27 is incorporated by the author of those texts and whether in fact those texts (like Naboth) have intentionally links with the New. In other words, Johnson has appealed to a series of correlations (significance) which are questionable. This is in fact the main issue of the Christocentric hermeneutic.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

The problem in the examples above is that the details and purpose of these texts do not correspond with the claims of the Christocentric hermeneutic. For instance, in context, the darkness surrounding Abraham does not seem to correspond with God's wrath against Christ. The darkness has an entirely different function contextually.⁴² Similarly, Samson's suffering is not entirely innocent (unlike Christ's) and nothing in the context seems to suggest a positive connection between him and the Messiah. One could argue the opposite since Samson's failed leadership is why Israel needs a king and thereby a Messiah (Judg 17:6). Moreover, is the point of the narrative about David and Bathsheba about us as readers or about the failure of the Davidic dynasty?⁴³ Valid implications stem from what the author said and why he said it.⁴⁴ The dilemma with the list above is that the Christocentric hermeneutic has failed to establish proper linkage between the meaning of a text and its significance.

Theological Basis for the Christocentric Hermeneutic

That being said, the Christocentric hermeneutic has reasons for why such implications are still justified. First, specific passages set up the demand to link Christ from every text. Our Lord Himself says that the Scriptures speak of Him (John 5:39–44) and proclaimed from Moses to the prophets the texts concerning Himself (Luke 24:27). Furthermore, Paul only proclaims Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor 1:23; 2 Cor 4:5). Paul also states that everything is summed up in Christ (Eph 1:10). These particular texts seem to indicate that true Christian proclamation must exclusively be about Christ and that every text thereby is about Him.⁴⁵

Second, a biblical theological rationale also helps to support a Christocentric approach. They contend the Scripture is a unified whole where it appears that later revelation provides an expanded understanding of prior revelation. One can observe how typological patterns exist concerning Adam (Gen 9:1; Rom 5), the sacrificial system (Isa 53:1–10; Heb 8–10), the Exodus (Hos 11:1; Isa 43–44), and even a new David (Hos 3:5). Because of these patterns, the Christocentric hermeneutic contends that the entire OT works typologically. After all, Paul states that these were but shadows of the substance which is Christ (Col 2:16–18). This is reinforced by grander realities where the NT reshapes the OT in light of Christ. Even though Hos 11:1 speaks of Israel's historical Exodus, Matthew reinterprets it to speak of Jesus' escape from Herod (Matt 2:15). Similarly, Jeremiah's description of Israel's exile relates to the circumstances surrounding Christ's birth (Matt 2:18). Certain psalms are also read as if they are about Christ (John 19; cf. Pss 22, 34; 68). Such reinterpretation or perhaps better put, full revelation, only occurs in light of the Christ-event where Christ opens His disciples' eyes to see the full meaning of Scripture (Luke 24:45). In light of this, the NT reveals that God fully unveiled every text to have Christological concepts.

Overall, the Christocentric approach initially presents a tension of desiring to be faithful to literal-grammatical-historical exegesis of biblical texts *and* relating all texts with Christ. In doing so, they affirm a commitment to acknowledging the authorial intended meaning of texts;

⁴² K. A. Matthews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2005), 173. Matthews identifies the darkness as what will accompany the message about a dreadful time for Israel in the near future (Exodus).

⁴³ Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 368–70.

⁴⁴ The focus upon authorial intent is because the Christocentric hermeneutic itself advocates such a position. See above discussion.

⁴⁵ Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 54, 84, 187–88.

however, the significance or implications they draw may not initially cohere with what the text states for the reasons it originally stated it. Nevertheless, this is acceptable in light of greater theological realities that show how later revelation unveils these implications. Specific passages demand such interpretation and a broader redemptive-historical rationale provides the mechanics for why this occurs. In essence, in light of the NT, Christocentric implications of any text are unlocked and unveiled. In this way, even if they do not correspond with the (human) author's original intent, the Christocentric hermeneutic has not abandoned authorial intent. Rather, they claim they cling to God's full intent as revealed in the way the NT has used the OT and demonstrated how it divulges its full Christological implications.

Evaluation of the Christocentric Hermeneutic

As we think about the Christocentric hermeneutic, we should acknowledge its helpful contributions. The emphasis on discussing the theological implications of texts is healthy in a growing biblical and theological undiscerning culture. It healthily balances preaching that is moralistic.⁴⁶ The desire to see the unity of Scripture is also important not only relative to higher critical attacks which minimize the cohesion of Scripture but also for churches that may only preach or teach one part of the Scripture. Indeed, the church should be concerned with giving the whole council of God's Word (Acts 20:20, 27). A concern for Christ's honor is highly important in a growing narcissistic church. Even more, the Christocentric hermeneutic's concern for exegetical accuracy with authorial intent is also laudable (more on that shortly).

Furthermore, one must also admit that the Christocentric hermeneutic is convincing in many ways. For one, as just mentioned, the very rhetoric of being Christ centered and distinctively Christian is appealing. Who does not want to exalt the Messiah and be a Christian? In addition, the passages raised as well as the biblical theological framework are compelling. The Christocentric hermeneutic does not lack theological reasons for their approach. They have a thorough theological framework. If such biblical theological development is how the Bible works and how God's intent works, then we should accept it especially since it leads to a wonderful end: the honor of our Savior. The cogent case presented by the Christocentric hermeneutic show all the more why we need to discuss the issue. It even more accentuates that we cannot merely know what we believe about hermeneutics but *why* we believe this hermeneutic is biblical. Understanding the reasons for why we interpret Scripture the way we do grants us the clarity to discern through issues and to cling to what is not merely a matter of opinion but what is right.

In light of this, one way to think through the issue of the Christocentric hermeneutic inquires whether modifications to the literal-grammatical-historical method are justified. After all, the Christocentric hermeneutic does not undermine traditional hermeneutics but explicitly states they affirm them. That is commendable for such a hermeneutic, as the previous paper attempted to defend, is biblical.⁴⁷ At the same time, they also acknowledge that because of certain theological reasons, divine intent may grant implications not readily seen in what the text said in the original context. The question then pertains to whether these theological grounds are

⁴⁶ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 294.

⁴⁷ See discussion in previous paper; see also Abner Chou, "Is Inerrancy Inert? Closing the Hermeneutical 'Loophole': Inerrancy and Intertextuality," in *The Inerrant Word: Biblical, Historical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspectives*, ed. John MacArthur (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 231–43. See also Abner Chou, *The Prophetic, Apostolic, and Christian Hermeneutic* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, forthcoming).

sufficient to warrant an exception to the rule. We can tackle this in regards to the specific passages the Christocentric hermeneutic puts forth as well as to their biblical theological rationale as a whole.

Examining Specific Passages

Concerning the specific passages, even those in the Christocentric camp recognize the need for substantial qualifications upon their statements. After all, if Paul only knew Christ and Him crucified, what of the resurrection (cf. 1 Cor 15:1–10)? Christocentric scholars argue resurrection is implied or in the context of the passage.⁴⁸ However, this still ignores other realities that Paul teaches about Christ and the gospel. What of sin, substitutionary atonement, or Christ's second coming? These are all parts of what Paul will discuss later on in the book. Are those excluded by Paul's statement? Those in the Christocentric camp would argue in the negative. They in fact are cautious to say that such statements do not exclude preaching the all of God's Word.⁴⁹ Thus, Paul's statements often cited are not as exclusive and monolithic as the Christocentric hermeneutic portrays them.

Instead, in context, those statements contrast Paul's focus upon Christ against other incorrect ideas. This includes preaching Christ as opposed to pride (1 Cor 1:31–2:1), exalting Christ instead of man (2 Cor 4:2–5), and championing Christ as opposed to lessening His supremacy (Col 1:14–20). These contrast should direct the proper application of Christ's centrality. Paul knew Christ alone in opposition to all these sinful dispositions, not in contrast with preaching all of Scripture. The reason Paul can speak of a variety of theological issues and exhort preaching all of Scripture (2 Tim 4:2) without contradiction is because there is no contradiction to these statements. Paul's intent is to show relative to his ministry what he is for and thereby what he is against. This is not intended to show the *modus operandi* on how he honors Christ or even more that he preaches Christ to the detriment of the rest of Scripture. Such contrasts and implications are foreign to these texts.

