

**Creatively Moving to the Cross:
Adopting the Goal while Adjusting the Method of Early Christian Preaching**

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Abstract

One goal of early Christian preaching was to read Old Testament Scripture in search of Christ. However, Lienhard writes: “It is something of a shock for modern interpreters to turn to patristic literature and discover the Fathers, who bequeathed orthodoxy to the church, indulging the most fanciful forms of what appears for all the world to be eisegesis.”¹ You may have experienced this shock as you consulted the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. This paper argues that, while the goal of preaching Christ is worthy, the method utilized by early Christian preachers needs to be adjusted to enhance the pericope’s meaning. The author presents a method of creatively moving to the Cross and illustrates this method from the preaching of Timothy Keller of Redeemer Presbyterian Church on 1 Kings 3:16-28.

Three standard examples from early Christian preaching of creatively moving to the Cross

Numbers 20:2-13 records how God’s people and their leaders, Moses and Aaron, acted in the waterless wilderness of Zin. In a nutshell: the people quarreled with their leadership, the leadership went into the presence of God and received instruction concerning how to provide water, but didn’t quite follow those instructions, yet God provided water anyway and told the leadership what would happen because of their unbelief and failure to uphold God as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel.

Because of Paul’s interpretation in 1 Corinthians 10:4 (“...they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ”), we would expect early preachers would find Christ in Numbers 20:2-13. Here’s how Augustine understood part of the narrative: “The rock is Christ in a sign, the true Christ in the Word and in the flesh. And how did they drink? The rock was struck twice with a rod. The double striking prefigures the two pieces of wood on the cross.”²

Exodus 4:24-26 contains a puzzling scene as Moses begins to make his way back to Egypt to redeem his people. During a stopover, the Lord who commissioned Moses to deliver His people “met him and sought to put him to death” (v. 24). Thankfully, Moses’ wife, Zipporah, knows how to stop the attack. She circumcises their son “and touched Moses’ feet with it and said, ‘Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!’” (v. 25). In Augustine’s, *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin*, he wrote, “Christ was the rock whence was formed the stony blade for the circumcision...”³

One final example comes from Theodoret of Cyr’s understanding of Psalm 23. Concerning the phrase, “Your rod and your staff comforted me,” he writes, “with one he supports my weakness, with the other he guides toward the right way. You would not be wrong, however, to apply this to the saving cross....This is the meaning...the cross is assembled from two rods, with the upright staff confirming and directing those who believe in him and strengthening those who are weak, and using the crossbar as a rod against the demons.”⁴

Christological interpretation of early Christian preaching was characterized by two major tendencies. First, all three examples show the tendency of atomistic interpretation. The preachers found Christ in the details of the narrative, such as the rock being struck twice. Their goal was to preach Christ and they creatively moved from details in the narrative to the cross to accomplish their goal. Second, and more important for this study, these three interpretations show the tendency to engage in what I call disconnected, Christological interpretation. In other words, there appears to be no attempt on the part of early Christian preachers to connect Christ to the meaning of the pericope.

In Numbers 20, the discovery of the Cross in the rock being struck twice does not help interpret the narrative. There is no connection between Christ crucified and the sinful response of God's people in the wilderness. The same goes for seeing Christ as the rock from which a cutting instrument was formed in Exodus 4. Seeing Christ does not help interpret the scene in which God is stopped from seeking to kill Moses. Theodoret of Cyr's discovery of the Cross in the shepherd's rod and staff in Psalm 23 did not have any bearing on the meaning of the Psalm, in particular how a believer could claim that the Lord was their Shepherd according to the Psalm.

While I admire and espouse the goal of early Christian preachers to find Christ throughout the Old Testament, I am proposing that an adjustment needs to be made so that the Christological discovery enhances the meaning of the pericopes. But, before I present an adjustment, I want to briefly give two reasons why this approach is necessary. The first reason has to do with the implication of Jesus' teaching in Luke 24. The second reason has to do with the results of biblical theology's attempt to locate a canonical center.

