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GREATER THAN THE FORMER: A CHRISTOCENTRIC  
APPROACH TO HAGGAI IN LIGHT OF RECENT  
CHRISTOCENTRIC HOMILETICS

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Alex Ryan Loginow, Sr.

May 2018

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**APPROVAL SHEET**

GREATER THAN THE FORMER: A CHRISTOCENTRIC  
APPROACH TO HAGGAI IN LIGHT OF RECENT  
CHRISTOCENTRIC HOMILETICS

Alex Ryan Loginow, Sr.

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Date \_\_\_\_\_

To our five children,  
Alex, Jr., Jack, Haddon, Sophia, and Anastasia.

You are my gift and my reward.

And to

My beautiful and brilliant bride,

Bethany Anne.

Your love is better than wine.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BDB	<i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic</i>
LXX	Septuagint
NAC	New American Commentary
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
<i>NDBT</i>	<i>New Dictionary of Biblical Theology</i>
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries

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## PREFACE

I will never forget my Preaching 1 class at Boyce College in the fall of 2007. Brian Payne was the professor, and he exposed me to biblical theology and Christ-centered preaching. It was a revelation to me. It was like the first time that I was exposed to Reformed theology; I have never read the Bible in the same way again. Ever since that class, men like Graeme Goldsworthy, Dennis Johnson, Russell Moore, and Tim Keller have shaped the way that I read and preach the Scriptures. I am glad that Dr. Payne introduced me to that conversation ten years ago, and this thesis is my humble contribution to the discussion that has reimagined the “old, old story” in my heart and mind.

This thesis bears my name, but it was not written alone. More people than I can mention deserve recognition for their influence on my life, ministry, and education. That stated, there are several people whose names belong at the beginning of this paper. First, I have to thank my dad and mom, Randy and Donna Loginow. They have always been a shining example to me of what it looks like to be faithful to one’s spouse and church. They showed me Jesus from the day I was born, and God has used them to bring me to faith, grow me in Christlikeness, and encourage me in the gospel. It is an honor to serve alongside my dad as an elder at Christ Community Church, and it is a joy to see them love our children.

I am thankful for my three sisters, Holly, Heidi, and Heather. It is an honor and a privilege to be their older brother, and they have shaped who I am as a leader, brother, and a man. I am also thankful to my brothers and sister-in-law, Vadnais, Steph, Chrissy, Tim, Talli, and Dustin. My in-laws, Joe and Wendy Vadnais, have also been a great encouragement to me. The exegesis of the fourth chapter of this thesis was done with the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* given to me by my father-in-law, Joe. It is the

same *BHS* he used when he did his Ph.D. at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary twenty years ago.

I cannot express the depth of my love and gratitude for Pastor Kevin McGuire and Christ Community Church. I have been a member of this church since I was ten years old. I grew up there. I interned there. I met my wife and we were married there. And now I serve as a pastor there. It is my family and my home. One member in particular, Linda Witan, also deserves special recognition. Linda helped me edit this thesis, and for that I am thankful. It is such a blessing to know that our children will be raised in this beautiful body, and I thank Jesus every day for his grace in bringing us home.

I owe a debt greater than I can pay to Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., and the faculty of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Ever since I moved to Louisville, Kentucky, in August 2006, this gorgeous campus has been my second home. I graduated from Boyce College in 2011 with my bachelor's degree and SBTS in 2015 with my M.Div. I now have the privilege of receiving a doctorate for my Alma Mater. This institution, in more ways than I will ever know, has shaped my theology and ministry. I also have to specifically thank Dr. Brian Payne. Dr. Payne taught my undergrad preaching classes at Boyce, and now he has supervised my doctoral preaching thesis. It is safe to say that he has greatly influenced my homiletic. I am indebted to him for his wisdom and guidance over these years.

This preface would seem empty if I did not mention my dear friend and fellow doctoral student, Brady Martin. Brady and I were roommates at Boyce. We did our grad work together and both ministered in churches near Owensboro, Kentucky. Brady encouraged me to pursue the D.Min. in Expository Preaching, and we have finished this journey together, a journey begun in Carver 319 back in the fall of 2006. He and Jennifer are dear friends to Bethany and me, and he will always be the smartest person I know.

I have been greatly encouraged by two of my dearest friends and brothers throughout this process, and I have to make mention of my brother and my cousin

Andrew and Brett. They have always been an academic sounding board for me. We have fought this fight together, and I am beyond grateful for their friendship. They will always be my brothers, and my best friends.

Five people in this world will never know me as Dr. Loginow; to them I am dad. I am so grateful to Jesus for our lovely children, Alex, Jr., Jack, Haddon, Sophia, and Anastasia. You truly are my gift and my reward (Ps 127:3). You have been a sweet distraction for me throughout this process. I love you guys!

I have saved the best for last. The greatest debt that I owe a person in this world is to my wife, Bethany. Her name ought to be on the cover of this thesis as well. She has been an incredible encouragement to me since before we were married. She has done all of the hard work for the last three years. When I traveled to Louisville for seminars or library trips, she stayed with the kids. She devoted countless hours to reading and editing my writing. She is smarter than I will ever be, and I cannot express how grateful I am for her. Jesus has been so kind to me to give me a bride who is more than a partner, but a best friend. I love you, Bethany. You're the bassist to my heart's drumbeat as we play our love song.

Alex R. Loginow, Sr.

Madison Heights, Michigan

May 2018

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Every story has a hero. Themes like good versus evil, sacrifice, and redemption flow throughout countless stories like blood coursing through a man's veins. Many of these stories climax with the sacrifice of the hero on behalf of others. This theme has always captivated people because it is the theme of the greatest story ever told.<sup>1</sup> Mike Cosper notes,

Christians believe an audacious fact. At the heart of our faith is the bold claim that in a world full of stories, with a world's worth of heroes, villains, comedies, tragedies, twists of fate, and surprising endings, there is really only one story. One grand narrative subsumes and encompasses all other comings and goings of every creature – real or fictitious – on the earth. Theologians call it “redemption history”; my grandfather called it the “old, old story.”<sup>2</sup>

The redemptive story of Scripture is the great metanarrative. Every other narrative is but a signpost pointing to the story of redemption. God's plan to redeem his fallen people through the grace of the gospel is the story of the Bible. This makes the Scripture the greatest tale ever told. Like every great story, the climax of revelation occurs in the sacrifice and victory of the hero. The savior that the Bible reveals is Jesus of Nazareth, and the entire canon finds its *telos* in him.<sup>3</sup> In Luke 24, Jesus reveals to the two

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<sup>1</sup>For more information on this topic, see J. R. R. Tolkien, “On Fairy Stories,” in *Tolkien on Fairy-Stories*, ed. Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson (Nashville: HarperCollins Publishers, 2014). Also Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “In Bright Shadow: C. S. Lewis on the Imagination for Theology and Discipleship,” in *The Romantic Rationalist: God, Life and Imagination in the Work of C.S. Lewis*, ed. John Piper and David Mathis (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014); C. S. Lewis, *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories* (New York: Mariner Books, 2002); Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015); Mike Cosper, *The Stories We Tell: How TV and Movies Long for and Echo the Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014).

<sup>2</sup>Cosper, *The Stories We Tell*, 29.

<sup>3</sup>Micah Fries, Stephen Rummage, and Robby Gallaty, *Exalting Jesus in Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, Christ-Centered Exposition (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2015); David E. Prince and Ashland Staff, *Church with Jesus as the Hero* (Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015).



Emmaus road travelers that the entire Old Testament speaks of his person and work (Luke 24:25-27). The apostle Paul resolved to preach “nothing . . . except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2).<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere he teaches that if the church is to be presented mature in Christ, then pastors must proclaim Christ (Col 1:28).

If the goal of preaching is to present people mature in Christ and the method is preaching Christ, then many hermeneutical and homiletical questions naturally arise. These questions must be addressed in order for preaching to be effective and lives to be transformed. Is it the responsibility of the preacher to preach Jesus from every text in the Scriptures? Is it hermeneutically irresponsible to impose a Christocentric hermeneutic where a given pericope does not refer to Jesus specifically? How does the Old Testament speak of Christ? This thesis will answer the first two questions in general and then specifically answer the third question in reference to the book of Haggai.

### **Thesis Statement**

How can pastors and teachers faithfully preach the gospel from the book of Haggai? Many scholars believe that determining the human authorial intent of a pericope is enough for understanding Old Testament texts, but this hermeneutical focus potentially fails to place any passage within its canonical context. In order to best understand, communicate, and appreciate the book of Haggai, preachers must employ a Christocentric hermeneutic. Following an introductory survey of relevant literature, this thesis first analyzes sermons and lectures of five major preachers in church history on the book of Haggai. This survey gives perspective on how the text has been interpreted for the last 2,000 years. Second, the work defines and defends the Christocentric hermeneutic as the best option for consistent biblical interpretation. Third, the Christ-centered hermeneutic is applied to an exegesis of the book of Haggai. Fourth, the exegesis of

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<sup>4</sup>All Scripture, unless otherwise noted, is quoted from the English Standard Version.

Haggai is enlisted to craft five Christ-centered sermons from the book of Haggai. Last, the thesis is reviewed and suggestions for further research are given.

### **Familiarity with the Literature**

The debate about Christocentric preaching has produced a mass of hermeneutical and homiletical literature. In that literature, many works advocate for a Christocentric hermeneutic. This hermeneutic teaches that every sermon, regardless of the text, must find its end in Jesus. Advocates of a Christ-centered hermeneutic contend that if the sermon does not have Jesus as its goal, then it is not a Christian sermon. Others advocate for a human authorial intent approach, which employs the grammatical-historical method to uncover the original meaning of the text. Once the original meaning is determined, the method directly applies that meaning to the contemporary audience without necessarily uniting it to the gospel. The human authorial intent approach argues that if the text is not about Jesus explicitly, then there is no need to mention Jesus in the sermon at all. These two methodologies stand at opposite ends in the debate. Mediating positions, however, exist between these two poles.

### **Christocentric Works**

While Graeme Goldsworthy's primary focus has been biblical theology, his works have also advocated for a Christocentric hermeneutic for the entirety of Scripture. These works include *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, his magnum opus about gospel-centered preaching and hermeneutics.<sup>5</sup> Goldsworthy's Gospel-centered method of preaching and interpretation places the gospel at the center of biblical interpretation. He writes, "A sermon must move from the meaning of the text to the legitimate application of that meaning to our contemporary context in light of the

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<sup>5</sup>Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible As Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000).

gospel.”<sup>6</sup> When the gospel is the starting point for exegesis, the preacher will connect his sermon to the work of biblical theology. His understanding maintains that the entire Bible, not just the New Testament, must be preached as a Christian canon. In another work, Goldsworthy argues for the presupposition of the gospel in hermeneutics.<sup>7</sup> He states, “The hermeneutical centre of the Bible is therefore Jesus in his being and in his saving acts – The Jesus of the gospel.”<sup>8</sup>

Dennis Johnson’s work *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from all the Scriptures* is another work that argues for a Christocentric hermeneutic.<sup>9</sup> Johnson asserts that the church has inherited both Christian doctrine and hermeneutics from the Apostles. The apostolic hermeneutic is a Christ-centered hermeneutic, he argues, and it is the preacher’s guide for understanding the Bible.<sup>10</sup> Johnson argues that the theological themes of creation and covenant weave their way throughout the Bible, which will tie every pericope to the gospel of Jesus. Like Goldsworthy, Johnson believes that if the preacher is to be faithful to the Bible, then he must preach Christocentric sermons.

Sidney Greidanus’ *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* argues for Christocentric preaching, but not as strongly as Goldsworthy or Johnson.<sup>11</sup> Greidanus believes that the preacher must preach Christ from the OT, but he does not begin with the Christ-centered presupposition that Goldsworthy and Johnson hold. Greidanus proposes a method of seven different ways that the exegete

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<sup>6</sup>Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 121.

<sup>7</sup>Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010).

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 62.

<sup>9</sup>Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007).

<sup>10</sup>Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 10-14.

<sup>11</sup>Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999).

can use to bring any OT text to its fulfillment in Christ. His method is useful for preachers to employ when actually preparing a sermon from an OT passage. He also gives a helpful survey of the church's historical understanding and methodology of preaching Christ.

### **Human Authorial Intent Hermeneutical Approaches**

Walter Kaiser has written in defense of the human authorial intent hermeneutic. In his work *The Majesty of God in the Old Testament: A Guide for Preaching and Teaching*, Kaiser argues that the Christ-centered approach impose foreign presuppositions on the OT.<sup>12</sup> He claims that these preachers are doing eisegesis instead of exegesis on a passage when they read an OT text in light of redemptive history. In *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church*, Kaiser maintains that a Christ-centered hermeneutic “flattens” the Bible, which is meant to be read forward and not backward.<sup>13</sup> In lieu of the Christocentric approach, Kaiser advocates for a plain, historical reading of the text.

Hershael York and Bert Decker also defend the human authorial intent hermeneutic in *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition*.<sup>14</sup> They write, “We are never welcome to preach a meaning from a text other than the one the author had or that was shown elsewhere in Scripture that referred to that text.”<sup>15</sup> This understanding would exclude a Christocentric hermeneutic because the original authors would not have fully understood the Christ event at the time

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<sup>12</sup>Walter C. Kaiser, *The Majesty of God in the Old Testament: A Guide for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

<sup>13</sup>Walter C. Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003).

<sup>14</sup>Bert Decker and Hershael W. York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: B&H Books, 2003).

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 28.

of their writing. Their book is about preaching in general and not hermeneutics specifically, so they do not write at length to defend their position. They simply state the matter and then build on it to present their understanding of expository preaching.

Abraham Kuruvilla's *Privilege the Text: A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* argues for what he calls a "Christiconic hermeneutic."<sup>16</sup> He asserts that theology of a given pericope must dictate the interpretation of the pericope for preaching. The interpreter's job is to relay the theology of the original author – "what the author is doing with what he is saying."<sup>17</sup> When this hermeneutic is followed, it will produce a Christiconic interpretation. Jesus is the only human to obey the divine demand that God has given humanity. As a result, the Bible shows readers different facets of Christ's obedience and enables them to reflect his image.<sup>18</sup> The Scriptures do not simply tell people about Jesus, but they make people like Jesus.

Haddon Robinson's work *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* has become a prominent work in the recovery of expository preaching.<sup>19</sup> He defines expository preaching in this way: "Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers."<sup>20</sup> Robinson goes on to note that the substance of the sermon is determined by the author's thought.<sup>21</sup> He makes no mention of a Christocentric

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<sup>16</sup>Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text! A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2013).

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 259-60.

<sup>19</sup>Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014).

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

hermeneutic and clearly limits his interpretation to a purely grammatical-historical methodology. Robinson builds off of this thought in chapter two when he discusses finding the “big idea” in the text. The big idea is that which the author sought to convey to the original audience.

### **Biblical Theology Texts**

A number of biblical theology texts help further the discussion of Christ-centered preaching, for Christ-centered preaching is unapologetically tied to biblical theology. The *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, edited by T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, D. A. Carson, and Graeme Goldsworthy, is a treasure chest of biblical theology content.<sup>22</sup> This dictionary is a collection of articles explaining and defending biblical theology. The work addresses hermeneutics and homiletics in the introduction, which confirms the argument of this thesis that biblical theology is how the preacher ties interpretation to preaching. In addition, the dictionary has a chapter on the prophets and a section in that chapter specifically places the book of Haggai within a framework of biblical theology.

Another helpful biblical theology is G. K. Beale’s *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*.<sup>23</sup> Beale argues that every theme in the NT is a development of a theme from the OT. Jesus is the fulfillment of each OT concept. He is the one who inaugurates the kingdom and the new creation. The argument of Beale’s work is a presupposition of this thesis. Jesus is the unifying center of the Bible. Every book must be read in this light. The book of Haggai is no exception; it finds its end in Jesus.

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<sup>22</sup>T. Desmond Alexander et al., eds., *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture* (Leicester, England : IVP Academic, 2000).

<sup>23</sup>G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

Graeme Goldsworthy has written another work that explains his understanding of biblical theology: *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible*.<sup>24</sup> In this work, Goldsworthy first introduces and defends his Christocentric hermeneutic. He then moves through the storyline of redemptive history, viewing the narrative through a Christ-centered lens. This thesis applies Goldsworthy's understanding to the book of Haggai. His Christocentric interpretation is biblically grounded, theologically sound, and ecclesiological beneficial.

In *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology*,<sup>25</sup> Jim Hamilton argues that the theme of God's glory in salvation through judgment can be traced throughout the entire narrative of Scripture. By doing so, he places the book of Haggai within the context of the person and work of Jesus. Hamilton's theme ties the entire metanarrative of the Bible together in a unified plan. This understanding will lend itself to Christocentric preaching, as Goldsworthy argues, because if there is unity in the story, then there must be unity in the message. Jesus is the end of that message; he is the hero.

Vaughn Roberts' *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* argues for the unity of the Scriptures under the theme of the Kingdom of God.<sup>26</sup> Roberts contends for a biblical theology rooted in the concept of Kingdom, which is God's people, in God's place, under God's rule and blessing. The Kingdom theme can be traced throughout the narrative of Scripture and is beneficial when the preacher is attempting to determine how any pericope, OT or NT, finds its *telos* in Jesus. Roberts argues that Christ is the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God. The rule of Christ, over God's people in God's

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<sup>24</sup>Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002).