Similarly, Paul's statement in Eph 1:10 that Christ is the sum of all things may also be over read. The term summed up (*ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι*) can regard the synthesis of an argument or the conclusion of a matter.⁵⁰ However, just as a synthesis, summary, or conclusion does not embody every single detail of what was said, so Christ cannot be every in every single aspect of creation. Rather, a conclusion or summary hits the main or focal point of the argument. In the same way, Christ is the eschatological point of all creation as He subjects all things under feet and they give Him glory (Eph 1:18–23).⁵¹ The language is not Christocentric but more Christotelic in nature.

What of Paul's statement in Colossians that previous revelation are but shadows of what is to come but Christ is the substance (Col 2:16–18)? First, in context, this refers specifically not to the entire OT but rather to certain parts of the OT law. Second, in context, Paul is not speaking of a hermeneutical approach to the OT or how the OT hermeneutically functions but rather to the

⁴⁸ Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 6.

⁴⁹ Andy Johnson, "On Removing a Trump Card: Flesh and Blood and the Reign of God," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 13, no. 2 (2003): 75.

⁵⁰ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 66.

⁵¹ H. W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002), 220–21.

issue of value. A shadow does not have the weight or substance of the body.⁵² The law then does not have the value that Christ has. The reason is that the law was temporary and pointed to Christ (Col 2:17; cf. Gal 4:1–6).⁵³ With that, Paul’s exhortation is about why people should cling to Christ as opposed to evaluating everything through the lens of the law. This is not a hermeneutical lesson from Paul about how to read the OT. To be sure, the OT law as a system is temporary and points to Christ. A Christotelic idea is present. Nevertheless, this is not the same as saying everything in the OT is typological. The passage is neither talking about everything in the OT or even a hermeneutical typology strictly speaking.

Likewise, Christ’s own statement in John 5:39 is Christotelic. He rebukes the religious leaders for reading the Scriptures yet miss the very point of the Scripture which is Christ. Such language does not demand that every single passage be Christocentric. Rather, John 5:39 parallels other statements which discuss how the OT generally points to Christ (cf. 1:45; 2:22; 3:10; 5:45–46; 20:9).⁵⁴ In those statements, the notion is not exhaustive but rather deals with the general tenor of the OT. Köstenberger puts it well:

Jewish diligence in studying the Torah was legendary. But although the Jews’ zeal in studying Scripture was undeniable, Jesus maintained that such zeal was misguided, for alone it was insufficient for attaining eternal life. What is required, rather, is an understanding of Scripture’s true (christological) orientation and purpose. Not merely are individual sayings of Scripture fulfilled in Jesus; Scripture in its entirety is oriented toward him. Yet Jesus’ Jewish opponents “did not want” to come to him (i.e., to accept his claims and believe in him): their refusal is deliberate (R. Brown 1966: 225)⁵⁵

Furthermore, Jesus’ words in John 5:39 do not suggest the religious leaders require a new hermeneutic.

If He did, then He could not have condemned the religious leaders for failing to read it the way it was supposed to be.⁵⁶ Jesus’ argument is that they are condemned because they failed to read it the way they were supposed to and reach the conclusion they were supposed to.⁵⁷ Thus, John 5:39 does not assert a Christocentric nature of the OT nor suggest a new hermeneutic is required to read it. The opposite is actually true.

The same can be said of Jesus’ statements recorded in Luke. The language does not state that Jesus spoke Scripture *as* all about Himself but rather *that which was about Himself* (τὰ περὶ ἑαυτοῦ) in Moses and the prophets (Luke 24:27). Jesus is not making every scriptural passage speak of Him but rather highlighting throughout the OT the pertinent passages concerning Himself. In fact, Jesus condemns His disciples for not recognizing what the prophets have spoken. This shows that the hermeneutic the disciples had was adequate to identifying what the prophets spoke. Even more, it shows that Jesus affirms the human authorial intent of the authors.

⁵² F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1984), 115.

⁵³ Ibid.; R. Y. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 179.

⁵⁴ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 263.

⁵⁵ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 193.

⁵⁶ D. A. Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2010), 283.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

He does not appeal to a hidden meaning or idea but rather what the prophets had articulated. The problem is not in a hidden revelation behind what the OT writers stated but rather the blindness of the readers to properly read. Hence, Jesus must open their eyes (Luke 24:45; cf. Gen 3:7).⁵⁸

Accordingly, the specific passages do not provide the demand that Paul or Jesus read every passage as about Christ. Rather, they had a Christotelic viewpoint and a viewpoint that supports the authorial intent of the OT. This does not demand a modification to traditional hermeneutics but robustly supports it. If anything, these examples illustrate a hermeneutical problem in the Christocentric approach. This study has identified that a key dilemma is how the Christocentric hermeneutic links meaning and significance. This is not only in the passages that they want to see Christocentrically but also in the passages they use for their arguments. They have over read the text or seen implications that do not abide by the original purpose of the statement.

Examining Biblical Theological Rationale

However, the Christocentric approach not only cites individual texts in support but also appeals to a larger biblical theological rationale. The way the NT uses the OT reveals how the OT is typological in nature. Within this, the NT reveals that a hermeneutical shift that occurs. All of this argues for why certain Christological implications are valid.

In response, the previous paper addressed such issues when dealing with the prophets' and apostles' "literal" hermeneutic. In that paper, we observed that the apostles both in claim and practice actually understood the OT correctly relative to both its meaning and significance. The prophetic hermeneutic continues to the apostolic hermeneutic. Thus, a hermeneutical shift based upon a biblical theological shift is not warranted.

For this discussion, we should take this line of thinking one step further. We can observe that the reason the apostles interpreted and applied certain passages to Christ is *not because of typology* per se but because of the *text* itself. For instance, Matthew in applying Hos 11:1 to Christ knew how Hosea used the Exodus. He understood that Hosea used the past Exodus to drive a new Exodus led by a new Moses and David, the Messiah (Hos 1:11 [Heb., 2:2]; 3:5). Thus, the reason he applied Hosea to Christ (and not even Exodus itself) is because of what Hosea said. Matthew's rationale is textual and not typological even evidenced by his choice of Hosea over the book of Exodus.

Similarly, when Matthew uses Jer 31:15 to apply to the slaughter of the innocents in Jesus' day (Matt 2:18), he does so because Jeremiah actually applies to that situation. Jeremiah has in mind the entirety of the exile of which the tragic situation surrounding Jesus' birth takes part. Furthermore, Matthew's use of Jeremiah corresponds tightly for Jesus' deliverance leads to the new covenant (cf. Matt 26:26–28) which is discussed in the context of Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer 31:31). Again, Matthew does not see Jeremiah in a new light but rather in light of what he already established. The grid is textual not typological.

Likewise, even typological comparisons between Adam and Christ are not generated by Paul re-interpreting the Genesis narrative. Rather, the promise of Gen 3:15 already hinted at a savior who was male and thereby had some association with Adam. Even more, later individuals connected with the Seed are cast as Adamic figures (cf. Gen 9:1). On top of that, Daniel himself portrays the Messiah as one like the son of man (Dan 7:9–13). Accordingly, what was initially

⁵⁸ Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 620; Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture*, 282.

established in Genesis is fleshed out by later OT revelation. Paul continues that line of thought. This does not mark a new deeper meaning of the OT but rather one that has been in some form from the beginning and highlighted and expounded by progressive revelation. The entire suggested biblical theological rationale is not entirely accurate.⁵⁹

One can understand the motives and the reasons for a Christocentric hermeneutic. However, in asking whether there are exceptions to the rule, we find that this is not necessarily the case. The specific passages raised do not support that Christ is exhaustively in every single text of the OT. Rather, they illustrate a residual problem in the Christocentric approach: the problem of connecting meaning and significance. At best, they illustrate the Christotelic nature of the OT.