Two reasons for Christological interpretation

First, while teaching His disciples, if Jesus applied His hermeneutic throughout the entire Old Testament Scripture, then this kind of creative exegesis was one of the ways He "[began] with Moses and all the Prophets" and "interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27; verse 44 adds "and the Psalms"). If Jesus only utilized His hermeneutic in selected Texts, then maybe He could get by with the more obvious connections created by quotes and clear allusions.⁵ The wording of Luke 24:27, however, favors the need for Jesus to creatively move from most Old Testament preaching portions to some aspect of His person and work.⁶ Luke says, "all the Prophets" and "in all the Scriptures."

In most Old Testament sections Jesus would have had to creatively move to Himself since direct quotes are sparse. Greidanus cites research that shows that the New Testament contains 1604 quotations from 1267 Old Testament passages.⁷ If my math is accurate, then that leaves approximately 26,300 unquoted verses in the Old Testament.⁸ How would Jesus move, for instance, from those narratives about the kings in Kings and Chronicles to Himself? McCartney and Clayton raise this issue: "Since the NT writers do not cover everything in the OT, we may expect large areas where the typology or *sensus plenior* has not been indicated in the NT."⁹ Those large areas are either off limits to the Christ-centered hermeneutic, or we can attempt to creatively move to the cross. However, I stress again that Luke twice said, "all," which suggests that expositors should (must?) find ways to creatively move to the cross if they are to implement Jesus' hermeneutic.¹⁰

Second, if these creative, Christological connections are not made, then a crucial segment of Scripture's message is absent in most Old Testament preaching portions. I've arrived at this conclusion through interaction with Walt Kaiser's writings, specifically his proposed canonical center. Kaiser argues that in order for biblical theology to function as "informing theology" for the Church, it must have a "canonical center."¹¹ He states his center as "...God's word of blessing...or promise...to be Israel's God and to do something for Israel and through them something for all the nations on the face of the earth."¹²

Notice what this canonical center leaves out. It does not tell us what Scripture tells us--how God's promised blessing came true. Kaiser's center has left out Scripture's portrayal of Jesus as the One through whom God's blessing/promise would come to the Jew first and also to the Greeks. Kaiser's analysis has left out the Gospel and this affects the interpretation/application of Scripture, especially Old Testament Scripture. This observation becomes an important part of my understanding of how Christ-centered preaching operates. Christ-centered preaching consistently fills in Kaiser's canonical center by showing how God-in-Christ brings His salvation/blessing to those who believe. In the Old Testament this means showing Christ as God's ultimate display of grace, the means by which judgment is averted, and the fuel for the desire and capacity to live according to the stipulations of His covenant.

A proposed adjustment to creatively moving to the Cross: Anchor Christological meaning to the meaning of the preaching portion

Now, having presented two reasons for adopting the Christological goal of early Christian preachers, let's discuss a way to adjust their method so the connection to Christ enhances the meaning of a preaching portion. In the examples above of early Christian preachers, the connection to Christ was disconnected from the meaning of the preaching portion. They knew they needed to find Christ, but didn't know that Christ taught His disciples how He completed the meaning of those pericopes. The narratives, laws, prophetic oracles, and Psalms all meant something more than was previously known. I do not believe Jesus was showing them Himself in a way that was disconnected from the meaning of the pericopes. Yet, this is how much Christological exegesis is conducted.¹³

Let's revisit Numbers 20:2-13. Augustine taught that the double-striking of the rock pictured the two pieces of wood that made up Christ's cross. I am suggesting that the connection to Christ needs to be connected to the meaning of the narrative, meaning tied to the plot. How does knowing that their rock was Christ enhance the interpretation/application of Numbers 20? A first reading of Numbers 20:2-13 could be seen as a call for God's people not to quarrel with Him about what He hasn't yet provided. In this reading, the narrative is designed to encourage God's people to believe in His ability to provide for them. The gift of water-from-the-rock is intended to bolster faith. For Paul to identify the rock as Christ appears to be a meaning-changer, but look at what this interpretation actually does.