<sup>25</sup>James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

<sup>26</sup>Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2003).

place, is the eschatological hope of the Bible. Roberts' understanding of Kingdom is a guide, much like Goldsworthy's, that implements biblical theology into the hermeneutical and homiletical tasks.

Thomas Schreiner's *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* is another biblical theology that traces the theme of the Kingdom of God throughout the entire canon.<sup>27</sup> Schreiner argues that the Bible tells a singular story with multiple themes. One of those themes is the Kingdom or rule of God.<sup>28</sup> The promise of the Kingdom is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ.<sup>29</sup> Schreiner's chapter on the Book of the Twelve is a survey of the different themes that can be traced throughout the Minor Prophets. Themes like covenant, the Day of YHWH, and future salvation are all prominent in the Book of the Twelve, and they are fulfilled in Christ.

### **Commentaries on the Book of Haggai**

This paper uses the book of Haggai as the test case for Christ-centered preaching. In so doing, commentaries on the book of Haggai are consulted to interact with their understanding of the gospel in relation to the text. Tremper Longman and David Garland have edited *Daniel – Malachi* in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*.<sup>30</sup> The chapters pertaining to the book of Haggai were written by Eugene Merrill and include both background information and verse-by-verse commentary. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* is not Christocentric in the way that Goldsworthy and Johnson understand the hermeneutic. While the work does speak of fulfillment in Christ in a limited manner, the expositions do not engage the covenantal and canonical horizon of

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<sup>27</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013).

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., xii-xiii

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 428.

<sup>30</sup>Eugene Merrill, *Haggai*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, eds. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 697-721.



biblical interpretation.

Another beneficial work on the book of Haggai is Richard Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen's volume in the New American Commentary Series.<sup>31</sup> This commentary is unique in that the introduction includes a survey of the theology and intertextuality of the book of Haggai.<sup>32</sup> Taylor and Clendenen survey the themes that tie the text of Haggai to the rest of the OT. They also make mention of both the OT and NT texts that are mentioned in and make mention of Haggai's prophecy. This work does place the book of Haggai within a Christological understanding, noting that Haggai spoke beyond what he could comprehend.<sup>33</sup> The problem with the commentary is that the Christological fulfillment seems to be a theme that is added in the conclusion. The authors fail to analyze the whole book through a Christological lens, which is the task of this thesis.

Pieter A. Verhoef's commentary on the book of Haggai interacts with the text in a Christological and conservative manner.<sup>34</sup> Verhoef argues for the unity and reliability of the text.<sup>35</sup> He also finds the fulfillment of the prophecy in Jesus. He ends the commentary on Haggai 2:20-23 noting that the passage is applied to Zerubbabel, Christ, and the church.<sup>36</sup> While Verhoef's commentary does recognize Christological fulfillment, there is still a need to explore a more full Christological hermeneutic. He does not explore how the prophecy is fulfilled in Christ and the church and that is what this thesis will accomplish.

Tim Meadowcroft's commentary on the book of Haggai is an example of a

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<sup>31</sup>Richard A. Taylor and Ray Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2004).

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 73-92.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 201.

<sup>34</sup>Pieter A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987).

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 150.

work that finds no Christological fulfillment in the text.<sup>37</sup> This work is unique in that the author writes a prolegomena about reading the book of Haggai as Scripture before his introduction. Meadowcroft also divides the text up into six different oracles. While he does claim that the prophecy is eschatological, he fails to find any messianic fulfillment.<sup>38</sup> Meadowcroft misses the fuller meaning of the book of Haggai by disconnecting the text from its Christological context. When the book of Haggai is divorced from the epochal and canonical horizons then the significance of the text is lost.

David L. Petersen's commentary on the book of Haggai is another example of a commentary that does not engage a Christocentric hermeneutic.<sup>39</sup> Peterson engages the text critically and contends that the book of Haggai went through several stages of editing.<sup>40</sup> He also views Haggai's prophecies through a historical political lens. Petersen argues that the final oracle to Zerubbabel relates merely to the post-exilic Persian setting.<sup>41</sup> He makes no mention of Christological fulfillment and does not place the text within its epochal or canonical context.

Paul L. Redditt has written the volume in The New Century Bible Commentary on Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.<sup>42</sup> His chapters on the book of Haggai are rich in historical observation but lacking when it comes to Christological interaction. Redditt does not place the text within its epochal and canonical contexts. The result of his hermeneutic is that he misses the eschatological fulfillment of the prophecy in Jesus.

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<sup>37</sup>Tim Meadowcroft, *Haggai, Readings: A New Biblical Commentary* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006).

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 219-20.

<sup>39</sup>David L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984).

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 37-39.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 106.

<sup>42</sup>Paul L. Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub Co, 1994).

Redditt says that the book was “too optimistic” when speaking to the temple, the nations, and Zerubbabel.<sup>43</sup> He does not see the prophecies being historically fulfilled. If Redditt would read the book with a Christological hermeneutic, he would see genuine fulfillment.

Hans Walter Wolff has written a commentary on the book of Haggai that is both historically and exegetically rich.<sup>44</sup> The focus of the commentary is more historical than theological. Wolff spends a lot of time discussing post-exilic history and does not place the book of Haggai within an epochal or canonical context at all. Wolff also believes that there have been three “growth rings,” or editorial forms, between Haggai’s original proclamation and the final version of the text.<sup>45</sup> The commentary is not Christocentric in its understanding. Wolff argues that the final message to Zerubbabel is lacking themes that belong to the “messianic expectation.”<sup>46</sup> Wolff does finish the commentary by noting that all OT expectation is fulfilled in Christ, but his hermeneutic is not Christocentric throughout.<sup>47</sup>

### Void in the Literature

A great deal of literature has been written about the importance of a Christocentric hermeneutic; however, not many resources have sought to apply that Christocentric hermeneutic to the book of Haggai. The book of Haggai is one of the smallest Minor Prophets found in the Old Testament. Based on the size and genre, this text has rarely been considered in discussions regarding Christocentric hermeneutics.<sup>48</sup> A

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<sup>43</sup>Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 34.

<sup>44</sup>Hans Walter Wolff, *Haggai*, Continental Commentary Series (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1988).

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 106.

<sup>47</sup>Wolff, *Haggai*, 108.

<sup>48</sup>See Mark Dever, *The Message of the Old Testament: Promises Made* (Wheaton IL: Crossway, 2006), which includes thirty-nine sermons, each of which includes a survey of one OT book. Dever’s sermon on Haggai is Christocentric, but it is only one sermon. He does not deal with each oracle individually because that is not the intention of his work. Micah Fries, Stephen Rummage, and Robby

majority of the commentaries written on Haggai neglect a Christ-centered framework in their interpretation. Critical commentators like Wolff and Redditt do not see much, if any, Christological fulfillment. Conservative works like Verhoef's and the NAC series do not place every pericope within its epochal and canonical contexts. Works from Goldsworthy and Johnson offer a helpful methodology, but by design do not include application towards the biblical canon. Biblical theologies that are Christocentric in nature address the book of Haggai briefly, usually as a part of the Book of the Twelve, but then move on to cover the New Testament. In addition to this lack of extensive interaction, few works offer interaction towards the act of preaching Haggai in Christological perspective. In light of this void, much work remains on applying Christ-centered methodology to the book of Haggai for the purpose of helping preachers effectively exposit this text.

### **Outline of Chapters**

The following chapters advance the argument of the thesis by surveying the history of the church to observe how the book of Haggai has been preached, introducing Christocentric preaching, and providing both theory and demonstration of applying a Christocentric hermeneutic to the book of Haggai.

#### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter begins the thesis by surveying several works on hermeneutics, homiletics, biblical theology, and commentaries on the book of Haggai. It demonstrates that there is a void in the literature that has been produced about how preachers ought to apply a Christocentric hermeneutic to the book of Haggai.

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Gallaty have authored *Exalting Jesus in Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, which is also Christocentric but does not place each pericope within its epochal and canonical context. Also, it does not include sermons so the reader does not see the fruit of the exegetical work for preaching. Michael Williams has written a work similar to Dever's, entitled *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens: A Guide to Christ-Focused Reading of Scripture*. This work surveys every book of the Bible with the goal of reading the canon Christologically. Like Dever's work, this tome covers the entire book of Haggai in one chapter and does not give attention to every individual pericope. It also does not include actual sermons that help apply the methodology to preaching.

## **Chapter 2: The Book of Haggai throughout Church History**

This chapter surveys five preachers representing distinct periods of church history in order to examine how the book of Haggai has been interpreted and preached. Augustine represents the patristic era based on his significant theological influence and profundity as a preacher. No medieval theologian who has had more lasting influence than Thomas Aquinas. His work on the book of Haggai embodies this period. For the Reformation era, Martin Luther is analyzed. He is the father of the Reformation and has made a lasting contribution to Christian preaching. With respect to the Puritan era and preaching, this paper interacts with a sermon by John Flavel. The “Prince of Preachers,” Charles Haddon Spurgeon, represents the modern period. It is useful to examine how Spurgeon preached the book of Haggai because his influence continues to radiate in Evangelical pulpits today.

## **Chapter 3: A Definition and Defense of Christ-Centered Preaching**

This chapter argues that a Christocentric hermeneutic is the best option for understanding and applying Scripture. First, the chapter defines a Christ-centered hermeneutic by engaging with authors like Goldsworthy, and Johnson. Second, it necessarily addresses some of the concerns about Christocentric preaching from those who ascribe to a human authorial intent hermeneutic. These authors include Kaiser, Kuruvilla, and York. After surveying their issues, these difficulties are answered. Finally, the chapter submits the need for a Christocentric homiletic, which is characterized by the four interpretive horizons of Christ-centered preaching given by Brian Payne – contextual, covenantal, canonical, and contemporary.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Ryan Fullerton, Jim Orrick, and Brian Payne, *Encountering God through Expository Preaching: Connecting God's People to God's Presence through God's Word* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017), 35-60.

#### **Chapter 4: Christ-Centered Exegesis of the Book of Haggai**

This section uses the Christocentric hermeneutic and homiletic that is explained in chapter three to provide a full exegesis for the book of Haggai. The book is divided into its five natural sections – 1:1-11, 1:12-15, 2:1-9, 2:10-19, and 2:20-23. Each of these pericopes is filtered through the Christocentric horizons – contextual, covenantal, canonical, and contemporary – to produce Christocentric exegesis.

#### **Chapter 5: Christ-Centered Sermons from Haggai**

This chapter uses the exegesis from chapter four to produce manuscripts of five Christ-centered sermons from the book of Haggai. These sermons put theory into practice and demonstrate how to preach Christ from the book of Haggai. Each sermon is structured according to a three-point grid – original meaning, gospel connection, and contemporary application.

#### **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

This chapter concludes the paper by confirming the thesis and briefly reviewing the contents of the paper. Suggestions for further research will also be given. The work concludes with a statement of the future of Christ-centered preaching.

CHAPTER 2  
THE BOOK OF HAGGAI THROUGHOUT CHURCH  
HISTORY

**Introduction**

William Shakespeare wrote, “What’s past is prologue.”<sup>1</sup> His words ring as true today as they did when he penned them. The past sets the context for every generation. Voices from the past cannot be sacrificed at the altar of contemporary favoritism. C. S. Lewis considered this attitude to be “chronological snobbery.”<sup>2</sup> When the voices of the past are ignored, their insights are lost and their mistakes are repeated. Jose Ortega y Gasset rightly reminds readers, “Each generation stands on the shoulders of its predecessors like acrobats in a vast pyramid.”<sup>3</sup> If this is true for culture in general, then it is that much truer for the church.

Twenty-first century believers stand on the shoulders of a great cloud of witnesses (Heb 12:1). Tony Lane notes,

We need to read about the past in order to *understand the present*. People without a grasp of history are like a person without a memory. Many of the current beliefs in our society are properly grasped only when we see how they have emerged. A knowledge of history will help us to understand better both ourselves and those with whom we might disagree.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. W. J. Craig (Oxford University Press, 1959), 10.

<sup>2</sup>C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (Princeton, NJ: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1966), 207.

<sup>3</sup>Jose Ortega y Gasset, quoted in Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Present Day* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1999), xiii.

<sup>4</sup>Tony Lane, *A Concise History of Christian Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 1. Emphasis original.

Gonzalez adds, “Without understanding the past, we are unable to understand ourselves, for in a sense the past still lives in us and influences who we are and how we understand the Christian message.”<sup>5</sup> It is imperative that the church not live as a person without a memory. She must understand herself, thus pointing to the necessity of historical theology.

If preachers are to understand how to properly preach Christ, it will be helpful to listen to the voices of past preachers. Sidney Greidanus surveyed several preachers that include Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran, Reformed, and Baptist. Each of these preachers agreed that they are called to preach Christ.<sup>6</sup> Disagreement erupted when they were asked about how they are to preach Christ. Before we explore Christ-centered preaching in the book of Haggai, it would profit us to consult the voices of the past to see if and how they preached Christ from the OT.

How have different preachers interpreted and preached Christ from the book of Haggai? What insights can be drawn? What have past preachers done well? What are some pitfalls to avoid? In order to gain substantial insight into Christ-centered preaching, we will survey five different preachers from five distinct periods of church history – Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Flavel, and Charles Haddon Spurgeon. A survey of five sermons from the book of Haggai will be analyzed with two questions in mind: (1) Did the preacher preach Christ from the book of Haggai? And (2) If yes, then how did they do so?

Greidanus’ methodology will prove helpful in the survey, as he submits six ways to preach Christ from the OT.<sup>7</sup> His ways include: (1) redemptive-historical

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<sup>5</sup>Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, xvii.

<sup>6</sup>Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 1-2.

<sup>7</sup>Greidanus also offers a seventh way to preach Christ from the OT that he calls “the way of analogy.” This avenue looks at similarities between OT figures and events, and Christ. I did not include the way of analogy in my analysis because it seems that Greidanus is simply re-categorizing implicit typology as analogy. His other six ways will suffice in surveying these five giants of church history.



progression, (2) promise-fulfillment, (3) typology<sup>8</sup>, (4) longitudinal themes, (5) NT references, and (6) contrast. First, the way of redemptive-historical progression accounts for the “eschatological beat” that throbs in the OT. Greidanus notes, “From our position later in redemptive history, we should not only hear this eschatological beat but also recognize its fulfillment in the First and Second Coming of Jesus.”<sup>9</sup> The OT is a story that reaches its climax in the Christ event; the result is that preachers can connect Jesus to every OT pericope.

Second, the way of promise-fulfillment preaches Christ through explicit promises given by God in the OT that are fulfilled in Jesus. “Preaching messianic promises with an eye to further fulfillment is relevant because it enlarges people’s vision to the full scope of kingdom history . . . . it places the hearers right in the dynamic flow of God’s promises and fulfillments.”<sup>10</sup> The third way to preach Christ from the OT is through typology, which discovers “specific analogies along the axis of God’s acts in redemptive history as revealed in Scripture.”<sup>11</sup> In his providence, God ordained these pictures – or types – to point his people forward to Christ.

The fourth way to preach Christ from the OT is through longitudinal themes. Greidanus suggests that preachers use biblical theology to trace major themes in the OT that lead to Christ.<sup>12</sup> The fifth way to preach Christ is through NT references. The final

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<sup>8</sup>This paper will frequently interact with the idea of biblical typology. Before moving forward, it will be helpful to have a working definition of typology. Robert Plummer has a good definition of typology in Robert Plummer, *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2010), 206. Plummer writes, “Because God is completely sovereign over history, all Old Testament-era saving events, institutions, persons, offices, holidays, and ceremonies served to anticipate the final saving event, the final saving person, the final saving ceremony, etc. This style of citing the Old Testament is known as typological interpretation.”

<sup>9</sup>Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament.*, 237.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 248.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 249.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 267. Greidanus writes, “Major Old Testament themes which function as highways leading to the person, work, and teaching of Christ are the kingdom of God (reign and realm), the providence of God, covenant, the presence of God, the love of God, the grace of God, justice, redemption, law, sin and guilt offerings, God’s concern for the ‘poor,’ mediator, the Day of the Lord, and so on.”

way to preach Christ from the OT is through contrast. There is some difference in how God interacts with his people in the OT in contrast to the NT. For example, consider the ceremonial law. These contrasts lead the preacher to Christ because “[Christ] is primarily responsible for any change between the messages of the Old Testament and those of the New.”<sup>13</sup> These six ways to Christ will frame the analysis of each sermon to determine whether each man preached Christ. If the preacher did preach Christ, these ways will inform how they preached Christ.

### **The Patristic Era**

Few men in the history of Christianity have had the lasting influence of Augustine of Hippo (354-430). The history of Western Christianity in particular is indebted to Augustine. Although he lived near the end of the Patristic era, he casts a long shadow that would influence the church’s homiletic throughout the Medieval period. In many ways, Augustine’s work is the “transition from the early Church to the Middle Ages.”<sup>14</sup> His most famous contribution to homiletics is his four-fold interpretation of Scripture.