At the same time, we can see from even this brief discussion that a literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutic can discern such Christotelicity. It can identify certain passages as Messianic. It can also trace how the OT develops certain texts and moves toward the NT with a view to Messiah. This is because such a hermeneutic is the very hermeneutic used by those who wrote Scripture. The biblical writers did not have a typological hermeneutic but a textual one. In sum, the Christocentric approach does not warrant an exception to the rule. Rather, it proves that the rule is established and that the rule is sufficient to see how the OT leads to the NT and how the OT is oriented to Christ. It demonstrates what the Bible says is the pattern of interpretation is the pattern of interpretation that honors Christ.

Dangers of the Christocentric Hermeneutic

To some, perhaps the above discussion is completely academic, theoretical, and impractical. Can we not just love Christ more and move on?⁶⁰ Although the discussion of method may appear quite nitpicky and isolated, its ramifications are massive. Scholars recognize that hermeneutics is foundational and so the way one interprets Scripture effects one's exegesis, theology, and living. That is exactly the case here.

One initial ramification is whether we honor Christ in the way we approach His Word. He demands us to rightly divide it (2 Tim 2:15) and to not twist it (2 Pet 3:16). Hence, simply opening one's Bible or reading it does not mean one honors the Lord. One must read it rightly as He demands. Methodology is directly related to this matter. We need to study the exegetical and theological issues surrounding how we read Scripture so that we honor Christ.

However, what is at stake goes far beyond that implication. A Christocentric approach runs the risk of creating "a canon within a canon." That refers to how one part of Scripture is elevated to the exclusion of every other idea within Scripture. Reading every text as about Christ (and particularly soteriology) generates this precise effect. Individual passages lose their voice and other themes are crowded out for this single idea. A Christocentric hermeneutic can force a canon within a canon.

As a result, other doctrines can be pushed aside. The Trinity is a good example of this. Concentrating on the Son can neglect speaking about the Father and the Spirit. It can lead to confusion about the roles within the godhead. This in turn can lead to confusion on doctrines the Christocentric approach desires to champion. After all, salvation itself is Trinitarian in nature (cf. Eph 1:3–13). These warnings are not from those outside of the movement but those within. For

⁵⁹ See further explanation in Chou, "A Hermeneutical Evaluation of the Christocentric Hermeneutic," 129–31.

⁶⁰ For further discussion on this topic see *Ibid.*, 133–35.

example, Greidanus acknowledges that one could lapse into Christomonism where the focus is “primarily on Jesus in isolation from God the Father.”⁶¹

In addition to the Trinity, other doctrines can also be silenced. For example, ecclesiology, Israel, suffering, and sanctification can be deemphasized because the emphasis is primarily upon Christology and soteriology. In fact, the emphasis against “moral preaching” may end up never speaking about any moral issues which Scripture addresses. These again are not speculations but warnings of those within the movement. Christocentric proponents remind their readers that some are “not Christ-centered enough” because they do not talk about Christ in His other roles outside of soteriology.⁶² Christ is not only one’s priest but one’s king.⁶³ The risks spoken of a real ramifications as acknowledge by those in the Christocentric movement.

Since the doctrine of canon is part of bibliology, “a canon within a canon” inherently denigrates bibliology. Certain details and ideas in Scripture are swept away in light of what is truly important; namely, Christ and salvation. For this reason, Block observes that Christocentric preaching at times has a low view of Scripture.⁶⁴ Scripture is only valuable as long as it talks about certain issues. Block also observes that Christocentric approaches rely more upon “the creative genius of the preacher than the divinely intended message of the biblical authors.”⁶⁵ Such a shift in hermeneutical authority places elevates the reader as opposed to Christ who authors His Word (Heb 1:1–4). Instead of being Christ centered by honoring what He said, it has become reader centric by highlighting what one conjures. With that, the Christocentric ironically becomes less Christ centered. Once again, these allegations are not conjecture. The Christocentric approach knows full well that their approach has in the past and even in the present can put Scripture under the reader’s control rather than putting the reader under God’s Word.⁶⁶ This is precisely why Christocentric proponents demand for careful attention to detail and context of the text.⁶⁷ They warn against just jumping straight to Christ.⁶⁸ They desire further discussion on what a text originally meant so as to show how it contributes to the theology about Christ.⁶⁹

Even more, Christocentric methodology not only reshapes how we think and understand all the beauty within Scripture but also how we live. A canon within a canon approach can shift our understanding of the practical issues within sanctification. Especially with an emphasis on the gospel and soteriology, a Christocentric approach can diminish the need for personal effort and responsibility in sanctification that Scripture commands. The recent debate concerning “gospel-centered” sanctification illustrates the reality of the concern. Does one merely need to meditate on the gospel more in order to grow in holiness? Does focusing on one’s justification automatically lead to one’s sanctification? Is obedience just a form of self-justification even

⁶¹ Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 178.

⁶² Murray, “David Murray on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics,” 11; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 179–81.

⁶³ Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery*, 91–105.

⁶⁴ Block, “Daniel Block on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics,” 6–7.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁶ This is precisely why they eschew various past examples of Christocentric interpretation. See Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 88.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 279–85; Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 70–81; Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 379–403.

⁶⁸ Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 276–77; Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 125–26.

⁶⁹ Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 276–77; Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 125–26.

though the Bible makes commands of justified believers (cf. Rom 12–15)?⁷⁰ Those in the Christocentric movement have condemned such thinking.⁷¹ They contend that even if “moral models” are wrong, one still needs to preach moral imperatives in light of Christ and the gospel. They recognize the imbalance that comes from making one theme of Scripture speak for all of it.⁷² Again, the hermeneutical concerns and their effects are not theoretical or inference but rather real issues that have arisen due to imprecise methodology. These ramifications extend not only to the way one thinks but also to the way one lives.

Yet another area impacted is the area of eschatology. I have saved this topic for separate discussion in light of the topic of this conference. The emphases of the Christocentric approach inherently downplay eschatology. This makes sense. The emphasis of soteriological realities overshadow any discussion of eschatology.⁷³ The emphasis on any other entity (say Israel or other nations) is overwritten in light of Christ.⁷⁴ As already noted, the very theological grounding of the Christocentric hermeneutic is one that grounds alternative hermeneutics for eschatological systems outside of premillennialism.⁷⁵ It is thereby without much surprise that the results of a Christocentric hermeneutic on eschatological passages results in readings more akin to amillennialism. A Christocentric reading treats these texts as figurative expressions of Christ’s saving work in the world.⁷⁶ A Christocentric interpretation of Isaiah 43 illustrates this. Isaiah 43 regards a second and eschatological Exodus for the nation of Israel. However, a Christocentric approach regards this merely as how God and Christ are with us in our trials in salvation.⁷⁷ The reading decouples theology from its space-time referent and diminishes terms like “Jacob” or “Israel” (Isa 43:1) which indicates the prophecy directly deals with Israel.⁷⁸ This not only illustrates concerns relative to history and grammar as discussed in the previous paper, it also illustrates how the Christocentric hermeneutic overrides eschatology with soteriology. As we have seen, a canon within a canon swallows up other areas of theology and eschatology is a prime target.

However, this is tragic for eschatology in so many ways amplifies the glory of Christ. Even in the example of Isa 43, the work of the Servant (cf. Isa 42:1) is magnified. He rescues and leads His people Israel back home from even greater distances (Isa 43:5) and greater obstacles (Isa 43:2) than the first Exodus. His power, supremacy, and might are on display and this is not merely theoretical but will be actual for Christ will do this in history. God then will be indisputably the only Redeemer for He actually redeemed in a way that no one else could (Isa 43:10–11). The eschatological fulfillment of His plan revealed in Isaiah proves that God alone is God for He can alone deliver and intend and no one else can reverse it (Isa 43:17). This illustrates that eschatology does give immense glory to God and Christ. As discussed in the previous paper, this is not only because eschatology describes such majesty but also shows such

⁷⁰ Tullian Tchividjian, *Jesus + Nothing = Everything*, Second Printing edition (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 188–92.