Numbers 20:2-13 still encourages God's people to believe in His ability to provide for them on the basis of what He has provided in Christ. Christians who are satisfied with all that God is for them in Christ do not crave evil things and quarrel with Him. My wording comes from 1 Corinthians 10:6 ("Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved."). This second, Christological reading provides a more specific look at why God can and should be trusted--look at what He did for us in Christ. It also provides a reason why those who truly have Christ put to death their evil cravings (Christ satisfies).

The second reading is a true second reading because we've allowed the first reading of Numbers 20:2-13 to communicate foundational meaning.¹⁴ Then and only then can we move to something like: Christians do not crave evil things when Christ satisfies their thirst. In the Numbers narrative God is calling us not to contend with Him because to do so is evidence of a lack of faith in His provision in Christ. Notice, only the rock has been redefined, not the plot. The meaning and intention of the original mini-plot is kept intact despite the addition of the larger plot of the Gospel Story. The narrative in Numbers has set the parameters for meaning, meaning that is not violated by the New Testament reference to Christ.¹⁵

Anchoring Christological meaning to the meaning of the entire preaching portion is a crucial part of adjusting the method utilized by early Christian preachers. The concept of creatively moving from an Old Testament preaching portion to the Gospel involves a certain lack of precision. To be creative is to be inventive, imaginative. This does not undermine preaching with greater accuracy because of where we are

at this stage of interpretation. If this creativity was employed at the beginning of the exegetical process to establish foundational meaning, then we might have problems. But, to the best of our abilities we've anchored meaning to the vocabulary and structure of God's Word (i.e., in the plot, not the redefinition of the rock as Christ).

Examples of creatively moving to the cross

Eliminate the preaching portions in the Old Testament that contain material quoted in the New Testament; eliminate the segments containing clear allusions. In order to implement Jesus' hermeneutic, one must be ready to creatively move to the cross. Consider the following examples of possible, creative connections.

Exodus 31-34 contains the story of God's people worshiping the golden calf. Part of God's judgment on His people was the order for the Levites to "kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor. In Exodus 32:29 Moses says, "Today you have been ordained for the service of the Lord, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day." In v. 30 Moses goes on to say, "now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin."

One meaning or intention of the narrative is to urge Believers away from the kind of idolatry displayed at Sinai. In order to avoid this kind of sinful behavior, Christians need to believe how God-in-Christ has made atonement for their sin and act according to that faith. The narrative provides a connection to the Gospel by mentioning that the blessing of God could come upon God's people only "at the cost of his son" (v. 29). This is exactly how God provided atonement for our sin, which includes the ability to avoid the sin of idolatry. At the cost of His Son, God made our atonement possible.

Another way to move from the story to the Savior is in verses 30-35 where Moses pleads with God. Moses asks God to blot him out of God's book if He will not forgive their sin. In verse 33 "the Lord said to Moses, 'Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book.'" Thankfully, God did temporarily blot out One who did not sin against Him. God did not accept Moses' offer because Moses could not forgive sins through his own condemnation. However, God did accept Jesus' offer and Jesus' death-for-sin stopped the plague caused by our rebellion (cf. Exodus 32:35).¹⁶ Faith in God's most gracious act is the beginning of loyal worship.

The story of Jonah provides another opportunity for creative, Christological exegesis. Kuruvilla provides a summary of the meaning of Jonah: "Will you be merciful like the God who called you?"¹⁷ Let me suggest a couple of ways to creatively move to the cross from Jonah chapter 4. First, in 4:2 Jonah tells God that he knew He was "slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster." However, on the cross, God did not abandon His harsh intention to kill His Son to pay for our sin. When Believers see God extending that kind of mercy at the expense of His Son, it changes them deeply and gives them the desire and capacity to "be merciful" (like God and unlike Jonah). Second, in 4:3 and 8 Jonah's words can be applied to Christ with new meaning: "it is better for me to die than to live." Jesus died as a result of this reasoning and this was the ultimate display of God's mercy. This connection to the Gospel also shows how Believers can put Jonah's message into practice.