Augustine taught that Scripture has four senses: historical, allegorical, analogical, and etiological.<sup>15</sup> Greidanus notes that while Augustine did use promise-fulfillment and typology to preach Christ from the OT, he also emphasized allegory.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 272.

<sup>14</sup>David L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: A Study of Some Modern Solutions to the Theological Problem of the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1976), 47.

<sup>15</sup>Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 103. For Augustine the historical sense of Scripture is the plain or literal reading of the text. Allegory refers to that which is said figuratively. These are the two senses with which Augustine deals the most, although he does officially recognize two other senses of interpretation: (1) the analogical sense, and (2) the etiological sense. Analogy demonstrates the congruency between the OT and the NT, and the etiological sense accounts for the cause of that which is said and done in the Bible. For further discussion, see James Samuel Preus, *From Shadow to Promise: Old Testament Interpretation from Augustine to the Young Luther* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1969).

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 100.

While much of his work was allegorical, later in his life Augustine developed more of an eschatological focus. He understood the Bible to be a record of “God’s saving work for man in the past, the present, and the future, until the Second Coming of Christ.”<sup>17</sup>

Surveying Augustine’s sermon on Haggai 2:8-9, I will answer the two questions mentioned earlier: (1) Did he preach Christ, and if so, (2) How did he do so?

### **Sermon Overview**

Augustine once preached a sermon from Haggai 2:8-9 entitled “Sermon Against the Manichees, on What is Written in the Prophet Haggai: Mine is the Gold and Mine is the Silver.”<sup>18</sup> The sermon is polemical in nature and was given to address the claim of the Manicheans that the God of the Old Testament is making statements contradictory to the New Testament. Augustine begins the homily by fighting against their application of Haggai’s statement, and then provides, what he believes, to be the deeper, spiritual meaning of Haggai 2:8-9. In the sermon, Augustine engages hermeneutics, theology, and life application to defend the continuity of the Bible.

The answer to the first question – Did Augustine preach Christ? – is yes. Augustine’s emphasis from Haggai 2:8-9 is eschatological, and he finds this prophecy to be fulfilled in the work of Christ. The prophet may reference gold and silver, but he is not merely discussing one’s financial portfolio. Haggai is pointing to something much grander. Augustine believes that Haggai’s greater temple is fulfilled in the church.

Haggai is looking forward to the great eschatological building that is built on the foundation of gold and silver. He is making reference to Jesus’ church. Augustine says that Jesus was the “admirably avaricious man” who sold all that he had to buy the field

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<sup>17</sup>Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 103.

<sup>18</sup>Augustine, “Sermon Against the Manichees, on What is Written in the Prophet Haggai: Mine is the Gold and Mine is the Silver,” in *Sermons 20-50*, ed. John Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 1991), 344-52.

with the treasure – his people.<sup>19</sup> While he does address the historical sense of the text early, he moves quickly to this spiritual fulfillment. It is true that God does own all of the literal gold and silver, but the true treasure is his people.

Augustine is convinced that if his audience does not see this spiritual sense, it is because he does not have the Spirit. The Spirit reveals the deeper meaning of the text. The treasure upon which the church is built is the gold of God’s wisdom and the silver of his sayings (Ps 12:6). Jesus is the great high priest of this temple, for he is the salvation and wisdom of his people. This is the first fulfillment that Augustine sees in the pericope. The true temple will be the church.

The peace that Haggai addresses in 2:9 is the final resurrection, which is the only time that mankind will truly be at peace (Gal 5:17; 1 Cor 15:53). This is the second eschatological element of the passage that he sees fulfilled in Christ. God’s promised peace is not merely for the postexilic Israelites living under Persian rule. God’s true peace will be had at the final resurrection, which is the result of Jesus’ work. Augustine’s emphasis on the church as the temple, and the peace as the resurrection, sheds further light on his eschatological understanding of Haggai.

Augustine sees eschatological fulfillment not only in the temple, and the peace, but also in the shaking of the nations. Augustine argues that this verse refers to the second advent of Christ. “Clearly it is about the latest, that is to say the second, coming of the Lord, when he is going to come in glory.”<sup>20</sup> Augustine connects the final temple of the church and the final peace of the resurrection to the final shaking of the nations that happens at Christ’s coming. Jesus was not desired by the nations at his first coming, but he will be at his second. Christ will be desired because “the gospel seed has been

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<sup>19</sup>Augustine, “Sermon Against the Manichees,” 349.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 349.

scattered abroad through all the nations, [so] the desire of him is kindled among all nations.”<sup>21</sup>

It is Augustine’s belief that the shaking of the nations is finally realized at the second advent of Christ, but he also determines that this shaking was initiated at Jesus’ first coming. He concludes,

First, therefore, it was necessary for the heavens to be shaken, when the angel announced to the virgin that she would conceive him, when a star led the magi to worship him, when angels yet again told the shepherds where he was born; for the earth to be shaken when it was disturbed by his miracles; for the sea to be shaken, when this world roared and raged with persecutions; for the dry land to be shaken when those who believed in him hungered and thirsted for justice; finally, for all the nations to be shaken when his gospel ran everywhere to and fro.<sup>22</sup>

The fulfillment of Haggai’s prophecy was inaugurated through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. It will be consummated at his return.

### **Sermon Observations**

Now that we have established that Augustine did indeed preach Christ from Haggai 2:8-9, the second question to ask is, how he preached Christ? Augustine preached Christ from the book of Haggai using (1) redemptive-historical progression, (2) promise-fulfillment, and (3) longitudinal themes. First, he used redemptive-historical progression. The occasion for the sermon was to argue against those who did not hold to redemptive-historical progression. The Manicheans believed that the God of the OT was different from the God of the NT. Augustine argues that he is that same God, and his redemptive plan is fulfilled in Christ.

The basis for Augustine’s eschatological interpretation of Haggai 2:8-9 is that “the gospel was foretold”<sup>23</sup> throughout the OT. The only logical conclusion for Haggai’s

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<sup>21</sup>Augustine, “Sermon Against the Manichees,”349.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 349-50.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, 344.

message is that the prophecy is fulfilled in Christ because redemptive history is teleological, and it reaches its climax in the Christ event. Augustine believes this to be “clear.”<sup>24</sup> He also believes that if someone has the Spirit, then they would see that this Christological understanding is the case.<sup>25</sup> The church’s fulfillment as the final temple, the resurrection’s fulfillment as the final peace, and the shaking’s fulfillment as the Second Coming are all natural conclusions to be drawn from a redemptive-historical understanding.

The second way that Augustine preached Christ from Haggai 2:8-9 was through promise-fulfillment. He believed the promises of Haggai to be fulfilled in the church, the resurrection, and the Second Coming. In Augustine’s view, the house filled with glory is fulfilled in the church (Hag 2:6-9). He writes that Haggai “is in his accustomed figurative way foretelling the Lord himself and the times of the new age, that is of the Church.”<sup>26</sup> He does not believe the house of YHWH in Haggai 2 to refer simply to the Second Temple, but fully to the people of God. This is an example of prophecy that is later fulfilled through Christ. The church is composed of the people of Christ that are gathered through his work, and so the temple is fulfilled in Jesus.

Further, Augustine sees the resurrection as a fulfillment of promises given. Haggai is looking forward to the “ultimate resurrection of the body, in which the most perfect bliss will find its term.”<sup>27</sup> The promise of the resurrection is only possible because of Christ’s work, and it takes place when he returns; it is a promise that is fulfilled in Jesus.

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<sup>24</sup>Augustine, “Sermon Against the Manichees,” 349.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 352.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 349.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 351.

Not only does Augustine find Christological fulfillment in the church, and the resurrection, but also in the second advent of Christ. He contends that Haggai 2:7 is “clearly...about the latest, that is to say the second, coming of the Lord.”<sup>28</sup> That which was initiated with Christ’s first coming will be finished at his second. The great eschatological shaking will happen at his second coming when he, who is desired by the nations, fills the church with his glory.

The third way in which Augustine preached Christ from Haggai 2:8-9 is through longitudinal themes. Not only does history move toward Christ, and not only are promises fulfilled in Christ, but also there are certain biblical themes that are answered in Christ. Augustine uses the example of true riches. God has sovereignly given gold and silver to men so that they might use it for good, but these treasures are mere shadows of the gospel. When Luke 16:9 calls wealth the “mammon of iniquity,”<sup>29</sup> it is because it is iniquity compared with the true riches of the gospel. It is unjust to speak as if money can do what faith in Christ does. Only Jesus eliminates need. Often, wealth creates more need. Haggai, and other portions of the OT, discusses wealth and need. These texts are revealing a greater need that is satisfied in Christ. Men are in need of Christ because of their sin. Jesus has offered a treasure of spiritual riches in the gospel. This theme is a final way in which Augustine preached Christ from the book of Haggai.

Augustine did indeed preach Christ from the book of Haggai. He used redemptive-historical progression, promise-fulfillment, and longitudinal themes to accomplish his task. His sermon was eschatologically focused, for he believed Haggai’s prophecy to point to the First, and more obviously, the Second Coming of Christ. Augustine most notably emphasized the church as the true temple, the resurrection as the

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<sup>28</sup>Augustine, “Sermon Against the Manichees,” 349-50.

<sup>29</sup>This is the English translation of what Augustine quoted from the Vulgate. The ESV reads, “unrighteous wealth.”

true peace, and the Second Coming as the true shaking of the nations. Each of these components is a product of the person and work of Christ. Having surveyed Augustine, we will now move on to analyze a sermon from the largest name in medieval theology – Saint Thomas Aquinas.

### **The Medieval Era**

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) was a Dominican friar and Roman Catholic priest. He is considered one of the most significant philosophers and theologians in church history. Aquinas is certainly the most influential theologian of the medieval era, and quite possibly the most influential theologian in the history of the Roman Catholic Church. His *Summa Theologiae*<sup>30</sup> was a significant force in shaping contemporary Roman Catholic dogma, and is still considered a prominent resource. Aquinas was influenced by Augustine's four-fold interpretation, but he did ground the three spiritual senses in the historical sense.<sup>31</sup> Aquinas was not a slave to the allegorical method. He uses the allegorical interpretation, but also warns against it.<sup>32</sup> His sermon from Haggai 2:7 will serve as one example of preaching Christ from the book of Haggai from this period.

### **Sermon Overview**

Aquinas has a sermon from Haggai 2:7 entitled “Veniet Desideratus (“The Desired”).” Unlike Augustine's homily, which was polemical, Aquinas gives a festal homily for the first Sunday of Advent. He actually begins the sermon by quoting Augustine who proclaims that one is only freed from damnation through faith in Christ.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. Aquinas Institute Faculty and Staff, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Rochester, NY: The Aquinas Institute, 2012).

<sup>31</sup>Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 106.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 107. Aquinas' warning against allegory is three-fold: (1) it is susceptible to deception; (2) without a clear method it leads to confusion; and (3) it lacks a sense of the proper integration of Scripture.

<sup>33</sup>Thomas Aquinas, “Veniet Desideratus,” in *The Academic Sermons*, ed. Gregory F. LaNave, trans. Mark-Robin Hoogland (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 23.



From that first quotation, his thesis claims that all saints long for the coming of Christ. The unequivocal answer to the first question – Did Aquinas preach Christ? – is yes. Aquinas connects the desire of the saints to Haggai 2:7; Jesus is the desired one. The homily is Christological from the start. Aquinas believes the words of Haggai to be fulfilled in Christ in three ways: (1) Jesus comes down from heaven, (2) Jesus fulfills the desire of the fathers, and (3) Jesus freely bestows his pleasing benefit on humanity. The first point articulates the lowliness of Christ’s coming. The second point reveals the need for his coming, and the third point uncovers the gift that is offered at his coming.

The first point Aquinas uses to preach Christ is that God’s Son comes down. The “desired one” has descended from heaven to save his people. Aquinas argues that Jesus had to come for three reasons – (1) to grant the whole world the highest grade of dignity, (2) to lead them back to their proper human state, and (3) to take away their offense against God.<sup>34</sup> In order to grant the world the highest grade of dignity, Jesus makes a new union, takes on a new generation, and brings along a new perfection. He is the first person who creates a union between that which is temporal and that which is eternal – humanity and divinity. Jesus is about to unite these two parties because he has an earthly mother, and a heavenly Father. He is the first man who is born of a mother but “without a father in time.”<sup>35</sup> He is also the first one to unite the creature and creator with the same essence. Through these three means, Jesus grants the whole world the highest grade of dignity.

The second reason that Jesus came was to lead humanity back to their proper state. He came to establish one king, one law, and one judge administering justice. Jesus is proven to be the king because of all of the worship that he received at his birth. The

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<sup>34</sup>Aquinas, “Veniet Desideratus,” 24.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 25.

law that he brings is general, spiritual, and it pertains to love.<sup>36</sup> He brings justice because Jesus is the only one who has the true authority to administer justice.

The final reason that Jesus came was to take away man's offense against God. Mankind deserves death because of rebellion. Both judgment and mercy are met in Christ. He is the Son of God who makes peace between God and man; he brings the peace settlement. Aquinas believed that Haggai's message pointed to Jesus' coming. Jesus will right the wrongs of humanity. He will reconnect God to man.

Aquinas' second point is that Jesus fulfills the desire of the fathers. Here, Aquinas sees explicit fulfillment in Haggai's prophecy. Jesus is the desire of the nations because (1) man was weak through an incurable wound, (2) man was oppressed by an unbearable tyrant, and (3) man was thirsty with an unquenchable thirst. The incurable wound refers to sin, which has corrupted the whole human nature. Second, humanity's rebellion brings about the oppression of an unbearable tyrant, like an unjust person handed over to enemies.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, Aquinas writes that people have an unquenchable thirst because there is a lack of sacramental grace in their sin.<sup>38</sup> Like Israel in the wilderness, humanity cries out to God for his presence and justice. Jesus is the desired one of Haggai 2:7 because he cures the wound, quenches the thirst, and relieves the oppression that humanity has experienced.

The third, and final, point is that Jesus freely bestows his pleasing benefit on people by filling his house with glory. Aquinas argues for a three-fold fulfillment of Jesus' house.<sup>39</sup> (1) The unique house is the Virgin Mary. Jesus' incarnation fulfills Haggai

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<sup>36</sup>Aquinas argues that the first law was only for Israel. This new law is for all men, which is why it is general. The new law is spiritual because the prophet Jeremiah says it is written on the hearts of people. Finally, it is a law of love because it speaks of heavenly things.

<sup>37</sup>Aquinas, "Veniet Desideratus," 31.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 32-33.

2:9 when he fills Mary's womb with the glory of the divine. (2) The special house is the church militant. Christ built this house through his work and it is made of living stones (1 Pet 2:5). (3) The general house is the heavenly homeland. This house is filled at the ascension of Christ where he connects heaven and earth. Aquinas sees three-fold fulfillment of the greater house in Mary, the church, and the heavenly homeland. The coming, desire, and benefits of Jesus frame Aquinas' sermon on Haggai 2:7, and he certainly preaches Christ in this homily.

### **Sermon Observations**

Just as Augustine's sermon was one example of how the book of Haggai was preached in the Patristic period, Aquinas' sermon gives us an example from the Medieval era. After establishing that Aquinas did preach Christ from the book of Haggai, the next question is to answer is how did he preach Christ? Aquinas preached Christ from the book of Haggai using: (1) redemptive-historical progression, (2) longitudinal themes, (3) promise-fulfillment, and (4) typology. The content of the sermon reveals Aquinas' Christological methodology. He opines, "And this [fulfillment in Christ] is shown well and plainly in the saying mentioned in which the Prophet shows three things . . . ."<sup>40</sup> Aquinas believes the passage to "plainly" reveal Jesus.

First, Aquinas preaches Christ from the book of Haggai through redemptive-historical progression. Aquinas' first point is that redemptive history reaches its climax in the first advent of Christ. The brokenness that exists between God and man is reconciled in Jesus Christ. Aquinas notes, "therefore all the saints always, from the beginning of the world, longed for and desired the coming of the Savior."<sup>41</sup> The new union, generation, and perfection that come in Jesus all restore the effect of the fall. Jesus reconciles the

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<sup>40</sup>Aquinas, "Veniet Desideratus," 32-33.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 23.

temporal with the eternal, and also the creature with the creator. This is the restoration for which God's people have longed. Aquinas also teases this truth out in his second point – Jesus is the desire of humanity. He is the satisfaction of the desire that is as old as the Garden of Eden.

Second, Aquinas preaches Christ through longitudinal themes. Aquinas believes that a number of OT themes find their *telos* in Jesus. The first theme Aquinas explores is kingdom; Jesus is the true king. Aquinas writes,

And therefore Christ came, in order to be the one reigning king of the whole world himself, whose dominion would be universal, whose empire universal, and whose reign eternal. And this is shown clearly in his birth, because then he manifested himself as the king of the people when kings adored him; as the king of the angels playing on their stringed instruments as they rejoiced; as the king of the [Jews] awaiting him because the shepherd listened; as king of the heavenly bodies because the stars knew him.<sup>42</sup>

Jesus is the climax of the kingdom of God, and now rules his people.

The second longitudinal theme that Aquinas explores is the law. Jesus brings the new law. This is a law that is not merely for Israel, but for all men. It is a spiritual law that is written on the hearts of men. This new law is a law of love; it speaks of heavenly things.