⁷¹ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 294.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Murray, “David Murray on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics,” 11; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 179–81. Both Murray and Greidanus acknowledge the tendency of the Christocentric approach to do this with a variety of theological topics which include eschatology. See examples in Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery*, 193–207.

⁷⁴ See examples in Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery*, 193–207.

⁷⁵ See discussion in previous paper.

⁷⁶ See Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 321–29. See also, Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery*, 193–207.

⁷⁷ Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 321–29.

⁷⁸ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40–66*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 137.

majesty is substantive: it is rooted in time and space actions that show that such supremacy is not just words but reality.

Eschatological prophecy of both OT and NT revolve around the Messiah. He is the Shepherd who will not only resurrect His people nationally but even grant them a new heart spiritually and allow for God's glory to visibly fill the entire earth (Isa 6:1–3; 52:13–53:12; Ezek 36:26; 40:3). He is the Conqueror who defeats defeat for His feet will touch the Mount of Olives and destroy the symbol of loss (cf. Sam 15:30) in order to save His own people who are in Jerusalem (Zech 14:3). These realities are not merely for the nation of Israel but rather for the entire world. He is the true King in Isaiah (Isa 11:1–9), the one who judges nations and upholds righteousness in the world (Isa 2:2–4). He ensures true peace where nations will beat their swords into plows (Isa 2:2–4; 9:6) because He is the Prince of peace (Isa 9:6). He is the one who causes creation to be renewed so that peace, justice, and righteousness reign. His dominion allows establishes a renewed creation like Eden (Gen 49:10–12; Amos 9:13–15; Joel 3:18 [Heb., 4:18]). He is the One who will fulfill the promises made to Israel so that peace and blessing will reign not only in the nation but throughout all the earth (Dan 2:35).

Eschatology then showcases how Christ totally and definitively solves not only spiritual problems but all the problems of this world, deals not only with one people (church) but Israel and all the nations, conquers not only sin but all of its effects and consequences, triumphs not only spiritually but cosmically, and exhibits His reign not only in the heart but throughout the entire universe. Eschatology displays the fullness of the glory of Christ not just theoretically but in a way that will be demonstrable and verifiable. It shows that He is truly all in all (Eph 1:23). Erasing eschatology then erases the full extent of Christ's majesty. It produces a theology that lacks the ability to solve all that was raised by the storyline of Scripture itself. It thereby robs Christ of the full extent of His kingship and authority. It robs Him of His full universal power and impact. It robs Him of His full reward for being the lamb slain (Rev 5:1–5).

Therein lies an irony. By becoming Christ-centered hermeneutically, the Christocentric approach becomes less Christ-centered. By diminishing other truths concerning the Trinity, ecclesiology, suffering, or sanctification, they diminish the context of who Christ is and thereby give less dimensions to His person and character. By diminishing one's approach to handling Scripture, one does not honor how Christ has demanded us handle His Word. By potentially distorting sanctification, one may end up living in a way that does not honor Christ. On top of all of this, by diminishing eschatology one robs Christ of all the glory, ordained by His Father (Rev 5:1), prepared for by all of redemptive history (Rev 5:5), and for His honor forever (Rev 5:13). Accordingly, the ultimate area effected by the Christocentric hermeneutic is Christology itself. At the beginning, of this section we asked why we cannot just "love Jesus more" and move on. Why bother talk of methodology? The reason we speak of these issues is because we love Christ and must defend His honor in every part of Scripture for in process and in the end, it all gives glory to Him. He is at stake and that is why this discussion matters.

A Helpful Corrective: Christ's Own Hermeneutic

In light of what is at stake, how should one read Scripture and in particular, the OT? How can one proclaim Christ from Scripture in a way that honors Him and glorifies Him the most? In addition, some may still have some reservations about the discussion thus far. How can one be thoroughly sure of the problems with grounds of Christocentric approach as well as an appropriate solution? I contend a helpful answer to both these questions that solidify problem

and solution resides in Christ's own hermeneutic. After all, one arguably cannot be more Christ centered than Christ Himself. However, more reasons than this exist for why Christ's hermeneutic is important and we turn to that now.

Christ's Hermeneutic as the Hermeneutic of Scripture

The particular important reason Jesus' hermeneutic is so important is because His hermeneutic is the hermeneutic of Scripture. Jesus' hermeneutic is in fact in continuity with the OT prophets' hermeneutic for He continues the prophets' office and ministry. The opening of Hebrews demonstrates this. The author of Hebrews categorizes revelation as that which God spoke in many ways through His prophets in the past versus the singular way He spoke in the Son (Heb 1:1–2). Jesus is the ultimate prophet and climactic revealer of divine revelation. The gospels pick up on this paradigm. In the OT, Moses predicts that a prophet will arise like him (Deut 18:18) and Deuteronomy ends by looking for such an individual (34:10). Jesus' life from its beginning parallels Moses. Jesus is delivered from one who desires to kill young boys (Matt 2:1–15) like Moses was delivered from Pharaoh (Exod 2:1–25). Both Jesus and Moses were in the wilderness for forty units of time (Acts 7:30; Matt 4:2). Both Jesus and Moses give discourses from a mountain (Exod 19; Matt 5). Mathew depicts Jesus as a new Moses and as such, He is the continuation and climax of the prophetic office.⁷⁹

Likewise, Jesus' ministry also parallels Elisha and Elijah. Luke makes a point of this by recording Jesus' own words where He parallels His actions of moving to the Gentiles based upon these prophets (Luke 4:25–30). Following this, Jesus performs a miracle of resurrecting a young boy at Nain (Luke 7:). Luke records this miracle using language describing how Elijah (1 Kgs 17:21) and Elisha (2 Kgs 4:8–48) raised individuals from the dead. Even more, Nain is adjacent to Shunem where Elisha's miracle took place (2 Kgs 4:8). As a result, the crowds proclaim that Jesus is a great prophet (Luke 7:16). Jesus' ministry parallels and thereby continues the prophetic office.⁸⁰

This is not only seen in the God's providential actions but also by our Lord's direct claims. Jesus gives the sign of the prophet Jonah, one that proves the legitimacy of the prophetic ministry (Matt 12:39–41).⁸¹ Jesus states the persecution against Him is the culmination of what occurred against the prophets (Matt 23:35). He also claims "a prophet is not without honor except in his hometown" (Matt 13:57). Even more, He comments that it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside Jerusalem (Luke 13:33). All of these statements indicate that Jesus considers Himself as one of the prophets of old.

Because of the clarity of His actions and claims, people indeed recognize that Jesus is a prophet. As already mentioned, the people from Nain regard Jesus as the great prophet (Luke 7:16). In response to the feeding of the five thousand, the people respond that Jesus must be the Prophet who comes into the world (John 6:14). The crowd proclaims this at the triumphal entry (Matt 21:11). Similarly, the people in response to Jesus' words state that He must be the Prophet (Mark 6:15). When Jesus asks the disciples "Who do people say the Son of Man is?", responses

⁷⁹ Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993).

⁸⁰ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke Volume 1: 1:1–9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 652. "Jesus' effortless call to rise up contrasts with OT examples of resuscitation. Elijah stretched himself three times over the boy he revived (1 Kings 17:21), and Elisha touched his child with his staff and then later lay over him (2 Kings 4:31, 34–35). Resuscitation comes easy to this agent of God."

⁸¹ Eugene H Merrill, "The Sign of Jonah," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 23, no. 1 (March 1980): 23–30.

include Jeremiah or even one of the prophets (Matt 16:14). Even those who report to Herod report that Jesus must be a resurrected prophet (Mark 6:14–15). Because the OT already anticipated a prophet like Moses, the Jews rightly expected the Messiah to have a prophetic office. Jesus by His life and proclamation has this role. He is the continuation and climax of the prophets.