These kinds of creative connections involve no risk; the meaning of Jonah is not changed. I have found a couple of ways to move from Jonah to the cross so that the meaning of Jonah—"Will you be merciful like the God who called you"—can be actualized by Christians by faith. This helps us avoid a moralistic interpretation/application. I can be merciful like God, unlike Jonah, as I am seeing and believing in God's mercy for me displayed in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Believers don't follow Jonah's poor example of being mercy-less. They fight against selfish impulses by faith in Christ in the power of the Spirit.

This kind of Christological interpretation is not an alternative to exemplar preaching, but Christianizes it. Often, Christ-centered preaching and exemplar preaching are pitted against one another.¹⁸ I am suggesting that the choice is no longer simply between exemplar or Christ-centered preaching; it's not one or the other, but both/and. I have no doubt that one possible meaning of Jonah is that he was intended as a bad example ("go and do otherwise"). But I do not believe Jonah was intended to function as a bad example without pointing us to the perfect example of the Prophet who felt the same pity for the entire world that God felt for the Ninevites.¹⁹

An example from Timothy Keller's preaching on 1 Kings 3:16-28

In an article entitled, *How to Read the Bible*, Wilkens describes our task of doing creative, canonical exegesis: "The Bible becomes a vast field of interrelated words, all speaking about the same reality: the one God revealed in Christ....The task of an interpreter is to help the faithful look beyond the surface, to highlight a word here, an image there, to find Christ unexpectedly..."²⁰ I have found no one who does this better, week in and week out, than Timothy Keller. When pastors ask me for a model of Christ-centered preaching, I recommend they listen to the way Tim's hermeneutic plays out at the end of his sermons. It has been said that some things are better caught than taught. If you listen to Tim regularly you will catch his hermeneutic and benefit from the myriad ways in which he moves from the preaching portion to the Gospel.

My first exposure to Tim's preaching was his sermon on 1 Kings 3:16-28 which records the first test of Solomon's newfound, God-given wisdom. Two prostitutes approach Solomon over a dispute concerning an infant. Both mothers were claiming that the boy was theirs. Solomon asked for a sword to cut the baby in two so that each could have half. The real mother is horrified and quickly acquiesces to the other woman. Solomon's tactic revealed the true mother; his wisdom wins the day and his reputation began to grow.

At the end of the sermon, Keller begins to explore how we can copy the poise of the real mother. Keller said, "If she can do it, you can do it." He believes the narrative is functioning as a positive exemplar ("go and do likewise"). Then Tim goes on to say, "It's not just Solomon pointing us to Christ here. The woman is, too. You know what the woman did? She looked at the throne and said, 'No. No. Don't ruin his life; ruin mine; don't tear him into two; tear me into two. So that he can have hope and joy, I will lose and give away all my hope and joy.' But don't you realize there was a greater One than that who stood before the eternal throne and He looked at us and he saw the sword of judgment over us; he saw that we should be punished for our foolishness. And what did He say to the throne; what did He say to His Father. He says, 'No, don't ruin them; ruin Me; don't tear them into pieces; tear Me into pieces. I will give up all of my joy and all of my hope so they can have joy and hope.' And He did....Do you see Him doing that for you....if you have Him as your true King, you will be truly wise..." This is Tim's way of showing from the narrative that ultimately the King is wise for us. He is the source of our wisdom to handle life's tricky situations. Then Keller also quoted 1 Corinthians 1:30 "...Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God..."²¹

The way to connect preaching portions to the Gospel is virtually endless—there are almost as many ways as there are preaching portions. Bos suggests that one way to move creatively from an Old Testament preaching portion to Christ is to see the words as spoken to Jesus or by Jesus or about Jesus.²² Words spoken to Jesus could be in the form of a prayer or request or confession. Words spoken by Jesus need not be direct quotes found on Jesus' lips in the Gospels, but simply words He very well could have spoken due to His circumstances. I moved from the Story to the Savior in Jonah 4:3, 8 along this path. Words spoken about Jesus describe who Jesus is and what He has done to save those who believe.