The third theme that Aquinas develops is peace, or justice. Jesus is the “one judge administering justice.”<sup>43</sup> This authority has been given to Jesus from the Father. Justice has been marred by sin. There is corruption in the world, and sin has brought a penalty upon humanity. Jesus rights the wrong between God and man, and he rules the world with justice.

Third, Aquinas preaches Christ from the book of Haggai through promise-fulfillment. He writes, “the prophet shows that [Jesus] is the one who fulfills the desire of

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<sup>42</sup>Aquinas, “Veniet Desideratus,” 27.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 28.

the fathers in a merciful way, as he says: ‘who is desired by all the nations together.’”<sup>44</sup> Aquinas understands Haggai 2:7 to be explicitly fulfilled in Christ. Haggai promised that the “desire of the nations” shall come, and Aquinas proclaims Jesus to be that desire. Jesus is the desire of the nations because he heals man’s incurable wound, frees them from an unbearable tyrant, and quenches their unquenchable thirst. Unlike Augustine, Aquinas believes the emphasis of Haggai’s prophecy to only regard the First Coming of Christ.

The final way in which Aquinas preaches Christ is through typology. Aquinas’ typology is not Christological typology, but it is typology fulfilled in people and places related to Christ. Aquinas sees the future house of Haggai 2:9 realized in a three-fold way: (1) the Virgin Mary, (2) the church, and (3) the heavenly homeland. For Aquinas, the temple was a type of these three coming “houses.” He does not connect the building of the Second Temple to Christ, but to these objects that are connected with Christ.

The first house is the Virgin Mary. Aquinas calls her the “unique house.” Mary was the first dwelling place of the man, Jesus, and thus she is the fulfillment of the greater house. The “special house” is the church. The church is the by-product of the person and work of Christ, making it a greater house. The final house is the heavenly homeland, which is the “general house.” This is the final house because it is where Christ dwells now, and where his church will dwell forever.

Each of these houses is the typological end to which the temple was pointing. The Second Temple was a type. It was not a type of Christ, but a type of Mary, the church, and heaven. While Aquinas’ typology is not thoroughly Christological, it is firmly connected to the person and work of Christ. This makes typology Aquinas’ fourth way of preaching Christ from the book of Haggai.

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<sup>44</sup>Aquinas, “Veniet Desideratus,” 30.

The brief survey of Aquinas' sermon from Haggai 2:7 proves that he did indeed preach Christ. Aquinas preached Christ from this pericope through (1) redemptive-historical progression, (2) longitudinal themes, (3) promise-fulfillment, and (4) typology. There were many similarities to Augustine's methodology, though Aquinas did come to some different conclusions. The discussion now moves on to the Reformation era, and a lecture from Martin Luther on the second chapter of Haggai.

### **The Reformation Era**

Martin Luther (1483-1546) was a former Augustinian monk who became a Protestant pastor after unintentionally initiating the Reformation in Germany. He is most famously known for his stand against the Roman Catholic Church on issues such as justification and the sale of indulgences. In God's providence, Luther was used to change the course of church history in Wittenberg, Germany, on October 31, 1517, when he posted his ninety-five theses. Luther also casts a large shadow over history; more books have been written about Martin Luther than any other person in history except for one – Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>45</sup>

Luther was trained in the four-fold interpretation of Scripture, but abandoned it in 1517. At that point he opted for “a single, literal sense.”<sup>46</sup> Luther also held to a Christological interpretation of the OT. Greidanus notes, “The witness to Christ is Luther's criterion not just for good preaching but first of all for evaluating biblical books.”<sup>47</sup> Later, Greidanus also adds, “Luther begins with the premise that Christ is at the heart of the Bible.”<sup>48</sup> Considering his influence during the Reformation and today, Luther is an excellent choice for evaluation from this era.

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<sup>45</sup>John M. Todd, *Luther: A Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), xvi.

<sup>46</sup>Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 112.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 120.

## Lecture Overview

Martin Luther gave two lectures on the book of Haggai – one lecture for each chapter. These lectures have been compiled in a volume of lectures on the Minor Prophets.<sup>49</sup> For the purpose of continuity with Augustine and Aquinas, it will be helpful to analyze Luther’s lecture on Haggai chapter two. An overview of his lecture will provide a positive answer to the first question; yes, Luther preached Christ from the book of Haggai.

In this lecture, Luther emphasizes a number of themes that connect the book of Haggai to Christ: (1) the kingdom of Christ, (2) the unified people of God, and (3) the gospel. Luther begins his lecture by declaring that the prophet is describing the kingdom of Christ.<sup>50</sup> It is noteworthy that he makes this immediate connection to Christ. The imminence of the kingdom is meant to be a comfort to the people who have come out of exile and now face the task of rebuilding the temple. The Lord wants his people encouraged because many had seen the splendor of the former temple, and their current state of affairs had them discouraged. Luther compares their situation to that of personal salvation. Israel had seen the glory of Solomon’s temple, they were carted off into exile, and now they have returned to Judah. The task of rebuilding the temple seems hopeless and foolish. He writes that believers have had a similar experience. The gospel seemed like foolishness in the beginning, “but this is the way God declares his power.”<sup>51</sup> When things seem impossible to man, that is when God intervenes. Luther contends that Israel’s story would be realized in the kingdom of Christ.

Second, Luther sees the text fulfilled in the combined – Jew and gentile – church. Luther comments on verse five noting that God is using “fiery words to stir up

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<sup>49</sup>Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 18, *Lectures on the Minor Prophets I*, ed. Hilton C. Oswald (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007).

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 379.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 380.

the heart of the people.”<sup>52</sup> The Lord gives Israel specific encouragement that is different than how he speaks to his church now. Israel experienced their covenant as a nation, which means that they were all included whether they were righteous or not. Luther adds, “[n]ow, however, the kingdom is a spiritual one, and promises of this sort apply only to the righteous, whether they be Jews or Gentiles.”<sup>53</sup> The new covenant – with the church – extends only to those who are righteous, which makes the experience of God’s people today different than it was in theocratic Israel. Luther emphasizes the difference between theocratic Israel and the church of every tribe, tongue, and nation, which is connected through the work of Christ.

Luther explains why he believes this to be the case in verse 6. Nationalistic Israel is no longer designated as the people of God because Christ has come; the advent of Jesus is the fulfillment of Haggai 2:6.<sup>54</sup> This redemptive shift is proven by the disappearance of the anointed offices in Israel. The Jews have not had a prophet, priest, or king since the coming of Christ. These anointed offices had blessed the people for generations, but their necessity ended with the work of Jesus. The Law and the Prophets have been fulfilled with the coming of Christ and the arrival of the gospel.

The gospel is the third theme that Luther uses to tie the text to Christ. Luther’s interpretation of verse 7 is distinct from what we have seen from Augustine and Aquinas. Luther has a discrepancy with the Vulgate’s translation of the word “desired.” He translates the term as “treasure,” or “what is treasurable.” For Luther, the treasure is the gospel. He quotes Luke 24:47 to argue that Haggai is preparing the nation for the coming of the good news. Luther also understands the gold and the silver of verse 8 to refer to the spiritual treasure that Christ brings. In verse 9, Jesus is the only one who brings peace,

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<sup>52</sup>Luther, *Lectures on the Minor Prophets 1*, 380.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 381.



and this is why the gospel must be spread from Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). According to Luther, the gospel is the “treasured,” or “desired” thing that Haggai is predicting.

Martin Luther ends the lecture by commenting on Haggai’s final oracle and connecting it specifically to Jesus. Haggai speaks the last oracle to comfort the king and the people. He concludes that the speech was not so much for Zerubbabel, but for Christ who came from his loins.<sup>55</sup> The promise was not fulfilled in Zerubbabel’s lifetime, but in the time of Christ. This glorious fulfillment brings salvation and the preaching of the gospel. It is clear that Luther preached Christ from Haggai 2. The next question that must be addressed how did Luther preach Christ from the book of Haggai?

### **Lecture Observations**

Martin Luther did preach Christ from the book of Haggai. Luther used three different ways to preach Christ from this chapter: (1) redemptive-historical progression, (2) contrast, and (3) promise-fulfillment. First, he used the way of redemptive-historical progression. Luther places the narrative of Haggai within the redemptive narrative, which finds its culmination in Christ. He believed that Haggai was pointing the nation of Israel forward to the kingdom of Christ. He writes, “The prophet begins a third discourse, in which he comforts the people as he describes the kingdom of Christ which was coming and which was, in fact, imminent and had to be declared immediately.”<sup>56</sup> He understood Haggai’s message to look forward to Christ’s kingdom, which was imminent. Haggai’s prophecy is tied to Jesus’ kingdom through the narrative of redemptive history. God was providentially moving history to prepare the world for Christ, in the fullness of time (Gal 4:4-7).

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<sup>55</sup>Luther, *Lectures on the Minor Prophets 1*, 386.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 379.

Luther not only believes the story in Haggai to be looking ahead to Christ, but also believes this fact to be obvious. In his commentary on verse 6, Luther is discussing YHWH's shaking of heaven and earth. He understands this verse to refer to the coming of Christ, and is disgusted that the Jewish people do not share his view. He opines, "If the text here is true – as it cannot but be very true – the Jews cannot deny that the Christ promised to their fathers has come."<sup>57</sup> He is beside himself with their blindness to messianic fulfillment. Luther's redemptive-historical understanding places the Jewish hermeneutic out of bounds. For Luther, to deny the fulfillment of the book of Haggai, or the entire OT for that matter, in the kingdom of Christ was ludicrous. Luther writes, "[Haggai] gives himself completely over to a description of the kingdom of Christ so that people most certainly should believe the truth of his promises."<sup>58</sup> Luther first preached Christ from the book of Haggai through redemptive-historical progression, but that is not the only way he does so.

Second, Luther preached Christ from the book of Haggai through the way of contrast. Luther saw the contrast that exists between old covenant Israel and the church, and he used the difference as an avenue to emphasize the work of Christ. Israel's covenant was nationalistic and theocratic. Members of God's people came through birth. It is different with the church. The kingdom is now spiritual, and only righteous people are members of this kingdom. This is a redemptive-historical shift that has happened through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The shift in God's redemptive program is historically observable. Ethnic Israel may no longer lay claim to God's kingdom because they no longer enjoy the anointed offices – prophet, priest, and king. Luther pens,

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<sup>57</sup>Luther, *Lectures on the Minor Prophets 1*, 381.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

Now the Jews are not a people of this kind, for they have neither a kingdom nor a priesthood . . . Today, you see, they have no king, no priests, no prophets. Before Christ's birth they never lacked these, not even in captivity. After all, in the captivity they had Daniel and Jeremiah as proclaimers of the Word, who by the Word of God kept sustaining and encouraging them, lest they lose their faith, etc.<sup>59</sup>

God has demonstrably proven that there has been a shift in the drama of redemption; there is a new act, and the church has taken the lead as the people of God.

The third way that Martin Luther preached Christ in his sermon was through promise-fulfillment. Luther sees three instances of a fulfilled promise in Haggai's second chapter: (1) the treasure of the gospel, (2) the first advent of Christ, and (3) the royal lineage of Christ. First, he believes that the treasures of all the nations are the gospel. Luther's interpretation is different still from Augustine and Aquinas. Augustine understood the "desired" to be the church, and Aquinas believed it was Christ. For Luther, the gospel is the spiritual treasure that Jesus brings. Since the gospel will spread from Jerusalem, Haggai's sermon – in Jerusalem – is preparing the people for the gospel (Luke 24:47). Luther argues for the continuing power of the gospel as he reprimands the papacy. He declares, "The pope is nothing, for hearts have been changed, and the pope's realm displeases them; that is why it will not be able to last."<sup>60</sup> The gospel is the first promise that is fulfilled from the book of Haggai.

Luther's second fulfilled promise comes with verse 6. He understands the shaking of the nations to be fulfilled in the first advent of Christ. He contends that Haggai "looks only at the coming kingdom of Christ."<sup>61</sup> Technically, he sees the fulfillment coming with John the Baptist because the Law and the prophets were the only revelation "until John" (Luke 16:16). Again, history has proven this to be the case, because Israel has not had any prophets, priests, or kings since this time.

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<sup>59</sup>Luther, *Lectures on the Minor Prophets 1*, 381.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 381-82.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 381.

The final promise that is fulfilled in Haggai 2 is the royal lineage of Christ. Jesus is the “chosen one” of verse 23. Luther writes, “This applies not so much to the person of the king as it does to the person of Christ, who was born out of his loins . . . . You see, as long as Zerubbabel lived that change did not occur. It came after his death when the new King, Christ, was born.”<sup>62</sup> Jesus’ Davidic genealogy, which includes Zerubbabel, is the fulfillment of a promise that is recapitulated in the prophecy of Haggai. Luther used these three fulfilled promises – (1) the gospel, (2) the first advent, and (3) the royal lineage – to preach Christ from the book of Haggai.

Martin Luther believed Haggai to be the “easiest of all the prophets.”<sup>63</sup> Luther believed that the book of Haggai testified to Christ beyond its original context. He tips his hand in his Preface when he suggests that, for the church, the book of Haggai is not so much about “the subject matter” as it is about “the spirit and the words.”<sup>64</sup> Luther preached Christ from the book of Haggai using (1) redemptive-historical progression, (2) contrast, and (3) promise-fulfillment.

### **The Puritan Era**

John Flavel (1628-1691) was a Puritan preacher who spent most of his life on the run from English persecution.<sup>65</sup> He was first ejected from his pulpit in 1662 for nonconformity. This removal led to a lifetime of covert preaching in homes, or in the woods. He even once dressed up as a woman on horseback so he could reach a secret location where he would preach and administer baptism.<sup>66</sup> After King James II issued an

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<sup>62</sup>Luther, *Lectures on the Minor Prophets 1*, 386-87.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 367.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006), 245-56.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 247.

indulgence for nonconformists, Flavel spent the last four years of his life preaching publically. His complete works were printed five times in the eighteenth century, three times in the nineteenth century, and several times in the twentieth century. These works were influential in the ministries of homiletical giants like Jonathan Edwards and George Whitfield.<sup>67</sup>

Flavel's preaching style falls in line with that of many Puritans, including Jonathan Edwards. Each sermon was organized into three main points: (1) the text, which would describe the historical setting of the passage; (2) the doctrine, which would defend the thesis of the sermon using other Scripture; and finally, (3) the use, which would be the longest section of the sermon and apply the Scripture directly to the lives of his parishioners.<sup>68</sup> This is the style employed for his sermon on Haggai 2:7. Did this influential Puritan preach Christ from the book of Haggai? If he did, how so?

### **Sermon Overview**

John Flavel once preached a sermon from Haggai 2:7 entitled "Alluring the Hearts of Men to come to Christ, by a fourth Motive contained in another Title of Christ."<sup>69</sup> The sermon begins with the text and places it within the context of Haggai's first chapter. Israel had been rebuked for neglecting the house of God while they decorated their own homes. Once they began rebuilding the temple, they were discouraged that it was not as magnificent as the first. The prophet answers their angst with the encouragement that the glory of Jesus Christ will be greater than the first temple.

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<sup>67</sup>Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, 249-50.

<sup>68</sup>Douglas A. Sweeney, *Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the Word: A Model of Faith and Thought* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 74.

<sup>69</sup>John Flavel, "Alluring the Hearts of Men to come to Christ, by a fourth Motive contained in another Title of Christ," in *Works of John Flavel* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1968) 2:225-35.

Flavel is bewildered by the blindness of the Jews living in his own day. They do not recognize that Christ Jesus is the fulfillment of Haggai's prophecy.<sup>70</sup> More than 1500 years have passed since the destruction of the Second Temple; how can they not acknowledge that Jesus is the Messiah? Surely it is not the actual Temple building that is the fulfillment of the text, for the building was laid waste in AD 70. Haggai's promise was fulfilled at the incarnation of the Son of God, who lived while the Second Temple still stood. The incarnation is when the "desire of the nations" had come (Mal 3:12). This truth is confirmed by the Apostle in Hebrews 12:26. Flavel also makes a grammatical argument for a Christocentric reading of the verse.<sup>71</sup> When Haggai speaks of the "desire of the nations," he is putting the act of desiring in the place of the object that is desired – i.e. Jesus is the desire of the nations. He compares Haggai 2:7 with Ezekiel 24:16, where Ezekiel's wife is called "the desire of thine eyes" (KJV). Ezekiel's wife is synonymous with his desire for her; the same is true with Christ in Haggai 2:7. Jesus is the desire of the nations.

After discussing the text, Flavel moves on to the doctrinal implications. He summarizes the doctrine in this way: "*That the desires of God's elect in all kingdoms, and among all people of the earth, are, and shall be drawn out after and fixed upon, the Lord Jesus Christ.*"<sup>72</sup> This doctrinal truth addresses two questions for God's people: (1) Why Christ is called the desire of the nations; and (2) Upon what account the people of God, in all nations, desire him. First, Flavel lists a number of reasons why Christ is the desire of the nations, including his sufficiency and the extent of his kingdom. Second, Flavel answers upon what account God's people desire Christ. Jesus is the only one who can bring the nations relief in their consciences (Rom 5:16, 18), cleansing from sin (1 John

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<sup>70</sup>Flavel, "Alluring the Hearts of Men," 2:225.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 226.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 226. Emphasis original.