As such, our Lord's ministry does include the hermeneutical component of the prophets' work. Like the prophets before Him, Jesus interacts with and proclaims Scripture. In doing so, He does not differentiate Himself from how the prophets thought but rather claims to continue their ideas and assertions. The way He introduces Scripture indicates this. Phrases like "rightly Isaiah prophesied..." (Mark 7:6), "this is what is written..." (Matt 11:10) express such a sentiment. In fact, other prophets use similar language (Josh 8:31; Jer 26:18; Dan 9:13) which further indicates that Jesus engaged in parallel hermeneutical activity. He continues their ministry of proclaiming Scripture to His generation. Along that line, our Lord states that His parables work out the prophetic ministry (Matt 13:14–15; 13:35; cf. Ps 78:1) and His specific parable of the vineyard (Matt 21:33) picks up and continues how Asaph, Isaiah, Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel developed the story of the vine.⁸² Just as the prophets declare Israel's accountability to God's Word, so Jesus does the same (John 5:45–47). Just as the prophets were to uphold revelation (Isa 8:16–21), so Jesus upholds Moses and the prophets (John 10:35). The very notion that Jesus came to fulfill the law and not abolish it shows that He believes He is in continuity and climax of the prophets' activity rather than contradicting it.⁸³ Thus, Jesus does not distance Himself or deviate from the way the prophets thought about and treated Scripture. Rather, He demonstrates solidarity and fulfillment of what they said. Accordingly, Jesus' hermeneutic is one that links with His predecessors. We then can learn the hermeneutic of the OT because it is part of our Lord's.

The same goes for the NT apostles' hermeneutic. Our Lord declares that NT revelation takes place as the Spirit gives the disciples remembrance of what Jesus said to them (John 14:26). Hebrews reinforces that notion. As we already observed, the opening of Hebrews states that Jesus parallels the prophets in that He proclaims final revelation. That not only shows His continuity and climax of the OT prophetic office but also that He is the primary speaker of NT revelation. Consistently, Hebrews calls Jesus the apostle of our confession (Heb 3:1) because He is the ultimate apostles from whom all NT apostles come.⁸⁴ We can observe this in the way the apostles handle Scripture. They all believe that Isa 53 pertains to our Lord and His atoning death (Rom 5:15; 1 Pet 2:22–24) just as Jesus originally said (Mark 10:45). They all assert that the key command of Scripture is to love God and neighbor (Rom 13:9; Jas 2:8) just as Jesus proclaimed (Matt 19:19). They all declare that our Lord is the cornerstone per Psa 118 and Isa 26 (Acts 4:11; Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:6) just as Jesus established (Matt 21:42). They all describe Christ in light of Pss 2 and 110 just as Jesus did (Rom 1:3–5; Eph 1:15–20; Heb 1:5; Matt 22:44). All of these example not only show how the apostles were consistent with each but also how they were consistent with Christ. The apostles' hermeneutical uniformity stems from the fact that their hermeneutic is Christ's own (which I have already implied is connected with the prophets' own

⁸² J. Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 868; R. T. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1971), 809.

⁸³ David L. Turner, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 162.

⁸⁴ William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 75.

hermeneutic). Therefore, Jesus' hermeneutic is tied with the prophets' and apostles' hermeneutic. His hermeneutic is the hermeneutic of Scripture.

Christ's Hermeneutic as Literal

If Christ's hermeneutic is the hermeneutic of Scripture, the question becomes what is the nature of Christ's hermeneutic. I would suggest the way the prophets read Scripture is the way Christ's read Scripture and thereby the way the apostles read Scripture. The prophetic hermeneutic continues to the apostolic hermeneutic. Within this, I would also contend that our Lord's hermeneutic is literal-grammatical-historical. Christ's statement in Luke 24:25 provides a platform to demonstrate this.

As stated in the previous paper, the question of literal hermeneutics concerns authorial intent and specifically whether the biblical writers adhered to that intent as expressed in its original context or modified that meaning. Earlier, we observed that Christocentric proponents have used Luke 24 to argue that Jesus showed how the OT had a deeper Christological meaning.⁸⁵ They contend the fact that Christ had to enlighten the disciples (Luke 24:45) shows the need for a new hermeneutic. However, this is not the case. Jesus did not say His disciples needed a new hermeneutic. According to the text, the reason the disciples did not know was not because they had a bad hermeneutic but because they were "foolish" and "slow of heart" (ὧ ἀνόητοι καὶ βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ) which prevented them from believing (τοῦ πιστεύειν, Luke 24:25). The issue is not a wrong hermeneutic or the need for a new hermeneutic but the issue of the blinding power of sin and the need for a new heart.⁸⁶ Furthermore, Jesus did not reinterpret the OT. Luke does not say Jesus read every part of the OT as above Himself but rather identified that which is in Moses and the prophets that spoke of Him. He does not transform the meaning of the entire OT. To the contrary, our Lord actually upholds the OT. Jesus rebukes His disciples for not understanding "all that the prophets have spoken" (ἐπὶ πᾶσιν οἷς ἐλάλησαν οἱ προφῆται; Luke 24:25). In this statement, Jesus does not affirm a deeper divine intention but rather the intent of the human authors inspired by God. Those intents are unified. The reason Jesus rebukes the disciples is that they should have known better. What the prophets said is what the Scripture means. Thus, the prophets are sufficiently clear and the disciples should have understood them. In this way, Jesus does not differ from the prophets in their claims or hermeneutic but rather maintains them.

This is not an isolated sentiment. One can see that Jesus engages in a "literal" hermeneutic and not a Christocentric approach in the way He handles Scripture. He uses Scripture to speak of the resurrection (Exod 3:6; cf. Matt 22:32), eschatology (Dan 11:31; cf. Matt 24:15), loving God (Deut 6:5; cf. Luke 10:27), love for others (Lev 19:18; cf. Mark 12:31), marriage (Gen 2:24; cf. Matt 19:5–6), divorce (Deut 24:1–4; Matt 19:7–8), Israel's judgment (Gen 19:1–24; cf. Matt 10:15), and honoring father and mother (Exod 20:12; cf. Matt 15:4).⁸⁷ He never made any of these passages speak of Him but rather talked about what they talked about. Thus, the Christocentric hermeneutic's goal and method is not Jesus' goal or method. Our Lord's goal is to affirm what the OT says. He has a literal approach to Scripture. Ellis observes that such contextual interpretation is a hallmark of Jesus' approach in contrast with His contemporaries:

⁸⁵ See discussion on Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 54, 84.

⁸⁶ Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture*, 282–83; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke Volume 2: 9:51–24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 1916.

⁸⁷ See discussion in Chou, "A Hermeneutical Evaluation of the Christocentric Hermeneutic," 132.

Contrary to some misguided modern interpreters, there is never any suggestion in the Gospels of Jesus opposing the Torah, the law of God, the OT. It is always a matter of Jesus' true exposition of scripture against the misunderstanding and/or misapplication of it by the dominant scripture-scholars of his day. This becomes apparent in Jesus' encounters with such rabbis in numerous debates, a number of which the Evangelists are careful to retain.⁸⁸

Thus, Jesus used Scripture contextually, literally, and not in a Christocentric manner.

At the same time, our Lord not only understood the Scripture rightly in its immediate context but even in how the prophets wove OT texts together. Jesus knew of the greater context of Scripture intended by the authors themselves. Within this, our Lord grasped how the prophets maintained the meaning of prior revelation yet developed certain legitimate implications (significance) of those ideas. Jesus continues that pattern of upholding the original ideas of a text yet continuing the very applications the prophets specified and developed.