In Keller's example above, the true mother's action was used to highlight Jesus' action to save us who believe. Keller was able to include the sword, the object of judgment, in his movement from the Story to the Savior. In my first example from Jonah, I connected the Story to the Savior by pointing out that, on the cross, God did not act the way He acted in Jonah. On the cross God did not "relent from disaster" (cf. Jonah 4:2). In the Exodus 32:29 example, I moved from the Story to the Savior through a similar concept: redemption through the loss of a son/Son. Then in Exodus 32:33 a possible connection to the cross exists in the fact that what God said to Moses ("Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book...") thankfully was not true on the cross.

Conclusion

In an effort to adjust the Christological method of early Christian preachers, I suggest that the move to Christ should (1) be made after the idea of the preaching portion has been established through standard, historical/grammatical/literary exegesis, (2) be connected to the idea established through exegesis, and (3) should enhance the meaning of the preaching portion by showing how God-in-Christ-through the Spirit saves those who believe, including supplying the desire and capacity to live the sanctified life that is often portrayed by biblical character.

Notes

¹ Joseph T. Lienhard, ed. *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, ed. Thomas C. Oden, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. Old Testament III (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 110.

² *Ibid.*, 239. In the next paragraph, Caesarius of Arles is quoted, "What does it mean that the rock was not struck once but twice with the staff? The rock was struck a second time because two trees were lifted up for the gibbet of the cross: the one stretched out Christ's sacred hands, the other spread out his sinless body from head to foot. Sermon 103.3."

³ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴ Craig A. Blaising and Carmen S. Hardin, ed. *Psalms 1-50*, ed. Thomas C. Oden, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. Old Testament VII (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 180.

⁵ On a continuum, a quote is the clearest, most solid connection between two Texts/contexts. Next are the allusions, more indirect references. At the other end of the spectrum are creative connections which occur as phrases or concepts leading to some aspect of the Gospel of Christ.

⁶ Godet writes, "Jesus had before Him a grand field, from the Protevangelium down to Mal. 4. In studying the Scriptures for Himself, He had found Himself in them everywhere (John 5:39, 40)." Cf. F. Godet, *A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke* (New York: I. K. Funk & Co., 1881), 507. For an interesting understanding of the hermeneutic Jesus taught His disciples, see Matthew W. Bates, "Closed-Minded Hermeneutics? A Proposed Alternative Translation for Luke 24:45," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129, no. 3 (2010). On pages 556-557, Bates writes, "For Luke, the hermeneutical imperative is that a *qualified guide* must open the 'mind' of the Scriptures for those who have not yet become sufficiently acquainted with the way of the Lord...neither inward illumination nor a supernatural opening of the mind is needed in order to interpret the Scriptures successfully, but rather a qualified guide who can introduce the would-be expositor to the 'mind' of the Scriptures, that is, to the foundational apostolic kerygma."

⁷ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1999), 185.

⁸ Did Jesus move systematically through the Old Testament story or did He provide several examples to function as a template for their future studies? Your guess is as good as mine. I do not think that Jesus showed His disciples that every single verse in the Old Testament displayed a connection to Him. My understanding is that some preaching portions are lengthy such as Joshua 10-12 which catalogs Joshua's complete victory over the reigning kings in the Promised Land. In such sections you might discover a few creative connections between the narrative and the Gospel. For instance, Joshua 10:24 contains Joshua's instruction to his chief soldiers to place their feet on the necks of the defeated kings. There are several verses in those three chapters which I consider to have *no* connection. The lengthy narrative, not individual, isolated verses, contains the theology for the Church. That theology is developed as Joshua points to Christ having made His enemies His footstool (cf. Psalm 110:1; Acts 2:34-35; Heb. 1:13).

⁹ Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand : A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Pub., 2002), 167.

¹⁰ Not everyone agrees with this hermeneutic. Langley urges, "Let's be sure that when we're preaching Jonah we really preach Jonah and not John; when we preach Ruth, let's preach Ruth, not Revelation. In Christ-centered preaching there's a temptation to let the New Testament take over and not let the Old Testament be really heard." Cf. Ken Langley, "When Christ Replaces God at the Center of Preaching," in *Evangelical Homiletics Society* (Birmingham, Alabama: 2008), 16-17. Snyman writes, "It is not necessary for the New Testament to act as ventriloquist through which the Old speaks merely for the sake of being heard as the Old. Large parts of the Old do not have any christological focus....One should read and hear the Old Testament for its own unique theological message." Cf. S. D. (Fanie) Snyman, "Preaching the Old Testament from a Christian Pulpit," *Calvin Theological Journal* 45, no. (2010): 311, 316. These exhortations and statements must be squared with Jesus' hermeneutic which suggests that Jonah and Ruth, for instance, were no longer to be preached in isolation from Himself. On page 313 Snyman argues that a "broadened understanding of the Old allows the congregation of Christ to listen