5:6), and entrance into heaven (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Between these questions Flavel interjects an objection: Why do some reject Christ if he is the desire of the nations? He answers, “We must remember that the nations of the world have their times and seasons of conversion.”<sup>73</sup> God has appointed different nations to embrace the gospel at different times and seasons (Isa 49:7).

After considering the doctrine, Flavel transitions to the third segment of the sermon – the use. In this section, Flavel gives his hearer five facets of application in light of the text and the doctrine: (1) information; (2) examination; (3) consolation; (4) exhortation; and (5) direction.<sup>74</sup> In true Puritan form, Flavel treats the desire of Christ like a multi-faceted diamond. He slowly turns the gem to dissect several points of application for the Christian. The sermon then ends with one last final petition for the hearer to lay claim to Christ, who is the desire of the nations.

### **Sermon Observations**

John Flavel did indeed preach Christ from the book of Haggai. He did so using: (1) promise-fulfillment and (2) NT references. First, he used promise-fulfillment. The entire premise of the homily is predicated on Flavel’s belief that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the promise made in Haggai 2:7. After reviewing the disparity of Israel’s situation at the beginning of the book of Haggai, Flavel declares, “To this grand discouragement the prophet applies this relief; that whatsoever should be wanting in external pomp and glory, should be more than recompensed by the presence of Jesus Christ in this *second temple*. For Christ, ‘the desire of the nations,’ saith he, shall come into it.”<sup>75</sup> Flavel argues that Haggai prophesies that Christ will come while the Second Temple is still standing, and that his prophecy was fulfilled.

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<sup>73</sup>Flavel, “Alluring the Hearts of Men,” 2:228.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 229-35.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 225. Emphasis original.

Second, John Flavel uses NT references to preach Christ from Haggai 2:7. He mentions Hebrews 12:26, “For so our prophet here speaks, ‘I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come,’ to which the apostle alludes, in Heb. xii. 26. applying this prophecy to Jesus Christ, here called the ‘desire of all nations:’ putting the act for the object, desire for the thing desired.”<sup>76</sup> Flavel notes that the Apostle who wrote the letter to the Hebrews interprets Haggai 2:7 through a Christological lens. Because the apostle applies Haggai’s prophecy to Jesus, believers must also read and understand this text in light of the Christ event.

Furthermore, Flavel’s latter two homiletical segments – the doctrine and the use – are founded upon a Christ-centered reading of the pericope. In the doctrinal portion he dissects why Christ is called the desire of the nations, and in what way the nations desire Christ. Because Flavel believes that the book of Haggai should be read in a Christ-centered manner, he draws doctrinal conclusions from the text using a Christ-centered hermeneutic. He does the same thing with the application section of the sermon. Flavel offers five points (with multiple subpoints) of “use” that are designed to help his parishioners desire Christ properly. There is no doubt that John Flavel believes that, in light of Haggai 2:7, the nations are called to desire and lay claim to Jesus Christ.

What we have in John Flavel’s sermon on Haggai 2:7 is an example of a Christ-centered sermon from the Puritan era. Flavel used (1) promise-fulfillment and (2) NT references to preach the text Christ. He argued that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the promise made by the prophet in the text, and he quoted Hebrews 12:26 in defense of his hermeneutic. His doctrine and application were both grounded in his Christocentric reading of the pericope. Having now sampled a sermon from the Patristic, medieval, Reformation, and Puritan eras, we will now look to the Modern era and a sermon preached by C. H. Spurgeon from the book of Haggai.

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<sup>76</sup>Flavel, “Alluring the Hearts of Men,” 2:226.



## The Modern Era

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) is known as the “Prince of Preachers.” He pastored the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London for several years where he preached regularly. Spurgeon is best known for his Calvinistic theology and for his gifted oratory skills. His influence, during his lifetime and today, make him a substantial voice and a valuable contributor to a history of preaching.

Spurgeon believed that all preachers must preach Christ. His conviction is made clear in the instruction he gave to young preachers. Spurgeon said,

Don't you know, young man, that from every town and every village and every hamlet in England, wherever it may be, there is a road to London? So from every text of Scripture there is a road to Christ. And my dear brother, your business is, when you get to a text, to say, now, what is the road to Christ? I have never found a text that had not got a road to Christ in it, and if I ever do find one, I will go over a hedge and ditch but I would get at my Master, for the sermon cannot do any good unless there is a savor of Christ in it.<sup>77</sup>

Spurgeon's method of interpretation dealt with two senses of the text – the literal and the spiritual sense. Through the spiritual sense he would most often preach Christ through promise-fulfillment, typology, and allegory.<sup>78</sup> Spurgeon was undoubtedly the most prominent preacher in his day and he still bears a strong influence over the contemporary homiletical landscape. This reputation makes him an ideal candidate to evaluate from the modern era.

### Sermon Overview

On Thursday evening, August 25, 1870, C. H. Spurgeon preached a sermon from Haggai 2:7-9 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London. The sermon was entitled “The Desire of All Nations.”<sup>79</sup> The homily is about how Jesus and his church are the

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<sup>77</sup>Quoted in Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 153-54.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 156-59.

<sup>79</sup>Charles Haddon Spurgeon, "The Desire of All Nations," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 61 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1980).

fulfillment of Haggai's prophecy. Spurgeon enlisted his "duel-sense" hermeneutic to argue that Christ and the church both fulfill Haggai's prophecy about the desire of the nations. He begins with the church – the historical reality of the coming of the nations – and then moves on to the Christological goal of the text.

First, Spurgeon argues for fulfillment in Christ's church. He begins the sermon by contrasting the Second Temple with Solomon's Temple. In his providence, God used rulers like Cyrus, Darius, and Herod to build the new structure, but it was pointing the people to something different. The old Mosaic system was going to be "softly melted into the light of spiritual truth."<sup>80</sup> The physical temple was only pointing forward to "his true temple, the church." This is where he begins his first point – "The Historical Desire of All Nations Shall Come" – the church.

"The desire of all nations" refers, first, to God's people. The wealth and fame of all of the world's kings does not compare to the worth of God's church. The elect are God's "royal treasure, his secret jewels, the treasury of kings."<sup>81</sup> They are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Spurgeon also notes that the text reveals how God will build his house. He triumphs, "the desire of all nations *shall* come."<sup>82</sup> God has promised to build his church, and she can be assured that the sown seed will be harvested. Spurgeon exclaims, "We may preach the gospel with devout assurance of success."<sup>83</sup> God's people are the desired ones and they shall come in to his new temple.

God's method for bringing in his desired ones is through shaking. This shaking is made manifest through his providence, human conscience, and the Holy Spirit. This method is God's prerogative because he is the owner of the human heart. Spurgeon uses

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<sup>80</sup>Spurgeon, "The Desire of All Nations," 61:26.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid. Emphasis original.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 27

the illustration of two boxes, each that have been opened.<sup>84</sup> Both boxes are missing their contents, but they are in differing conditions. One box is “wrenched,” for “there has been used evidently rough means”<sup>85</sup> to open the box. The other box is undisturbed. The first box was broken into and its contents were stolen. “The person who had the key – probably the owner”<sup>86</sup>, opened the other box. God is the owner of the heart. When God shakes his people to come in, this does not violate their will because man’s heart belongs to God.

These “desired ones” will bring in their desired things; this is why Haggai speaks of the silver and gold.<sup>87</sup> Believers do not keep their riches to themselves; they give it all to Jesus. More to the point, the desired things of the church are much more grander than silver and gold. The riches of the church are faith, love, holiness, and joy, among others. Not only is the new temple filled with riches, but this temple also cannot be shaken. He quotes Hebrews 12:26-29 to allude to the church’s standing at the final judgment. Spurgeon believes that a literal understanding of Haggai’s prophecy is fulfilled in the church, for they are the desired ones of God.

Spurgeon’s second point is a treatise on the glory of Jesus, which is the glory of the Second Temple. This is the second, or “spiritual sense” of the text. Jesus is the true “desired one” of the nations. The nations dimly desired him and there were many, like Job, who longed for his coming. What is more, if the nations had the Spirit, they would know that Jesus is the one for whom they truly long. Spurgeon surveys three different issues that the nations want resolved and he notes that Jesus resolves each of these

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<sup>84</sup>Spurgeon, “The Desire of All Nations,” 28.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Here Spurgeon agrees with Luther that the translation of earlier theologians, such as Augustine and Aquinas, is not correct. While Spurgeon finds the plural translation to be the most literal rendition, he also agrees with the principle of the singular translation. He then preaches the truth of “the desired one” in his second point.

problems.<sup>88</sup> First, people wish for a way to God. This is why the Roman Catholic Church was successful in establishing the priesthood; men long for a mediator. Jesus is the one mediator between God and man. The nations also long for a peacemaker. Jesus is the prince of peace. Finally, man wants a purifier. Jesus is the greatest of all governments that will set the world to rights.

Spurgeon contends that there are two other ways in which Jesus is the desire of the nations. First, he is the desire of the nations in that believers desire for all of the nations to come to him. Spurgeon roars, “Oh! That the world were encompassed in his gospel!”<sup>89</sup> Finally, Christ is the desire of all the nations in that he is the most desirable, or choicest of all the nations. He is the choicest of ten thousand and the glory of God’s church.

The homily ends on an eschatological note. The visible glory of the Second Temple will be made manifest at the second coming of Christ. This is why the world groans for deliverance (Rom 8:19-22). God does not allow his people to get too comfortable with the world, but wishes for them to long for Jesus’ coming. This preview of the future mandates a call in the present. Spurgeon ends the sermon with a gospel call – “Is Christ thy desire?”<sup>90</sup> Spurgeon’s message on the desire of the nations concludes with a beckoning to come to the one who is the desire of the nations. He will give remission of sins to those who seek him. It is clear that Charles Spurgeon preached Christ from his sermon. This should not be a surprise to those familiar with Spurgeon as he is the one who once famously declared that he would take every text he preached and “make a bee-line to the cross.”<sup>91</sup> The final question that must be asked is, How did Spurgeon preach Christ from the book of Haggai?

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<sup>88</sup>Spurgeon, “The Desire of All Nations,” 61:30-31.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 31.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 33.

<sup>91</sup>Lewis A. Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications,

## Sermon Observations

C. H. Spurgeon preached Christ from the book of Haggai using five ways: (1) redemptive-historical progression, (2) promise-fulfillment, (3) NT references, (4) typology, and (5) contrast. First, Spurgeon used redemptive-historical progression. Even though Haggai preached to postexilic Israel, his message is applicable to the church, because the church is God's people in a different redemptive epoch. Prior to establishing his first point, Spurgeon acknowledges that the church is the "true spiritual temple."<sup>92</sup> The temple of the OT was pointing forward to the true temple in the NT. God's redemptive plan has moved forward, so that believers can see that the church is the fulfillment of what Haggai was prophesying. Since the progression of redemptive history is centered on the Christ event, Spurgeon's ecclesiastical application is a way to preach Christ from the text.

Second, Spurgeon preached Christ from the book of Haggai through promise-fulfillment. He saw a two-fold fulfillment to Haggai's message: the church and Christ. The church is the historical fulfillment of the desire of the nations, and Christ is the spiritual fulfillment. The church is ushered in through the work of Christ because he desires them. Christ is also the desired one of the nations. There are several different ways in which Jesus is the desired one from Haggai 2. He is the desired one because (1) the nations did desire him, (2) they should desire him, (3) they unknowingly do desire him, (4) the church desires the nations to know him, and (5) because Jesus is the most desirable man of all the nations.<sup>93</sup> The only reason that the desired ones – the church – can come to God is because the desired one – Jesus Christ – came to them. Spurgeon's hermeneutic is overtly and unapologetically Christocentric. He sees the promise of Haggai 2 fulfilled in Christ and his church.

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1992), 223.

<sup>92</sup>Spurgeon, "The Desire of All Nations," 61:26.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 29-32.

Third, Charles Spurgeon preached Christ in this sermon through NT references. He quotes from Hebrews 12:26-29 where this pericope is directly mentioned in the NT. Spurgeon contends that the promises made in Haggai 2:7-9 are fulfilled in Hebrews 12:26-29. It is not merely an allusion to the language of Haggai 2, but it is fulfillment. He concludes that the apostle, who is the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, is directly applying Haggai 2:7-9 to the church.<sup>94</sup> That which was promised in the old is fulfilled in the new.

Spurgeon also comments on the eschatological nature of Haggai 2:7-9 in reference to the book of Hebrews. He uses Hebrews 12:26-29 to argue that Haggai's oracle will be fulfilled at the second advent of Christ. The prophet's words were not fulfilled at the first coming of Christ, but only inaugurated. It is at the final judgment where God will shake the nations, and the church will remain the unshakable kingdom. He understands this passage to look forward to explicit fulfillment in Jesus. Spurgeon uses NT references to preach Christ from the book of Haggai through the epistle to the Hebrews.

The final two ways that Spurgeon preached Christ – typology and contrast – are connected. Spurgeon preached Christ through typology. The temple system was a type of the work of Christ, and the temple was a type of the final temple, the church. Even though the physical temple and the church are both described as temples, there is also a great deal of contrast between these two temples. Spurgeon contrasted Israel's temple with the final temple – the church. Discussing the passing of the physical temple, Spurgeon writes, “God intended there to light up the first beams of the spiritual splendour of the second temple, namely, his true temple, the Church, and he would put a sign of decay on the outward and visible in the temple of the first.”<sup>95</sup> Solomon's Temple and the

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<sup>94</sup>Spurgeon, “The Desire of All Nations,” 61:29.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 26.

Second Temple were both signs of the final temple, the church. The discontinuity between the physical temple and the spiritual temple comes through the work of Christ. Jesus has offered the final sacrifice, therefore there is no longer any need for a temple. God's temple now is the church, and it is filled with his treasures, which are his people. The first temple was made of stone, but the second temple is made of living stones. It is a spiritual living temple, not an inanimate building.<sup>96</sup>

Charles Haddon Spurgeon did preach Christ from the book of Haggai. He did so through (1) redemptive-historical progression, (2) promise-fulfillment, (3) NT references, (4) typology, and (5) contrast. Spurgeon's methodology was that of two-fold fulfillment – historical and spiritual. The historical fulfillment of Haggai 2 is the church, and the spiritual fulfillment is Christ.

### **Conclusion**

It will be helpful to draw some conclusions from this historical survey prior to proceeding to the recommended methodology. The survey is by no means exhaustive, for we only reviewed one sermon each from five different men, however it did give us a glimpse into how the book of Haggai has been preached by different men, at different times. These five preachers did preach Christ from the book of Haggai (see table 1 below). All five men used the way and promise-fulfillment to preach Christ from the book of Haggai. Augustine and Aquinas also used longitudinal themes. Aquinas used typology, while Luther used contrast; Spurgeon used both. John Flavel and C. H. Spurgeon also used the way of NT references to preach Christ from the book of Haggai.

These preachers connected Haggai 2 to Christ in a number of ways. Augustine believed the “desire,” or “treasure,” of the nations to be the church. Aquinas and John Flavel both understood that it was Christ. Spurgeon believed in a dual fulfillment – the

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<sup>96</sup>Spurgeon, “The Desire of All Nations,” 61:26.

church and Christ. Martin Luther understood the treasure to be the gospel. Each man preached Christ through promise-fulfillment, and yet they all understood the promise to be fulfilled in slightly different ways. The inconsistency of their conclusions proves the need for a consistent, biblical methodology of preaching Christ from the book of Haggai. In spite of their differences, this brief survey has revealed that several of the church's most prominent preachers have sought to exult Christ from the book of Haggai. Christ-centered preaching is not a recent phenomenon, but is part and parcel of the homiletical history of the church. Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Flavel, and Spurgeon all lived in different eras and used different homiletical styles. Even though their methodologies were different, their message was consistent – the book of Haggai testifies to Christ. Those who actively preach Jesus from the book of Haggai do so in the company of homiletical giants. If the past is prologue, then it is now time to move into the heart of the discussion about Christ-centered preaching.



Table 1. Summary of how historical preachers preached Christ

Redemptive -historical progression	Promise- Fulfillment	Longitudina l Themes	Typology	Contrast	NT References
Augustine	Augustine	Augustine			
Aquinas	Aquinas	Aquinas	Aquinas		
Luther	Luther			Luther	
	Flavel				Flavel
Spurgeon	Spurgeon		Spurgeon	Spurgeon	Spurgeon

## CHAPTER 3

### A DEFINITION AND DEFENSE OF CHRIST-CENTERED PREACHING

#### Introduction

The city of Detroit is designed like a spoke of a wheel. Each major road in town converges at a park called Campus Martius, which is the center of the city. Widely traveled streets like Woodward Avenue, Michigan Avenue, and Fort Street all meet at Campus Martius. In terms of infrastructure, this urban park is at the heart of the city. In the first century, it was said that all roads led to Rome; in the motor city, all roads lead to Campus Martius.