As already mentioned, Jesus' parable of the vine exemplifies this. The prophets used the vine metaphor to describe Israel's spiritual state from being healthy (Ps 80:8–9) to bearing bad fruit (Isa 5:2) to being an absolutely useless piece of wood (Ezek 15:2). They used the vine metaphor to trick Israel into admitting their guilt (Isa 5:6).⁸⁹ Our Lord follows this exact paradigm. He makes it clear He alludes to Isaiah and others (Matt 21:33) as well as uses the vine to trick the nation into admitting their guilt in rejecting Him (Matt 21:40–42). Jesus knew exactly how the OT worked, followed it, and climaxed it.

Similarly, Jesus does this in another parable: the parable of the mustard seed. With language of every bird of the air and beast of field lodging in the branches of the tree (Matt 13:32), Jesus echoes what is said in Dan 4:12 and Ezek 17:1–9. The consistent pattern in those texts is that when the tree (which symbolizes a kingdom, cf. Ezek 17:23) becomes so great, God chops it down (Dan 4:14; Ezek 17:9–10). Conversely, in our Lord's parable, the tree never falls (Matt 13:32). It picks up on what Ezekiel reveals about the true tree of God's kingdom which never fails (Ezek 17:23). In that way, Jesus knows the way Daniel and Ezekiel use the imagery of the tree.

Jesus use of Lev 18:5 provides another example of how He knew the interconnectedness of the OT. In confronting the rich young ruler, our Lord responds to the question of what one should do to enter the kingdom (Luke 10:25–28). After listing certain laws, Jesus says "Do this and you will live." That phrase is from Lev 18:5. The verse in and of itself discusses God's holy standard relative to the covenant.⁹⁰ Later prophets remind Israel of that standard and the reality that the nation cannot keep it.⁹¹ They point out that the only way to truly attain the blessing God

⁸⁸ E. Earle Ellis, "How Jesus Interpreted His Bible," *Criswell Theological Review* 3, no. 2 (1989): 350.

⁸⁹ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 1–39*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1986), 154.

⁹⁰ G. J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1978), 253; Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus*, New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2000), 241; John Hartley, *Leviticus*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1992), 293.

⁹¹ J. L. Martyn, "Paul's Understanding of the Textual Contradiction Between Habakkuk 2:4 and Leviticus 18:5," in *The Quest for Context and Meaning: Studies in Biblical Intertextuality*, ed. C. A. Evans and S. Talmon (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 5; Preston Sprinkle, "Law and Life: Leviticus 18.5 in the Literary Framework of Ezekiel," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 31, no. 3 (Mr 2007): 275–93; Joel Willitts, "Context Matters : Paul's Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12," *Tyndale Bulletin* 54, no. 2 (2003): 5.

has for the nation is through the new covenant (Ezek 18:1–31; 20:11–26; Neh 9:29–30; cf. Ezek 36:26). Our Lord’s point is exactly what Ezekiel and Nehemiah show. The rich young ruler cannot enter the kingdom on his own; he needs the new covenant.⁹² In fact, the message is not lost to even that young man. He asks “but who is my neighbor?” trying to still justify himself (Luke 10:29). Jesus knows and maintains the logic of the prophets.

The list could go on. Jesus speak of John the Baptist juxtaposing Malachi and Isaiah because they are already connected (Matt 11:10–14). Jesus speaks of eschatology in terms of Isaiah and Daniel because they already are connected (Matt 24:29–31). Our Lord’s words leading up to and on the cross collate certain psalms that are interconnected (Matt 27:30–60; cf. Pss 22; 69). Throughout our Lord’s ministry, His use of Scripture demonstrates how thoroughly contextual He was. He not only knew the immediate context but also the intertextual context of passages He used. He was so finely in tune with their intent He knew how to apply them in a way that would continue the precise ramifications discussed by His predecessors. Jesus’ hermeneutic is a literal hermeneutic *par excellence*.

Christ’s Hermeneutic as Grammatical

As discussed in the previous paper, grammatical hermeneutics refers to careful analysis of language from its broad features down to its individual lexical and syntactical details.⁹³ All of these linguistic factors are part of clearly communicating the precise intent of the author.⁹⁴ Christ’s hermeneutic displays such linguistic astuteness. One can begin to observe this from Luke 24. Our Lord’s use of comprehensive terminology like “*all* the prophets spoke” (Luke 24:25; emphasis mine) which includes not only the Messiah’s glory but His suffering shows how our Lord knew the claims of Scripture comprehensively and not selectively.

Moreover, such comprehensive reading is not merely breadth but with extensive grammatical depth. Initially, one can witness this in nearly any instance when our Lord quotes from the OT. He quotes using precise wording from prior revelation showing His awareness of what the text linguistically stated. In addition, His arguments hinge on individual terms. In John 10:35, He refutes the religious leaders by reminding them that Scripture calls those who bear God’s authority “gods.”⁹⁵ He quotes from Ps 82:6 stressing an individual term. He knew the Bible precisely down to the word. Similarly, Jesus’ use of the term “lifted up” (ὑψόω) in John also reflects this. He speaks of being lifted up which in some contexts discuss the cross (John 3:14–15) but also His ultimate exaltation and victory (John 12:32). The reason the term can be used for both is because in Isaiah that is exactly what occurs. YHWH sits high and exalted on His throne (Isa 6; אֲשָׁר יֹשֵׁב; Gk: ὑψηλοῦ καὶ ἐπηρμένου) and the only other one who has that exact exaltation in the book is the Servant because of how He suffered and died (cf. Isa 52:13; אֲשָׁר יִרָם; Gk.: ὑψωθήσεται καὶ δοξασθήσεται).⁹⁶ Our Lord’s use of a word reflects His understanding of the interconnections in Isaiah (cf. John 12:37–50).

⁹² Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 1026.

⁹³ Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard Duane Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011), 575, 623.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 623–24.

⁹⁵ Köstenberger, *John*, 314.

⁹⁶ See *Ibid.*, 127; Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 201; Abner Chou, *I Saw the Lord: A Biblical Theology of Vision* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2013), 30–31.

Other examples also support this. Our Lord uses the term of how He will give His life for the many (λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν; Mark 10:45) which alludes to Isaiah’s suffering servant who gives His life for the many (Isa 53:11; לְרַבִּים).⁹⁷ Jesus’ beloved title of the “Son of Man” also refers to the title in Dan 7:9–13. In fact, our Lord even quotes from that passage highlighting the detail of the Son of Man coming on the clouds (Matt 26:64). Again, Jesus knows words and phrases from the OT and uses them contextually. He understands the details of Scripture.

In addition, quite a few have observed that Jesus’ emphasis of the present tense supports the resurrection. In refuting the Saducees, our Lord observes that God cannot be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob if they are dead and gone (Matt 22:22–32).⁹⁸ In the original context, the title “God of Abraham...” is a covenant title for God. It denotes His identification not only with the patriarchs but His covenant relationship with them which includes how He will uphold His covenant promises made to them (cf. Gen 26:24).⁹⁹ Even more, God makes it clear that His promises are not only for the descendants of Abraham but to the patriarch themselves. For this reason, Genesis holds out hope that they are not dead and gone away but gathered to their people in the afterlife (cf. Gen 25:8; 47:30) presumably awaiting the fulfillment of such promises Heb 11:13).¹⁰⁰ All of these factors support that the copula is intentionally present tense for a reason. God is their God because He has a covenant relationship with them and is driven to fulfill His promises not only to their offspring but through that to them personally. Our Lord’s use of the present reflects again that He not only knows the details of the text but knows them thoroughly in their context.

These examples support that our Lord’s hermeneutic is grammatical in nature. He knows words, phrases, and syntax. He knows them per the way the author intended to use them. This both reaffirms the point of the previous section but also that the way our Lord read (and thereby the prophets and apostles) was thoroughly grammatically.