from their position in Christ....From their status in and connectedness to Christ, believers listen to how God reveals himself and what he expects from a particular pericope of the Old.” I am suggesting that congregants need to be reminded each weekend of their connectedness to Christ. One way to do that is to interpret the Old Testament in a way that shows its connectedness to Christ. Without this connection I fear most parishioners hear God’s expectations and leave trying to meet them apart from faith in the Gospel.

¹¹ Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1981), 138.

¹² *Ibid.*, 139.

¹³ An example of this approach can be seen in this theme from a sermon on Genesis 22:1-19 (the story of Abraham offering up his son, Isaac): “The greatest thing you can do for your children is to worship their Creator, the living God who provides for those who fear him.” Cf. Steven D. Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002), 170. Earlier on the page the preacher makes a Christological connection: “Genesis 22 foreshadows the provision of another sacrifice. The same God who provided a sacrificial lamb so that Isaac might live provided the ultimate sacrificial lamb, Jesus Christ, so that God’s people might live.” I am suggesting that this Christological connection be connected to the theme of worshipping God outlined in the stated theme. A similar approach of finding Christ, but stopping short of connecting Christology to the meaning of the pericope can be seen in Greidanus’ treatment of the flood narrative in Genesis 6:9--8:22 (cf. Greidanus, 321-322.), Clowney’s treatment of Psalm 22:1 (cf. Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 134.), and Wenig’s treatment of 2 Samuel 11-12 (cf. Scott Wenig, “A Different Exegetical and Homiletical Approach to a Prominent Biblical Narrative: Interpreting and Preaching 2 Samuel 11-12,” *Evangelical Homiletics Society* 10, no. 2 (2010): 17, 21.).

¹⁴ Green writes, “Without first (grammatical-historical) readings, second readings are not true second readings and dissolve into allegory, readings that have no organic connection [to] the larger narrative.” Cf. Douglas J. Green, ““The Lord Is Christ’s Shepherd”: An Alternative Christological Interpretation of Psalm 23,” in *Evangelical Theological Society--Eastern Regional Meeting* (Calvary Church, Soudertown, PA: 2005), 20. Speaking of John’s use of Psalm 69 (“zeal for your house...has consume me”), Hays writes, “Such retrospective reading neither denies nor invalidates the meaning that the Old Testament text might have had in its original historical setting. Psalm 69 is fully comprehensible as an expression of Israelite piety: it is a prayer for deliverance in a time of trouble and suffering. When it is reread, however, in light of the New Testament’s story of Jesus’ passion and resurrection, it takes on additional resonances beyond those perceptible to its earlier readers.” Cf. Ellen F. Davis, Hays, Richard B., *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 224.

¹⁵ Speaking of his Christological interpretation of the story of Daniel and his friends in the furnace, Hays writes, “the sermon illustrates the point that figural reading does not abolish the original historical reference of the text.” Cf. *Ibid.*, 310. Hays’ point was that the fourth figure in the furnace was a prefiguration of God’s presence with and for us in our suffering. Identifying the fourth figure that stayed in the furnace as our Savior does not destroy the meaning of that narrative which helps answer Nebuchadnezzar’s taunting question: “Who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?” (Daniel 3:15). The answer: Our God that delivers us is the God that did not deliver His own Son on the cross so we could have the assurance that He will always be with us in our suffering.