A similar principle is at work in the Bible. Every passage leads to Christ. He is the hero of the story and the heart of the story. This truth is so simple that a child can understand it, and yet it is so complex that it is the subject of numerous dissertations.<sup>1</sup> If Christ is at the heart of the Scriptures, then preachers have no choice but to preach Christ. When preachers preach Christ from the entire Bible, they will faithfully preach the Word (2 Tim 4:2).

A logical question follows this assertion: How does one faithfully preach Christ? Greidanus' survey revealed that preachers, from many traditions, agreed that they ought to preach Christ.<sup>2</sup> They simply did not agree about *how* they were to preach Christ.

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<sup>1</sup>One example of a children's book about the centrality of Christ is Sally Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name* (Grand Rapids: ZonderKidz, 2007). An example of a dissertation on the same subject is Brian Keith Payne, "The Summing Up of All Things in Christ and the Restoration of Human Viceregency: Implications for Ecclesiology" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008).

<sup>2</sup>Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 1-2.

The survey of sermons from chapter 2 revealed that in the past, when preachers have preached Christ, they have done so in different ways. This chapter will define and defend Christ-centered preaching. It will do so by first defining a Christocentric hermeneutic. Second, the chapter will address and answer questions that are posed by those who are resistant to the Christocentric hermeneutical method. Finally, this chapter will introduce a Christocentric homiletic that is the result of the Christocentric hermeneutic. This homiletic is organized around the four horizons of Christ-centered preaching—the contextual, covenantal, canonical, and contemporary horizons.

### **Christ-Centered Hermeneutics**

Before one can explore Christ-centered preaching, it is important that Christ-centered hermeneutics are first defined; hermeneutics are the foundation for homiletics. A Christocentric hermeneutic asserts that the Scriptures must be interpreted through the lens of the gospel. To phrase it another way, Jesus is the hermeneutical center of the Bible.<sup>3</sup> This means that every passage serves the great redemptive story—God’s salvation of his people through Christ. If this is true, then interpreters must approach every text with the gospel in mind. Graeme Goldsworthy observes, “The hermeneutical question about the whole bible correlates with the question, ‘what do you think about Christ?’”<sup>4</sup>

Dennis Johnson uses the terminology of “Apostolic Hermeneutics.”<sup>5</sup> He contends that the “*theological truths* articulated by the apostles” have been divorced from the “*interpretive methods*” that grounded those truths.<sup>6</sup> It is not merely enough to accept

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<sup>3</sup>Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 62.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007), 10.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. Emphasis original.

apostolic doctrine,<sup>7</sup> which is at the heart of orthodoxy, but one must also accept the apostle's hermeneutic, since it was the foundation of their doctrine. If Johnson is correct, that the apostles have left the church a hermeneutical method, and if Goldsworthy is correct, that one must have a "gospel presupposition" when he approaches the text, then two questions naturally arise. First, why must Christians practice this hermeneutical method? What is the reason for preferring this approach above others? Second, if it is proven to be correct, then how does one begin to employ the Christ-centered methodology? What are some approaches that can be used to read the Scriptures with a Christocentric hermeneutic?

### **Biblical and Theological Reasoning**

For the purpose of this thesis, Christocentric hermeneutics will be defined in this way—a Christocentric hermeneutic interprets every text of Scripture in light of the gospel of Jesus. This mindset is mandatory for two reasons: first, this is the hermeneutic that Jesus used. Second, this is the hermeneutic that the apostles used. Jesus interpreted the Bible (OT) with a Christ-centered hermeneutic. The most obvious account of Jesus' interpretation is in Luke 24. This is the first time, in Luke's Gospel, that Jesus appears post-resurrection. As he is walking with two of his disciples, Jesus gives the most important hermeneutics lesson in the history of the world. His disciples are sad, because they thought that Jesus was going to be the one to redeem Israel; instead he has been dead now for three days (Luke 24:21). Jesus rebukes the pessimistic understanding of his traveling companions. He calls them foolish and slow of heart. The reason for the rebuke is that these men did not believe all that the prophets have spoken (Luke 24:25). They did not comprehend their Bible in light of Christ. Then in verse 27, Luke shows that Jesus teaches them how to correctly interpret the OT. Christ began with Moses and the all the

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<sup>7</sup>Apostolic doctrine is summarized succinctly in the Apostles' Creed.

Prophets and he interpreted to them in *all the Scriptures* the things concerning himself.<sup>8</sup> Jesus reveals to these disciples that they did not properly understand what the Bible meant, because they did not interpret “all the Scriptures” concerning Christ.

Later, in verses 44-45, Jesus teaches the same truth to the disciples collectively. He confirms, “everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Jesus asserts that the entire OT was written about and is fulfilled in him.<sup>9</sup> Luke adds that when Jesus made this claim, “he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45). This means that the disciples’ minds were closed to the more full understanding before Jesus gave his roadside hermeneutics lecture. Jesus is not changing or misunderstanding what the Bible meant. It was the disciples who did not fully understand the text. Jesus opens their minds to the correct interpretation of the Scriptures—a Christ-centered interpretation.

The disciples—and all of Israel—had always sought to accurately interpret their Bible, but the problem is that their interpretation was incomplete. The hermeneutical revolution that came with Jesus Christ was his reinterpretation (or more accurately, his proper interpretation) of the OT centered in him. Russell Moore, writing about the spiritual warfare of boring preaching notes, “In the New Testament, the satanic deception leads the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees to pour endlessly over biblical texts, just missing the point of Christ Jesus therein. They come to conclusions that have partially biblical foundations – the devil’s messages are always expository – they just intentionally

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<sup>8</sup>Emphasis added.

<sup>9</sup>The classic division of the Hebrew Bible is different from that of the ESV and other English translations. In Jesus’ day, the Scriptures would have had the three-fold division described by Jesus known as the *Tanakh* (TNK). TNK is an acronym from the three Hebrew words that make up the division – תורה (Torah, Law), נְבִיאִים (Nevi'im, Prophets), and כְּתוּבִים (Kethuvim, Writings). When Jesus speaks of the Psalms he is referring to the entirety of the writings. The Psalms are simply the first book of the Writings. So here, Jesus is clearly claiming that the whole OT is written about him and fulfilled in him.

avoid Jesus.”<sup>10</sup> In Luke 24 Jesus reveals that he is the cornerstone of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Luke’s Gospel is not the only place where Jesus claims that he is the fulfillment of the OT. He also proclaims that he is the promised one before his death and resurrection. In John 5:39, 45-47, Jesus rebukes the Jews for not searching the Scriptures in a Christ-centered way. In verse 39, he says that the Scriptures bear witness about Christ. Jesus continues to instruct them that Moses specifically wrote of Christ. If they truly believed Moses, then they would believe Jesus also. Moses is the author of the Pentateuch and the one whom YHWH used to deliver Israel from slavery. Their national foundation was cemented under the leadership of Moses (Exod 20). He is one of their most celebrated leaders, and the author of the first-written Scripture. Jesus says that Moses wrote about Christ, therefore to not believe Moses is to not believe Jesus.

This Christological claim is displayed not only in the words of Jesus, but also in his deeds. The most magnificent example of Christ-centered fulfillment comes at the scene of the transfiguration in Mark 9:2-13. In this narrative, Jesus leads Peter, James, and John up the mountain where he is transfigured. Mark then announces that Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus. What is the point of Moses and Elijah appearing with Jesus at this pivotal moment? It certainly is not to suggest that they are equal to Jesus, or that they have returned to stay with the disciples. These suggestions come from those who do not know what they are saying (Mark 9:5-6). Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus because they represented the Law and the Prophets – the OT. Moses was the author of the Law, and Elijah may have been Israel’s most famous prophet. Their presence is accompanied

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<sup>10</sup>Russell Moore, “The Spiritual Warfare of Boring Preaching,” *Russell Moore*, August 10, 2016, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.russellmoore.com/2016/08/10/spiritual-warfare-boring-preaching/>. Obviously Moore is overstating his case here. Satan’s messages are not always faithful exposition. For example, in Gen 3:1, the devil does not accurately interpret God’s word from Gen 2:16-17. He questions the word of God and introduces doubt into the mind of Eve. More to the point, proponents of a human author-centered hermeneutic do not intentionally avoid Jesus; they simply do not believe that faithful exegesis of every OT pericope points to Christ. With that being stated, the position of this paper is that they do miss Jesus, and that their hermeneutic is lacking.

by a word from the Father, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him” (Mark 9:7). The Law and the Prophets are authoritative, but Jesus is the beloved Son of God whose authority is confirmed by the voice of God. Moses and Elijah come with authority, but that is even truer of Jesus. He is the one to whom they pointed; God’s people must listen to him.

Jesus taught this hermeneutic to the disciples (Luke 24:44-45). As a result, they too used a Christocentric hermeneutic to interpret Scripture. Peter, Paul, and the author of the epistle to the Hebrews all demonstrated this hermeneutic. First, Peter’s sermon at Pentecost employs a Christ-centered hermeneutic in interpreting different OT passages (Acts 2:14-41). He quotes Joel 2:28-32 and Psalms 16:8-11 and 110:1. He then applies them to Jesus. He says that the day of the Lord prophesied by Joel has been initiated because of the death and resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:22-24). In Acts 2:31, Peter says that David “foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ” (Ps 16:8-11). He uses the same interpretive grid with Psalm 110:1; he applies it to Jesus. The result of Peter’s Christocentricity is the salvation of men and the unity of the church (Acts 2:37-47).

Along with Peter, Paul is one of the most influential and renowned of the apostles. Examples abound of Paul’s Christ-centered understanding. In 1 Corinthians 1:17-30, Paul says that he did not come to Corinth speaking eloquent wisdom but preaching the gospel.<sup>11</sup> This gospel is folly to the world, but to those who are saved it is the power of God (1 Cor 1:18; Rom 1:16). The world’s wisdom is foolishness, but Jesus is the wisdom and power of God. Jesus became wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption for his people (1 Cor 1:30). For this reason, Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 2:2, “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” Jesus was the content of Paul’s message. He was the lens through which Paul read and interpreted his Bible.

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<sup>11</sup>For Paul’s understanding of the gospel that he preached to the Corinthian church, see 1 Cor 15:1-5.

Paul says something similar in Colossians 1:28. In this passage, Paul again explains that the apostles<sup>12</sup> proclaimed Jesus through “teaching everyone.” He states that the goal of the apostles’ work was that believers might be presented mature in Christ. Paul’s hermeneutics are not simply biblical (though they are because he received them from Jesus), but they are also sanctifying. Christ-centered teaching is what produces maturity in followers of Jesus.

A third model of this Christocentric, or Apostolic, hermeneutic is found in the epistle to the Hebrews.<sup>13</sup> The book of Hebrews is filled with typological explanation that connects Jesus to different OT texts. One example can be found in Hebrews 2:12. The apostle cites Psalm 22:22, and then applies the text to Christ. This is an illustration of the apostolic hermeneutic in a passage that is not traditionally messianic.<sup>14</sup> In Psalm 22, David is crying out for YHWH’s deliverance. He is in great distress, but he trusts that God will save him. David will rejoice with his brothers in the congregation when that day comes. The author of Hebrews connects this text to Jesus, and says that Jesus’ followers are now his brothers; they can rejoice with him in God. This verse did not bear the same messianic expectation as Psalm 2, 110, or Isaiah 53. Yet, the apostle does not hesitate to apply it to Jesus.<sup>15</sup>

In Hebrews 4, the author rebukes his readers for not applying the land promise to Christ (Heb 4:8-9). He does not seem to be making an exception to grammatical-historical interpretation alone to make his point. The writer is teaching the people how to

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<sup>12</sup>Paul’s use of the first person plural (*ὁν ἡμεῖς καταγγέλλομεν*) demonstrates that he did not consider his hermeneutic and homiletic to be unique. This was part and parcel of all the apostles’ message.

<sup>13</sup>See Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 167-97. Johnson argues that the epistle to the Hebrews was actually a sermon and that it can be viewed as an “Apostolic Preaching Paradigm.”

<sup>14</sup>For another helpful example of a Christological fulfillment of a nontraditional messianic text, see Matt 2:13-15. Here Matthew, yet another apostle, applies a text about Israel and the Exodus to Jesus.

<sup>15</sup>Interestingly, Jesus quotes Ps 22:1 while he is dying on the cross (Matt 27:46). It seems that Jesus also interpreted Ps 22 in a Christ-centered manner.



properly interpret these OT narratives. The good news is for the church (Heb 4:2). The book of Hebrews is not simply an exception to good interpretation. Interpreters do not just hold their nose and allow it's Christ-centered hermeneutic because it is apostolic. The book of Hebrews, along with other apostolic preaching and writings, teach us how to read the OT in a Christian way.

The biblical evidence for a Christ-centered hermeneutic is accompanied by theological support as well. Goldsworthy argues, "The fact that Jesus is the one mediator between God and people has enormous hermeneutical implications (1 Tim 2:5)."<sup>16</sup> There are three elements involved in the science of biblical hermeneutics – (1) God, (2) God's Word, and (3) the human receiver. All three of these factors are united in the man, Christ Jesus. Jesus is God (John 1:1, 20:28), Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1), and Jesus is man (John 1:14). Goldsworthy concludes that because this is true, interpreters must make a "conscious decision to work at the relationships of all parts of the Bible to the gospel."<sup>17</sup> Jesus mediates the word between God and man, so readers must come to the Scriptures with a gospel presupposition. The Bible is only understood through the mediation of the work of Christ.

After a brief review of the biblical case for Christ-centered hermeneutics, the next question is how to properly interpret a passage Christocentrically. There are different ways that have been offered for connecting a text to Christ.<sup>18</sup> We will survey three of these, starting with Dennis Johnson. First, Johnson argues against too technical of a methodology. He concludes that readers must let their "eyes adjust to the patterns as

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<sup>16</sup>Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 62-63. Goldsworthy acknowledges that the immediate context of 1 Tim 2:5 is not addressing this specific issue but that it is also an important implication of the Christological office of mediator.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>For a helpful layman's guide to finding "Jesus as the hero" in any text, see David E. Prince and Ashland Staff, *Church with Jesus as the Hero* (Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015), 17.

we discern the foundations of the biblical authors' understanding of God's unified plan and purpose for history."<sup>19</sup> He lists several suggestions for connecting a pericope to Christ that include typology, NT quotations, and allusions to Christ in the OT.<sup>20</sup> Johnson does not force step-by-step methodology, because he believes that interpreters must develop an apostolic eye for Christological implications.

Graeme Goldsworthy is a strong advocate for using biblical theology<sup>21</sup> as the method to connect a text to Christ. He advocates, "Biblical theology is uniquely appropriate for the task of understanding what kind of hermeneutical model fits the world-view of Christian theism. The reason being that biblical theology is essentially the examination of individual parts to see how they fit into the big picture."<sup>22</sup> Biblical theology is "principally concerned with the overall theological message of the whole Bible. It seeks to understand the parts in relation to the whole."<sup>23</sup> Understanding a text in relation to redemptive history is key to a Christ-centered hermeneutic. A redemptive-historical methodology will always yield a Christocentric hermeneutic, because Jesus is the climax of redemptive history.

One final avenue that is helpful for developing a Christ-centered hermeneutic is connected to biblical theology and originates with Richard Lints. He argues for three horizons of redemptive interpretation – textual, epochal, and canonical.<sup>24</sup> More detail

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<sup>19</sup>Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 199. Emphasis original.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 199-238.

<sup>21</sup>Good biblical theologies to consult include James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010); Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2003); and Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013).

<sup>22</sup>Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 68.

<sup>23</sup>Brian S. Rosner, "Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Leicester, England: IVP Academic, 2000), 3-11.

<sup>24</sup>Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 293-311.

about Lints' horizons will be explained later in the thesis, for these are the foundation for Payne's four horizons of Christ-centered preaching. Thus far, it is sufficient to say that Lints' canonical horizon helps connect the immediate text to Christ. It is the position of this paper that, because all of Scripture has one divine author who functions within the macro context of redemptive history, it is hermeneutically inadequate to examine the textual horizon (immediate historical context) alone; interpreters must place any given text within the canonical context.

### **Opposition to Christ-Centered Hermeneutics**

Given that warrant for Christ-centered hermeneutics has been established, it will be beneficial to consult some concerns of those who stand in opposition to this hermeneutic. The first concern is that a Christocentric hermeneutic ignores the legitimate meaning of the text. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of expository preaching in the Evangelical community. This resurgence has produced a substantial amount of literature about the importance of a hermeneutic that strictly abides by the intent of the human author. Haddon Robinson suggests, "The thought of the biblical writer determines the substance of the expository sermon."<sup>25</sup> They stress that it is imperative that interpreters are governed by the original intent of the human author, because that is the only meaning of the text. York adds, "We limit ourselves to authorial intent because we believe that words have real meaning."<sup>26</sup>

Advocates of the "authorial intent" hermeneutic, or what can more accurately be described as a "human author-centered"<sup>27</sup> hermeneutic (HAC), are troubled that to

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<sup>25</sup>Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 5.

<sup>26</sup>Bert Decker and Hershael W. York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: B&H Books, 2003), 28.