Christ’s Hermeneutic as Historical

Historical hermeneutics recognizes the importance of historical backgrounds as well as how theology is grounded upon history. As discussed in the previous paper, the biblical writers read and wrote this way. Without surprise, our Lord’s hermeneutic also reads Scripture this way. Jesus robustly affirms the historicity of what the OT taught. He affirmed the reality of Adam (Matt 19:4–5), Isaiah (Matt 15:7), the Ninevites (Luke 11:30), the queen of Sheba (Luke 11:31), Elijah and Elisha (Luke 4:25–27), Solomon (Luke 11:31), David (Mark 2:25), Abiathar (Mark

⁹⁷ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 326.

⁹⁸ Note the Gk. particularly in Matthew (ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ θεὸς Ἀβραάμ καὶ ὁ θεὸς Ἰσαὰκ καὶ ὁ θεὸς Ἰακώβ). Matthew stresses the verb in what could be a verbless clause to accentuate the point. The way the construction works in Hebrew presumes a present tense verb. This only accentuates the rhetorical function of the title for God. Such phraseology declares God’s covenantal faithfulness to those patriarchs. Hence, the tense is warranted both grammatically and contextually.

⁹⁹ Nahum Sarna, *Genesis*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 187. Note Sarna’s own comment on this phrase “This epithet, used here for the first time, is distinctively characteristic of the subsequent patriarchal narratives. On this topic, see Excursus 20. In the present context, the designation affirms God’s role as the guarantor of the promises: He is the same One who spoke with Abraham. At the same time, it emphasizes the continuity of the succession from father to son, and it connotes a personal and intimate relationship between God and the individual.”

¹⁰⁰ William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 357.

2:26)¹⁰¹, Jonah (Matt 12:39–41), as well as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matt 22:32) to name a few. Within this, our Lord uses history to ground theology. Jesus affirms the sign of Jonah to provide a sign for His legitimacy. Jesus speaks of the historicity of Gen 1–2 in order to show the theology of marriage which Genesis establishes (Matt 19:4–5). Jesus speaks of Elijah and Elisha and their ministry to the Gentiles, a point that the author of Kings raised.¹⁰² Thus, our Lord ties history and theology together.

However, our Lord not only emphasizes history but also views history in light of God’s plan. Jesus consistently views history as having directionality. He discusses how it anticipates, moves toward, and culminates in Christ. For example, Christ discusses how the prophets anticipated this day (Matt 13:17) and that the OT speaks of Him (John 5:39–46). He proclaims how the current generation is the climax of previous unbelieving generations (Luke 11:51). Even more, in Matthew, our Lord recounts the flow of revelation and history as “the law and the prophets prophesied until John...” (Matt 11:13). Our Lord views history as God’s plan and workings toward His coming.

This was not a hidden agenda but one the prophets’ themselves (even Abraham, John 8:56) recognized. Jesus does not put words in the prophets’ mouth but follows what they have already said. Moses recounted Israel’s history up to the Conquest but also looks forward to what will take place in the latter days when one like Moses will arise (Deut 18:18), a Seed/king will come (Gen 3:15), and the promises will be fulfilled (Gen 49; Deut 33). The historical books pick up on this narrative and continue it showing how the Davidic covenant sets the theological infrastructure for Israel’s true king, yet no human king can fulfill that powerful covenant. They also move history forward for the very ending of the historical books show God’s plan continues for the kingly line has not ended (2 Kgs 25:27–30), His relationship with His people has not ended (2 Chron 36:22–23), and yet even at the end of Israel’s history in the OT, fulfillment has not yet taken place. The psalmists and the prophets along various points of history echo this sentiment. They recount Israel’s past history (Pss 78; 105–6; Ezek 16; 23; Neh 9) but also anticipate where it is going (Ezek 16:53–63; Pss 96–99). Repeatedly the OT understands what has happened relative to God’s plan in the past and the general direction that plan is heading toward for the future. With such a big picture perspective, they can write with directionality toward the future because they are not merely focused upon the issues of their day but how those relate to the issues for all time. House says it well:

Christian theologians have long believed that the Old Testament can exist as a discrete witness, but also that it can be read as literature that leads naturally to the New Testament. It is important to admit that it is not blatantly obvious to all but the most obstinate reader that such is the case. Other reading strategies can lead to other conclusions, yet it is just as important to assert that reading the New Testament in light of and as a continuation of the Old Testament is not a forced pattern.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (HarperOne, 2007), 9–10. Some have observed that David did not technically seek bread during the days when Abiathar was high priest. They may charge Jesus with historical inaccuracy here. However, the phraseology ἐπὶ Ἀβιαθάρ ἀρχιερέως does not denote “at the precise time” of but rather “around” the time, see Matt 1:11 for an explicit use of such a construction.

¹⁰² Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 271–72.

¹⁰³ House, “Old Testament Narrative,” 43.

Hence, our Lord had a historical hermeneutic. He believed the Bible is engrained in history for it uses history as the basis for theology. On the historical side, this is why our Lord affirms the reality of historical assertions of the Scripture. On the theological side, this is why our Lord ties history and theology and specifically understands how God's plan moves through history. He knows what the prophets have already stated: God's plan moves in history and that history moves from the OT to the NT and Christ. The prophets were intentionally building revelation in that direction.

Christ's Hermeneutic and the Old Testament

With that, we do not need to read Christ into the OT. What Christ reveals is that within a literal-grammatical-historical approach, factors already exist in the prophets' intent for their writings to directly prophesy of Christ and prepare for Him in a variety of ways. As stated, this could be through direct prophecy. It could also be to prepare for Christ in understanding certain theological realities that tie in (via the prophets' work itself) into prophetic anticipations of Christ. For example, one can see how the sacrificial system links with Christ via Isa 53. Thus, knowing the sacrificial system in and of itself well has legitimate implications on understanding Christ well if we follow the path the OT lays out for us. On top of preparation in individual concepts, the OT provides an overarching storyline on a macro level that prepares the way for Christ. Israel's history moves toward on a broad level the advent of their Messiah.

Ultimately, our Lord has reminded us that the prophets wove texts together whether that be in individual terms or through the directionality of history. We must follow how the prophets did this and see how they connect ideas and history to Christ. In doing this, we can legitimately teach Christ from the OT the way that He the prophets did. That not only honors Christ in the process but also will honor Him even in the result.

Christ's Hermeneutic and Eschatology

Speaking of honoring Christ in both the means and in the end, we can see how our Lord's literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutic dealt with OT eschatological texts. In doing so, we can also observe how having the right process will in the end produce a theology that showcases the majesty of Christ in a substantive and full manner.

Our Lord uses the OT to speak often of eschatology (see Matt 24;29–32; Joel 2:10; Isa 34:4; Dan 7:9–13). Eschatology is not a subject our Lord shies away from. Instead, He speaks to this for it gives hope, accountability, and relates to His glory. Overall, in these instances, our Lord's hermeneutic assumes the original meaning of a text. For instance, our Lord often cites these OT prophecies without any modification or qualification. It appears from this that He saw no need to say anything else than what one would have normally understood reading the OT prophecies. Hence, He affirmed the prophecies about the Son of Man's return (Matt 26:64; cf. Dan 7:9–13) and a kingdom being restored to Israel (Matt 19:28; cf. Isa 2:2–4; 6:1–3; 11:1–19). This is particularly striking since our Lord does not hesitate to challenge wrongful interpretations of the OT with the correct one. However, our Lord does not see the need to make such clarification or correction in these cases. That is important for it demonstrates that He continues the ideas of the OT and no new interpretation is warranted.

Within this, our Lord's use of the OT affirms a plethora of ideas that relate to dispensational premillennialism. For one, He affirms the notion of the tribulation found in the

OT. In Matthew 24, our Lord affirms Daniel's prophecy concerning the abomination of desolation. Such terminology originally related to a prophesied event concerning the kingdom of Greece (Dan 11:31) which Daniel knew related with the end times (Dan 12:11).¹⁰⁴ Jesus affirms this by stating the abomination of desolation will appear again in a historical event just as Daniel original understood (Matt 24:15).