¹⁶ Davis displays this creativity in her interpretation of Psalm 39. She writes, “the Gospel takes us deeper into this psalm....God must become one of the desperate. So in the fullness of time, God becomes a resident alien in the person of Jesus Christ.” Davis makes this connection from the psalmist’s statement in verse 12, “As for me, I am a sojourner with you, a resident alien, like all my ancestors.” Cf. Ellen F. Hays Richard B. Davis, *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 303. On page 308-309 Hays moves to the cross from Daniel 3:25, the famous story of Daniel and his two friends being thrown into the furnace. Hays writes, “Did you notice, though, a strange thing....The one whose appearance is like a son of God does not come out of the furnace of suffering. He is not miraculously

preserved from the fire: he remains within it....At the end of this story stands Jesus....Jesus did not escape the clutches of his enemies; he did not emerge unscathed out of the furnace. No, he remained within it. He 'endured the cross, disregarding its shame,' precisely in order to deliver us to freedom and hope." Let me add that when Isaiah 43:2 reads, "...When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you," it's because the flames consumed our Lord on the cross as He suffered under the wrath of God.

¹⁷ Abraham Kuruvilla, "Text to Praxis: Hermeneutics and Homiletics in Dialogue," (PhD Thesis, University of Aberdeen, 2007), 91.

¹⁸ See Timothy Peck, "Salvaging the Old Testament Biographical Sermon," *Preaching* 15, no. 6 (2000). Compare Peck's approach with Sidney Greidanus, "The Necessity of Preaching Christ from the Old Testament," *Preaching* 15, no. 6 (2000). I am indebted to Tim Keller's model for this merging of Christ-centered and exemplar preaching. Some of Tim's comments during sermons suggest that he learned this approach from the practice of D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. This doesn't mean that Lloyd-Jones always practiced it, but it means that in Lloyd-Jones' sermons you often see both character studies and Christ exalted. You can see Lloyd-Jones's method applied in D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Old Testament Evangelistic Sermons* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995).

¹⁹ Concerning exemplars, Chapell writes: "This does not mean that biblical characters have no exemplary qualities for us to emulate (e.g., Rom. 15:4; Phil. 3:17). We must understand, though, that when these positive qualities appear, grace is the cause (Rom. 11:36)." Cf. Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2005), 303. I propose that connecting Christ to the preaching portion best explains how the grace of God functions in the life of a Believer so that the good example is followed and the bad (grace-less) example is avoided.

²⁰ Robert Louis Wilken, "How to Read the Bible," *First Things* 181, no. (2008): 27. There is a fine line between novelty and creativity. While I appreciate and share a similar goal of early Christian interpreters and their pre-critical exegesis, I am suggesting a different kind of creativity. The creativity of much early Christian exegesis as displayed, for instance, in the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, *creates* essential meaning. The creative relationship between isolated details of a preaching portion and Christ *creates* the meanings of that preaching portion. I am advocating some creativity in connecting the preaching portion to the Gospel, but that creative step only fleshes out meaning that resides in the preaching portion. It does not create meaning that is unrecognizable from the preaching portion.

²¹ This excerpt is from tape #208, King's Wisdom (Solomon): Pointers to Christ-Signs in History (1 Kings 3:16-28), preached on October 5, 1997 at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City. Keller has said that he learned much about preaching from D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. In his sermon, *The Approach to the Gospel*, Lloyd-Jones displays the creative approach to seeing Christ in the OT that Keller implements regularly: "What a perfect statement that is--' I am come down to deliver' (cf. Exodus 3:8 and God's statement to Moses concerning what He was calling Moses to do). Did I not start by telling you the gospel is to be found in the Old Testament? That is the whole story of the New Testament....God the Son came down from heaven. Why? Because he had seen your affliction and mine....He has come down, he came to deliver, and the only way to deliver was to take your sins and mine and bear them in his own holy, spotless, sinless body on the Cross....There he did it, he has paid the ransom, he has made the atonement, God is satisfied, the law is satisfied, hell and Satan are defeated and Egypt has been conquered." Cf. Lloyd-Jones, 42-43.

²² Rein Bos, *We Have Heard That God Is with You: Preaching the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 171-174. In her sermon, *Prisoner of Hope*, Davis writes concerning Psalm 39: "We might well imagine that this is the psalm Jesus prayed in Gethsemane..." Cf. Davis, *The Art of Reading Scripture*, 303.