<sup>27</sup>Jason Keith Allen, "The Christ-Centered Homiletics of Edmund Clowney and Sidney Greidanus in Contrast with the Human Author-Centered Hermeneutics of Walter Kaiser" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011). Allen rightly uses the designation "human author-centered

deviate from their position could lead to spiritualizing Scripture. They argue that spiritualizing disconnects the text from history and robs it of its original purpose. They also fret about eisegesis. Kaiser calls eisegesis a “methodological *faux pas*” and warns against this mistake in relation to Christ-centered hermeneutics.<sup>28</sup> He goes on to argue that an OT sermon can stand on its own merit. It does not need the NT to rescue it and save the day. To argue for the necessity of connecting each OT pericope to the NT would be to say that the OT has to “rely on the New Testament for the real solid stuff . . . theology and principles that we can apply directly to our lives.”<sup>29</sup> This mindset underestimates the OT, which is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16).

Another potential danger of the Christocentric hermeneutic is that it replaces the authority of the author with the authority of the interpreter. In a different work, Kaiser labels these perpetrators as “cognitive atheists.” He warns that these approaches “usurp the author’s revelatory stance and insert one’s own authority for his.”<sup>30</sup> When readers stray from the original meaning of the text, the result may be an arbitrary interpretation instead of the true meaning. Better to trust the intended meaning of a passage rather than devising a more appealing explanation. The words of the author are the words of God, and therein lay the meaning of the text.

The second concern is about apostolic authority. The apostles had the authority to interpret OT passages in a certain way. This does not mean that modern interpreters

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hermeneutics” because while this hermeneutical school would seek to claim “authorial intent,” it neglects the canonical intent of the divine author. The human author is only one piece of the hermeneutical puzzle; the Spirit – the divine author – also inspired the human author (2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:21). A holistic understanding of authorial intent would include both the contextual intent of the human author and the canonical intent of the divine author.

<sup>28</sup>Walter C. Kaiser, *The Majesty of God in the Old Testament: A Guide for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 16.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Walter C. Kaiser, “Legitimate Hermeneutics,” in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 118-19.

possess that same authority. It is only proper to interpret an OT passage redemptive-historically if the NT grants that authority. As noted above, the Christocentric hermeneutic claims apostolic authority for its origin. Opponents of a Christ-centered hermeneutic argue that this is not entirely valid. Abraham Kuruvilla gives modern interpreters four reasons not to pursue apostolic hermeneutics.<sup>31</sup>

The first reason is that the documented sermons of the apostles are limited. Kuruvilla acknowledges that most of the sermons recorded in the NT are about Jesus, but we must be careful about “creating a comprehensive apostolic hermeneutical model out of scant data.”<sup>32</sup> There is not enough information to know either way. Kuruvilla proposes that it is probably safe to assume that the full catalogue of the apostles’ sermons were not about the person of Jesus. When Paul remarked that he had declared the whole counsel of God, it is likely that he taught more than the gospel (Acts 20:27).

The second objection to the “apostolic hermeneutic” argument is that most of the sermons given by the apostles in the NT are evangelistic. Kuruvilla agrees that preachers must preach evangelistic sermons. When they preach these evangelistic sermons, the gospel must be front and center. They must preach nothing “except Christ, and him crucified.” Kuruvilla has no argument with this methodology in reference to evangelism. His discrepancy concerns preaching the gospel every week. The sermons of the apostles were not regular weekly congregational gatherings, but they were evangelistic events during the inauguration of the church.

Kuruvilla would argue that Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 is a clear example of his point. Peter’s sermon is not the same as a sermon given at a weekly gathering of a local

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<sup>31</sup>Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text! A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2013), 238-68. Kuruvilla argues for “Christiconic” preaching. He contends that Jesus is the only human ever to fulfill the divine demand and that the Scriptures paint a picture of the totality of his obedience. As a result, the goal of the Bible is to change people into the image of Christ. This is accomplished by ascertaining the theology of the pericope. The question that governs interpretation is “what is the author doing with what he is saying?”

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 246.

church. God used Peter at one of the most pivotal shifts in history. Peter was announcing the resurrection of the Christ to the very people that had crucified Jesus. The apostle's sermon was accompanied by the coming of the Spirit, which was the fulfillment of Scripture. Kuruvilla and others would argue that the sermon at Pentecost was descriptive and not prescriptive; it was a unique event.

Kuruvilla's third objection is that the apostolic sermons are not complete. Not only are the sermons limited in volume, but also the sermons that are recorded are not verbatim. Luke did not record Peter and Paul's sermons word-for-word. He simply produced edited renditions of the homilies to further his agenda. Kuruvilla contends, "We are not examining sermons *in toto*, but portions thereof, already raising the potential for skewing our analysis."<sup>33</sup> It is likely that there are lost portions of the sermons that focus on moral exhortation or positive examples.

Kuruvilla's final objection is that the meaning of the text lies not in the hermeneutic of the apostles, but with what the words actually say. He argues that the hermeneutic of the apostles is not inspired. This means that the hermeneutic is not profitable, but only "the biblical *account* of those events" is profitable and inspired.<sup>34</sup> He quotes Longenecker, "Our commitment as Christians is to the reproduction of the apostolic faith and doctrine, and not necessarily to the specific apostolic exegetical practices."<sup>35</sup> Interpreters now do not have the authority that the apostles had. God used them at a unique time and in a unique way.

The third concern with Christ-centered preaching is that it "flattens" the Bible. The Scriptures are meant to be read forward and not backward. Kaiser argues, "To read it backward is to end up with a flat Bible, one in which any mention of a topic calls for the

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<sup>33</sup>Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text!*, 246n87. Emphasis original.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 246-47. Emphasis original.

<sup>35</sup>Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 217.

total teaching in all Scripture to be used to interpret any one of the contributions made to that topic along the way.”<sup>36</sup> He is saying that the reader does not need to place a text within its canonical framework to understand what the text says. When one is interpreting a certain pericope, it is imperative that we do not impose later theology on the text. The author intended to mean only what he said.

Kaiser further explains that to read the Bible backwards “flattens” the unique perspective of men who are writing at different times. Moses did not have the knowledge of David, who did not have the knowledge of Paul. It would be improper to impose Pauline understanding on Moses. This is why it is so important to begin with the “plain, natural, original, historical meaning of the passage.”<sup>37</sup> If it is abandoned, then the text has no meaning.

Dale Ralph Davis applies this principle to Luke 24:27 and 44. He believes that Jesus is making an extensive inference about the OT and not an intensive reference. Davis explains that every part of the OT testifies to the Messiah, but not every OT text bears witness about him. He contends, “Jesus referred to the things written about him *in* the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms – he did not say that every passage spoke of him.”<sup>38</sup> This leads him to believe that there are some messianic predictions in the Law, some in the Prophets, and some in the Writings. This does not mean that every single pericope has an overt connection to Jesus. Kaiser and Davis would reason that sometimes the Bible speaks specifically to Christ, and sometimes it does not. This does not change the truth that Jesus is the center of redemptive history, but it also does not mandate that every sermon include the gospel.

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<sup>36</sup>Walter C. Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 51.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Dale Ralph Davis, *The Word Became Fresh: How to Preach from Old Testament Narrative Texts* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2006), 134-35. Emphasis original.

The fourth concern is that Christ-centered hermeneutics minimizes the plethora of occasions where the Bible exemplifies certain characters. Jesus is not the only person in the Bible who is portrayed in a positive light. The Bible is full of examples of men and women who are faithful and obedient. God tells Abraham that he knows Abraham truly fears him because he prepares the sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22:12). Rahab is protected because she helped the spies leave the city unharmed (Josh 2:1-21). David's courage against Goliath is viewed as heroic and worthy of imitation (1 Sam 17). YHWH even calls David a man after his own heart (1 Sam 13:14). This principle is prevalent in the NT, as well. Hebrews 11 is dedicated to the faith of men and women past. They are worthy of acknowledgment and imitation because of their faith.

Kuruvilla adds, "In many instances the Bible itself makes examples (positive or negative) of its characters."<sup>39</sup> Jesus himself does this with the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). After he tells this parable of a Samaritan that rescues a helpless Israelite, Jesus commands, "You go, and do likewise." While speaking to the Ephesian elders, the apostle Paul uses himself as an example to them (Acts 20:33-35). He did not covet their money and he worked hard. They ought to follow his example.

Kuruvilla suspects that the Christocentric hesitation for character exemplification is a result of bad hermeneutics and preaching. It is an overreaction to what he calls a "Be-like X" hermeneutic that preaches an "indiscriminant imitation of biblical characters."<sup>40</sup> This hermeneutic will lead to moralism. Kuruvilla also maintains that the potential for bad hermeneutics does not give interpreters a license to ignore biblical truth. He comments, "To label *all* preaching based on biblical characters 'moralizing' is not only hermeneutically suspect, it is also homiletically naïve."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text!*, 243.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid. Emphasis original.



This list of objections is not exhaustive, but it is a snapshot of why some are opposed to a Christocentric hermeneutic. They believe that a Christ-centered interpretation subverts the intended meaning of the original author. Opponents also object to the category of apostolic hermeneutics. The apostles had unique authority that is not available to interpreters today. A Christocentric hermeneutic “flattens” the Bible, which must be read forward. Finally, a redemptive historical hermeneutic ignores the myriad of examples – both positive and negative – that fill the pages of Scripture. These opponents are seeking to be faithful to the authority and meaning of the Bible. They believe the human authorial intent hermeneutic is the most faithful. To quote Dale Ralph Davis, “I do not take a ‘Christological’ approach . . . . Why is this? Because I do not think Jesus wants me to do so.”<sup>42</sup>

### **Answering Opposition to Christ-Centered Hermeneutics**

After surveying four different problems that opponents have with Christocentric hermeneutics, it will be beneficial to briefly answer those objections before beginning a discussion of Christocentric homiletics. The first concern was that a Christ-centered hermeneutic ignores the intended meaning of the author. Dissenters are concerned that the approach will lead to spiritualizing, eisegesis, and imposed meaning. The problem with this objection is that it sacrifices the epochal and canonical horizons at the altar of the textual horizon. Later interpreters can recognize a more full understanding without forsaking the intended meaning of the human author. There are plenty of examples in redemptive history of a deeper sense or fuller meaning that is revealed in a later epoch.

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<sup>42</sup>Dale Ralph Davis, *The Way of the Righteous in the Muck of Life: Psalms 1-12* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2010), 8-9.

Consider YHWH's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. God promises Abraham a land, a nation, and blessing. The seeds of that promise are fulfilled in Isaac; Abraham cannot become a nation if he and his wife are childless. When Moses wrote Abraham's story, he did so from a later perspective than Abraham, but he did not realize what Israel would become. Moses did not have the redemptive hindsight of David. They both read the same Scripture and believed the same promise, but they saw the promises being fulfilled in each of their respective times. Abraham saw, in an infant, the beginning of God's promise. Moses saw a people wandering in the wilderness toward the Promised Land. David saw a temple, an army, and Israel's greatest theocratic kingdom. No one would blame David, when he ruled as king, for expounding upon those promises in a more detailed manner than Abraham or Moses. He was living in a later redemptive epoch.

This example does not even consider the canonical horizon where Genesis 12:1-3 is fulfilled in Christ. Jesus is the true seed who comes from the nation of Israel (Gal 3:16). He is the blessing to all nations. He will lead his people into the final Promised Land (Heb 4:1-13).<sup>43</sup> It is appropriate, even mandatory, to make these connections because of the current redemptive epoch. Believers live after the resurrection. These truths have been made known to God's people. The same is true with the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7. YHWH promises David a son who shall build the Lord's house. This promise is fulfilled in the birth of Solomon, who builds the first temple. The implications do not end with Solomon. Solomon's throne did not last forever (2 Sam 7:13), however, the Davidic covenant is fulfilled in Jesus who is the son of David and the true king (Matt 1:1-17).

Another reason why redemptive hermeneutics are not arbitrary is because of the dual authorship of Scripture. The divine author – the Spirit, inspired the human

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<sup>43</sup>For further discussion on the fulfillment of the land promise in Christ and in the New Creation, see Oren Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land: The land promise in God's redemptive plan* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015).

authors of every book. The canonical horizon recognizes this element of the hermeneutical endeavor. Vanhoozer notes, “To read the Bible canonically is to read the Bible as a unified communicative act, that is, as the complex, multi-levelled speech act of a single divine author.”<sup>44</sup> He emphasizes that reading the Bible this way is to read it according to its “truest, fullest, *divine* intention.” The divine authorship recognized in the canonical horizon will yield the “thick” meaning of the text as opposed to the “thin” meaning of the text.<sup>45</sup> This idea will be explored more in the four horizons.

Sometimes a canonical reading of a passage will produce a level of meaning for a text that the original author did not see or intend.<sup>46</sup> This is not a problem, because the Spirit is the divine superintendent of revelation, and he is sovereign. For example, consider Matthew 2:13-15. As Matthew relays the account of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus’ round trip to Egypt, he quotes Hosea 11:1. In the context of the prophecy, Hosea is not talking about the future Messiah who will flee to Egypt for a time and then return home when it is safe. He is describing God’s love for Israel. He loved his people so much that he called his son out of Egypt. Of course, Hosea did not know whom Jesus was or what he was going to do. Matthew is imposing his own “spiritualized” meaning on the text, is he not? No, he is not.

Matthew is interpreting Hosea 11:1 canonically. He is interpreting the text Christocentrically. Jesus is the true Israel, the Son of God. His “exodus” from Egypt is an historical recapitulation of the experience of Israel. He is going to do what Israel did not do. Matthew’s interpretation is valid because though Hosea did not know all that would happen, the Spirit did. God has divinely ordered history to prepare the world for the Christ event. Scripture tells the story of that providence. Redemptive history is

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<sup>44</sup>Kevin Vanhoozer, “Exegesis and Hermeneutics,” in *NDBT*, 61-62.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Although the meaning of the text will always be organically related to and never in conflict with the original human author’s intended meaning.

teleological – it finds its *telos* in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. Some of the “authorial intent”<sup>47</sup> proponents impose these arbitrary safeguards to protect the text against wild allegory or poor interpretation, but the safeguards are just that – arbitrary.

The second objection was to the idea of continuing in an “apostolic hermeneutic.” Kuruvilla’s indictment on this matter is not persuasive. Of course the church should use the same hermeneutic that the apostles used. Christians today use the same OT that the apostles used, and live in the same redemptive epoch – post resurrection and Pentecost, pre-second advent.<sup>48</sup> The apostles were the foundation of the church; the same church that exists today. HAC advocates may insist that a Christ-centered approach is bringing an alien hermeneutic, but if they stand in opposition to the hermeneutic Jesus and his apostles used, it seems like their hermeneutic is alien.<sup>49</sup>

Those who argue against the apostolic hermeneutic seem to understand the apostles with a “do as I say and not as I do” mentality. They believe the church must abide by apostolic doctrine, but not by an apostolic hermeneutic. Yet, the apostles are the rock of the church and they hold the keys to the kingdom (Matt 16:18-19).<sup>50</sup> Should our interpretation of Scripture not follow the interpretation given by Jesus himself? Tom Schreiner contends, “[s]uch a view is flawed because it suggests that the fulfillment the

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<sup>47</sup>I have used the term “authorial intent” so far to describe this hermeneutical position, because this is how proponents refer to themselves. To be fair, the Christocentric position believes in authorial intent as well. The intent would be expanded beyond merely the human author to include the divine author. The Spirit is the author of Scripture who inspired the human authors. He has divine foresight and understanding that reaches beyond the mind and experience of the human author.

<sup>48</sup>Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 19.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid. 152-53. Johnson writes, “When any hermeneutic method disqualifies – or seems to disqualify, by pitting an Old Testament text’s “original” meaning against its interpretation in the New – the ways that Jesus, the Word of God incarnate, interpreted the Word of God written and taught his apostles to do so, this dissonance is a signal that something is seriously amiss.”

<sup>50</sup>Jesus spoke these words directly to Peter, whose name means “rock” (πέτρος), but Peter was instructed as the leader of the twelve. He represented the entire group who would be commissioned by Jesus, with Peter, to build his church.

apostles saw in the OT does not accord with what the texts truly mean. If this is the case, the connections drawn between the testaments are arbitrary, and the apostles (and Christ himself!) do not serve as models for interpreting the OT today.”<sup>51</sup>

The interpretations of the apostles are legitimate interpretations. Again using Matthew 2:13-15 as an example, HAC proponents would not say that Matthew recorded a faulty interpretation; he is an apostle and his Gospel was inspired. They would contend that readers presently could not do what Matthew did to another text unless the NT explicitly sanctions their interpretation.<sup>52</sup> The concern may be “safety.” The safe interpretation is what is explicitly given in the NT. The problem with this notion is that Jesus is good, but he is not safe.<sup>53</sup> Jesus moves redemptive history along and gives deeper meaning to the signs and symbols of the past. This is what the book of Hebrews is all about.<sup>54</sup> The apostles do not leave an exhaustive textbook on hermeneutical methodology. They left the church a new lens through which to read the Bible. It is not enough to use the magnifying glass (textual horizon); we must also use the fish-eye lens (canonical horizon).<sup>55</sup>

Kuruvilla’s four objections to the hermeneutic are not valid. First, he notes that the “data is scant” on the apostolic sermons from the book of Acts. Interpreters do not know the exhaustive content of their sermons. This is true, but it does not change the content of the sermons that remain. Paul notes that God gave him a stewardship. Paul was

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<sup>51</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner, “Preaching and Biblical Theology,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 27.