Our Lord not only affirmed the tribulational period but that which accompanies His return. Jesus discusses OT prophecies that speak of signs and wonders in heaven (Joel 2:10; Isa 34:4) as well as the gathering of Israel (Isa 27:13). Jesus affirms these are all eschatological and events which are associated with His coming (Matt 24:29–31). To be technical, our Lord states that the signs in heaven lead up to His coming while the regathering of Israel happens thereafter (Matt 24:29–31). That specific ordering of tribulation, Christ's coming, and establishing His kingdom is premillennial.

In addition, our Lord affirms that such a kingdom is of a physical nature. He explicitly affirms the regeneration of this world and within that the gathering and even judgment of Israel (Matt 19:28). Those ideas are major themes throughout OT prophecies. He ascends from the Mount of Olives as a sign that He will also return in the same way to the same location (Acts 1:12). This explicitly affirms the prophecy of Zech 14:3 where God will come down onto the Mount of Olives and from there rescue His people and establish His physical kingdom. Our Lord consistently affirms what the OT anticipated.

On top of all of this, our Lord asserted that these prophecies will come true physically in time-space and in the future. One way to demonstrate this is through our Lord's interactions in His various "meals" in Luke. On the night before He was betrayed, Jesus speaks of eating and drinking of the table when He returns in His kingdom (Luke 22:16). In that moment, He looks forward to His victory and the celebration of such in the kingdom. Luke particularly records after the resurrection how Jesus broke bread with certain disciples at Emmaus (Luke 24:30). The wording alludes back to a series of meals in Luke where Jesus provides for the five thousand (Luke 9:16) and for His disciples at the Lord's supper (Luke 24:30).¹⁰⁵ On one hand, the meal Jesus eats is not the one He spoke of earlier. As commentators note, the wording is different and the meal itself was not a Passover meal.¹⁰⁶ Thus, Luke does not portray this meal as the fulfillment of what Jesus earlier promised. On the other hand, the post-resurrection meal still shows something about that earlier promise. This post-resurrection meal indicates that Jesus has secured victory and that the celebration in the kingdom (and thereby the kingdom itself) is not merely "spiritual" in nature but rather physical. Just as Jesus ate before and after the resurrection, so shall we all eat in the future kingdom just as He promised. We will celebrate the way God has provided in Christ who has thereby changed history.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, this is precisely why Luke later mentions that our Lord eats fish. He is not a ghost (Luke 24:39) but rather flesh and blood. The kingdom has a physical component. This corresponds with the physicality of the kingdom and even the celebration in the kingdom established by the OT (cf. Isa 25:6). In this way, our Lord's

¹⁰⁴ Chou, *I Saw the Lord*, 128–31. See for further discussion of the parallels in Daniel between the third and fourth kingdoms. They are analogies of each other so one would expect such overlap and juxtaposition in Dan 11–12.

¹⁰⁵ John Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1998), 1206.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.; Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 1919. As Bock notes, "This meal is not a reenactment of the Lord's Supper since there is no wine and nothing is said over the elements (against, among others, Nolland 1993b: 1206)."

¹⁰⁷ Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1213. Nolland's overall point is correct. Jesus reveals who He is via these acts; however, the intertextual connectivity shows that He is working to fulfill what was also entailed in these acts. The Lord's supper provides that agenda which continues in a material way as testified by the resurrection.

actions allude to and affirm OT prophecies and eschatological conceptions. The resurrection does not change the kingdom and eschatology but confirms it.

Thus, Jesus indeed deals with the subject of eschatology and within this does not engage in a Christocentric approach. Instead, He assumes the authorial intent of the OT and explicitly affirms what the OT says. Even more, He demonstrates His glory through it all. We can observe this even in the limited examples cited above. In discussing eschatology in the Olivette Discourse, our Lord declares that even though great tribulation will come, He will have victory in the end. Even though He will be rejected in Jerusalem soon, in the end He shows that He is Israel's true king and Jerusalem will be His capitol. Along with this, His physical return to the Mount of Olives demonstrates the climax of His victory. As Zechariah prophesied, although past kings ran over the Mount of Olives in defeat (2 Sam 15:30), the true King will conquer defeat and establish it as the physical monument of His salvation for His people. That definitive victory belongs to only the Lord Jesus Christ.

In addition, Jesus' apostles will judge the nation showing His fulfillment of justice and righteousness in the land (Luke 22:30; cf. Isa 32:1). He will have the ultimate glory in fulfilling the promises to and actualizing the very destiny of Israel in the end. In light of this triumph, Jesus promises He will eat a real meal with us in a real kingdom in this world (Luke 22:16; 24:30, 39). This meal celebrates the fullness of Christ's redemption, one that centrally saved our souls in forgiveness but, in His own words, is indicative of the fulfillment of the kingdom (Luke 24:16). That is when Paradise comes (Luke 24:43), the world is renewed (Matt 19:28), and the world is made like Eden again (Luke 24:43; cf. Rev 2:7).¹⁰⁸ The meal celebrates that all the ramifications of the cross have come to pass. Jesus proclaims that eschatology celebrates and honors Him.

Accordingly, our Lord demonstrates that eschatology displays the very climax of His majesty and supremacy in a way that is real and substantive for that will happen and it will be visibly and indisputably displayed in this world (cf. Isa 6:3; 60:1–16; 66:18; Ezek 38:23; Dan 7:9–13; Zech 14:3). If one omits a detailed study of eschatology, one then omits the glorifying of Christ. Rather, we must study eschatology and study it in the way our Lord proclaimed it. That makes us truly Christ centered.

Conclusion

I once gave a lecture on the importance of creation as established in Genesis 1. A theology of creation shapes our understanding of God's supremacy (Psa 33:9), Christ's deity (John 1:1–3; 2 Cor 4:4–6), sin (Gen 3:1–10), anthropology (Gen 1:26–28), and salvation (Gen 3:15; Ps 51:10; cf. 2 Cor 4:4–6; 5:17). Because the theology of creation is involved in these discussions, changing the doctrine of creation has ramifications upon all these other theological realities. After the lecture, a student said he understood why we need to care about that aspect of Scripture. A lot is at stake when we deal with our origins. He wondered whether that the same

¹⁰⁸ Again Nolland here is helpful. See *Ibid.*, 1152. “In both Greek and Hebrew the emphasis seems to be upon what grows in a designated space; whether this be fruit trees, timber for the king, or the decorative plantings of a park. In the Septuagint, *παράδεισος* was used for the garden of Eden (Gen 2:8; 13:10; Ezek 31:8). In Isa 51:3, the promised future restoration involves the wilderness becoming like Eden, the “garden [LLX: *παράδεισον*] of the Lord.” In time this becomes, through reflection on the Genesis account, a hope for an eschatological reversal of the expulsion from the garden (*T. Levi* 18:10–11; Rev 2:7; 22).”

thought could be applied to the doctrine of eschatology. Is there really anything at stake that is so dramatic and dire that demands us to think and care about the issue?

A variety of thoughts crossed my mind. One could show how God's faithfulness to His promises (Gen 12:1–3; Isa 43:11–13) or the justice, righteousness, and true victory of God in this world (Isa 11:1–10; 60:1–22) are at stake. Those are major doctrines at risk if one neglects a proper understanding of eschatology. In the end though, I said, "What is at stake is the honor of Christ. Will Christ receive what He deserves and shows His full glory?" Eschatology gives us hope (1 Thess 4:17–18; 1 Pet 1:13) but as we have seen, it simultaneously gives praise to Christ. We need to remind our people that we study eschatology because of our love for Him and what He has revealed to us. In that vein, if we are Christ-centered, then we want to study a topic in Scripture that truly exalts Him. If we are Christ-centered, then we will study the future climax of His glory in the way He demands. That will thereby bring the most glory to Him for we will have honored Him not just in the lectern but in the study and proclaimed His glory not just from the part of Scripture but the whole. That is a truly Christ-centered hermeneutic.