<sup>52</sup>Decker and York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 28.

<sup>53</sup>C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 80. Mr. Beaver is telling Lucy about Aslan and says, “Safe? Don’t you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”

<sup>54</sup>For a helpful source on applying biblical theology to the book of Hebrews for the purpose of preaching, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Commentary on Hebrews*, Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2015).

<sup>55</sup>Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 275.

to make the Word of God fully known. He declares that the content of God's Word is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:25-27). Kuruvilla uses Acts 20:27 as an example noting that the Apostle declared more than is documented in the pericope. But Paul explains exactly what he considered the whole counsel of God. He did not shrink to declare to them repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:20-21). The ministry he received was to testify to the gospel of grace of God and to proclaim the kingdom (Acts 20:24-25). Scripture may not catalogue the entirety of the apostolic sermons, but what it does have are Christ-centered sermons. These sermons may not be the only sermons that the apostles preached, but they are the sermons that the Spirit sovereignly chose to comprise the eternal Word of God. Kuruvilla's argument is an argument from silence, which turns out to be a silent argument.

Second, Kuruvilla gives the disclaimer that these homilies were evangelistic. This is another answer that is left wanting. His thesis may explain the sermons in Acts, but it does not explain what Paul meant when he said he knew nothing among them except Christ (1 Cor 2:1-2), and that he must proclaim Christ if the church is to be mature (Col 1:28). Kuruvilla's third point was that the sermons were not recorded verbatim. This objection can be answered in the same way that the first objection was answered. The Spirit, through Luke, sovereignly chose to inscripturate these portions of the sermons.

His fourth point was that the hermeneutic of the apostles was not inspired; only their words were inspired. This objection can simply be answered, why not? What is the reason that we cannot enlist the hermeneutic of the apostles? They were divinely inspired to interpret these texts in a certain way. Their interpretations are in the eternal Word of God. There are no hermeneutical grounds to intimate that their interpretation was exceptional and not prescriptive. They were interpreting the text in light of the Christ event, and we are to do the same. If Jesus and his apostles are not a model of how to interpret the Bible, then interpreters are truly left in the dark.

The third complaint lodged against redemptive hermeneutics is that they flatten the Bible. This charge is misplaced. A Christocentric understanding does not flatten the Bible; it enlivens the Bible. It fills in the gaps. The NT sheds light on the OT revealing truth that is there, but shadowed. The OT is like a “chamber richly furnished but dimly lighted.”<sup>56</sup> Jesus is the light that shines on the truth of the OT that is present, but mysteriously hidden. This Christ-centered interpretation does not bring new meaning to the text. It reveals meaning that is there, yet not completely manifested.

Since this is true, it is imperative that newer revelation always interprets older revelation. God reveals truth as time progresses in his redemptive program. Abraham knew more about God’s redemptive plan than Noah did because he lived in a newer epoch. Noah knew that YHWH was faithful to his promises, and that in order for redemption to move forward he would have to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth (Gen 9:1). He did not know that YHWH was going to do this through a man named Abraham who was promised a seed, land, and blessing for the nations. Abraham did not know that the kin of his great-grandsons would become a theocratic nation, but Moses did. The current post-resurrection, Spirit-indwelt, vantage point of biblical readers is further along in the redemptive play. Christians live in a later act. David was not doing eisegesis when he applied Genesis 12:1-3 to the theocratic kingdom of Israel. Genesis 12:1-3 says nothing of a kingdom that worshipped at the temple and went to battle with the king’s army. When Israel looked back on the Abraham narrative, they could see how God was planting seeds that grew as time progressed. The same is true for the contemporary church when she applies the text to Christ.

One helpful way to illustrate the insight of the canonical horizon is through the movie *The Sixth Sense*.<sup>57</sup> The shocking ending of the film forces viewers to go back and

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<sup>56</sup>Benjamin B. Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1988), 141-42.

<sup>57</sup>Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 86.

watch it again. As viewers watch it a second time, they are forced to reinterpret everything that they saw before. One cannot help but think about the ending of the movie as they work through the story again. The ending reveals truth – truth that had been there the whole time, yet mysteriously hidden. The same principle is at play with the Bible. Once the reader is shocked with the revelation of the Christ event, they cannot help but reinterpret everything prior through this lens.

The final grievance of the opponents was that Christ-centered hermeneutics downplay the Bible's exemplification of certain people. It is true that the Bible exemplifies certain characters, but this is merely at the textual horizon. It is vital that readers connect the text to the epochal and canonical horizons, as well. In reaching the canonical horizon, it is clear that Jesus is the exemplar of exemplars. To harken back to the introduction, Jesus is the hero of the story. The birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth are the climax of world and redemptive history. If a preacher merely discusses the obedience of Abraham or the courage of David, then he is missing the big picture. This would be like reading one chapter from the book *Les Miserables*,<sup>58</sup> and concluding that the work is a warning against stealing bread. It is so much deeper than that.

God has sovereignly ordained, and providentially moved, history to prepare the world for Jesus, and this story is revealed in the Scriptures. Certainly, Abraham was obedient, and David was courageous, but their obedience and courage were pointing God's people forward to the truly obedient and courageous one who would die for their sins. More to the point, biblical characters are never exemplified in a vacuum. Obedient Abraham tried to save his own life by offering up his wife (Gen 12:10-20), and fathered a child with another woman (16:1-4). Courageous David had an affair with Bathsheba, and

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<sup>58</sup>Victor Hugo, *Les Miserables*, trans. Lee Fahnestock and Norman MacAfee (New York: Signet, 2013).



murdered her husband (2 Sam 11). Jesus is the true exemplar. The others, although virtuous, needed and pointed to a deliverer, a redeemer, Jesus.

The opposition to Christ-centered hermeneutics is not convincing. The Christocentric interpretation does not ignore the meaning of the author. It recognizes the dual-authorship of Scripture, and reads the whole Bible in light of that reality. Believers must read the Bible like the apostles did, for they are the foundation of the church, and the authors of the NT. The Christ-centered hermeneutic does not flatten the Bible; it brings light to the Bible. The hermeneutic also recognizes that Jesus is the most exemplary character in the redemptive narrative, and all others foreshadow him. Having laid the foundation through a Christ-centered hermeneutic, the question left to answer is how to preach Christ from the Bible.

### **Christocentric Homiletics**

A Christocentric homiletic will logically follow the Christocentric hermeneutic; Christ-centered interpretation yields Christ-centered preaching. The seeds of redemptive preaching have been scattered throughout the discussion thus far, but now those seeds will bloom. Keller opines, “Every time you expound a Bible text, you are not finished unless you demonstrate how it shows us that we cannot save ourselves and that only Jesus can. That means we must preach Christ from every text, which is the same as saying we must preach the gospel every time and not just settle for general inspiration or moralizing.”<sup>59</sup> The centrality of the gospel is imperative for Christian preaching.

The gospel is central for two reasons<sup>60</sup> – first, it is existentially central. Every believer enters the faith through the gospel. There is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism

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<sup>59</sup>Keller, *Preaching*, 48.

<sup>60</sup>Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 5-6. For further discussion on the marriage between biblical theology and homiletics, see Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002).

(Eph 4:5). No one becomes a follower of Jesus apart from the gospel. Second, the gospel is theologically central. All sound doctrine is in accordance with the gospel (1 Tim 1:10-11). This has been substantiated previously in the chapter. Since these two things are true, it is essential that preaching be gospel-centered. Beyond the theory, Julius Kim argues that Jesus actually preached Christ-centered sermons.<sup>61</sup> If this homiletic is necessary, then how is it accomplished? How does one preach Christ faithfully? Many suggestions have been offered. It will be beneficial to survey a few proposals before submitting four horizons of Christ-centered preaching.

Goldsworthy's proposal for preaching Christ flows directly out of his hermeneutic.<sup>62</sup> He suggests using biblical theology. Part two of his tome works through each different biblical genre to connect the different pericopes to the gospel. He suggests three different epochs of redemptive history.<sup>63</sup> The task of the preacher is to discern the epoch, and then theologically connect the setting to Christ.

Sidney Greidanus suggests seven different ways to preach Christ from the OT.<sup>64</sup> These ways include redemptive-historical progression, promise-fulfillment, typology, analogy, longitudinal themes, NT references, and contrast. By contrast, Dennis

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<sup>61</sup>Julius Kim, *Preaching the Whole Counsel of God: Design and Deliver Gospel-Centered Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 54-56. Kim argues that Jesus' sermon in John 6:1-12 follows the form and structure of a sermon that would have been frequently preached in worship services in Jewish synagogues. The lectionary for the services would often include a reading from the Torah and the Prophets. After the reading, the rabbi or teacher would interpret and apply the texts that were read. Jesus shocks his audience when he applies the bread of life discourse to himself. A Christocentric hermeneutic yielded a Christocentric sermon for Jesus.

<sup>62</sup>Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible As Christian Scripture*, 133-256.

<sup>63</sup>Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible As Christian Scripture.*, 139, Goldsworthy's tri-divided timeline starts at creation and moves to the first part of Solomon's reign. It is during this period of time that God ordained different types that pointed forward to Christ. The second epoch begins with the latter part of Solomon's reign and extends to the cross. This epoch is marked by prophetic eschatology that mainly contains indictments of judgment. This is where the types are confirmed. The third epoch begins at the death and resurrection of Christ and extends to the new creation. This is the epoch of antitype. The kingdom of God is revealed in the fulfillment of promise and prophecy in Jesus. As the preacher discerns his text's spot on the timeline he must identify the genre in the framework of history and theology and then he will make a valid link to the contemporary hearer through Christ.

<sup>64</sup>Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 234-78.

Johnson contends that his “Apostolic Hermeneutic” will produce sermons that are “redemptive-historically structured, missiologically communicated, and grace-driven.”<sup>65</sup> Brian Chapell’s most helpful contribution to this discussion is what he calls the “Fallen Condition Focus” (FCF). The FCF is “the mutual human condition that contemporary believers share with those to or about whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage for God’s people to glorify and enjoy him.”<sup>66</sup> The FCF will connect the text to Christ, because Christ is the answer to man’s fallen condition regardless of his epoch.

Tim Keller offers six different ways to preach Christ from all of Scripture.<sup>67</sup> These avenues include preaching Christ from every genre, theme, major figure, major image, and deliverance storyline in the Bible. His most valuable contribution comes through his final recommendation – preach Christ through instinct. Keller submits, “Sometimes, then, you can’t help but think about Christ even if the text you are looking at doesn’t seem to be specifically a messianic prophecy . . . . Yet you just can’t not see him.”<sup>68</sup> Keller is correct. Often, there is no multi-step formula. Sometimes we cannot help but see Jesus. This follows what Johnson suggested about training one’s eyes to see Christ. Once the end of the story is known, the details begin to come alive.

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<sup>65</sup>Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 16.

<sup>66</sup>Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 50. For a helpful expansion of Chapell’s FCF, see Zack Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World: Crafting Biblical Sermons That Connect with Our Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 46-47. Eswine expands the FCF to include four different aspects – fallen condition, finite condition, fragile condition, and faltering condition.

<sup>67</sup>Keller, *Preaching*, 70-90.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 87. Ironically, Keller ignores his own advice. He states, “However, you can’t just throw in anything you think of. Perhaps the scarlet cord that Rahab hangs from her window (Josh 2:18) reminds you of the blood of Christ, but that does not mean that is what it represents.” Ibid., 69. Why not? If he is correct in saying that instinct is a factor in preaching Christ, and he is, then why is Joshua 2:18 an exception? The divine author sovereignly inscripturated that which he thought necessary for his people. He chose to leave the church the particular color – scarlet – that is used to deliver God’s people from their enemies. That “feels” like an allusion to the scarlet blood that later delivered God’s people from their final enemies.

## The Four Horizons of Christ-Centered Preaching

The Christ-centered homiletical methodologies surveyed above are helpful but incomplete. Goldsworthy's tri-fold epochal structure ignores the unique nature of each of the biblical covenants. Keller's system is beneficial for understanding the canonical fulfillment of any text in Christ but stands the potential of ignoring specific epochal issues. The following section is Brian Payne's proposed Christ-centered homiletic.<sup>69</sup> It is important that the preacher discern the meaning of the text at every level that the Bible demands. There are four horizons to Christ-centered preaching that must be interpreted if the man of God is to be faithful to his task. He must find the meaning of the contextual (textual), covenantal (epochal), canonical (canonical), and contemporary (application) horizons.<sup>70</sup>

### Contextual Horizon

When the preacher employs the contextual horizon, his objective is to use the grammatical-historical method. This methodology recognizes God's intention that has been conveyed through the human author. This is what the AIH proponents rightly emphasize. Any good real estate agent will tell you that the key to buying a house is, "location, location, location." In a similar manner, the key to the contextual horizon is "context, context, context"; context is king. Discerning the contextual horizon is divided into two tasks – understanding the historical context and the literary context.

The first context is historical. The most important historical question that must be asked is, "Why was this text written?" This question explores the world – or the *sitz im leben* – of the particular text. Questions should be asked about the author, audience, and occasion of the book. This historical-cultural context informs the interpretation of the

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<sup>69</sup>Ryan Fullerton, Jim Orrick, and Brian Payne, *Encountering God through Expository Preaching: Connecting God's People to God's Presence through God's Word* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017), 35-60.

<sup>70</sup>The first three horizons are indebted to Richard Lints' three horizons of redemptive interpretation – textual, epochal, and canonical.

preacher. For example, consider Genesis 12, which has already informed the argument. The author of this pericope is Moses. His audience is the nation of Israel as they are in the wilderness preparing to enter the Promised Land. Abraham is their Patriarch, and Moses is reminding the people of their national, collective history.

The second context is literary. The task here concerns the passages immediately preceding and following the text. It is important to perceive cultural background, such as the Greco-Roman culture of Second Temple Judaism. It is also imperative to be aware of OT quotations or allusions, such as Matthew's quotation of Hosea 11:1 (Matt 2:13-15). The literary traits of the text cannot be ignored because of the nature of communication. Payne notes, "The Holy Spirit directed the human writers to connect their words, sentences, and paragraphs into a literary whole in the normal way that people use language to communicate."<sup>71</sup> The literary context can best be evaluated by dividing the text into sections, discerning the main point of each section, and, finally, explaining how each passage relates to the surrounding passages.

Genesis 11 precedes Genesis 12 where YHWH scatters the nations at Babel. After this earth-shattering event, YHWH calls Abram out of the chaos to be the father of a new people. God will give him a nation, a land, and blessing. The tension continues in Genesis 13 as Abram is separated from Lot. Genesis 12 can be divided into two sections – 12:1-9 and 10-20. In verses 1-9 the main point is that YHWH will bless Abram; God will continue the redemptive program through this man. The point of verses 10-20 is that Abram immediately jeopardizes YHWH's plan. In spite of Abraham's sin, YHWH preserves him.

The contextual horizon is always the first step in producing a Christ-centered sermon. It cannot be forsaken, because God spoke to his people at many times and in many ways (Heb 1:1). Grammatical-historical exegesis is the key to discerning the

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<sup>71</sup>Fullerton, Orrick, and Payne, *Encountering God through Expository Preaching*, 40-41.

historical and literary elements that comprise the contextual horizon. Words, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and books have meaning; simple communication is predicated upon this fact. Since this is true, expositors have no choice but to honor God's Word by exploring the contextual horizon of each and every text.

### **Covenantal Horizon**

The contextual horizon provides readers with the immediate context of any given passage. Each of these distinct contexts is set within a specific epoch of redemptive history. Every epoch is signaled by a covenant that God gives his people. The covenantal horizon is the vehicle through which the story of the Bible leads readers to Christ. God is sovereign over history, and in his wisdom he chose to reveal certain truth at certain times. His grandest redemptive moves take place within his covenantal system.

A covenant is an agreement between two people.<sup>72</sup> In the Bible, God initiates covenants. Different covenants have different stipulations and realities for God's people. That which is required under one covenant may be abolished under another covenant.<sup>73</sup> Negatively, those who misunderstand the covenants will misapply them in their sermons.<sup>74</sup> The most basic element of God's self-revelation is that of promise-fulfillment. The covenants are all promises made by God that are fulfilled in Christ Jesus (Acts 13:32-33; 2 Cor 1:20). This survey will begin with the Edenic covenant and move through the storyline to the New Covenant.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>See Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012) 130-133. The authors explore different definitions of בְּרִית, and they also survey its plethora of uses in the OT.

<sup>73</sup>Animal sacrifices are required under the Old Covenant. They are abolished under the New Covenant. That which was mandated under the old is now considered sacrilegious under the new.

<sup>74</sup>Fullerton, Orrick, and Payne, *Encountering God through Expository Preaching*, 44. Payne notes that disagreements about "health and wealth" theology, dispensationalism, and paedobaptism all stem from different understandings of God's covenants.

<sup>75</sup>For further discussion on the covenants, see John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 62-84; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*; O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1987).

God's first covenant is made with Adam at creation (Gen 2:16-17, 3:15).<sup>76</sup>

Though the word "covenant" is not used, it is clear that God has established a covenant with Adam.<sup>77</sup> Adam was the representative for the entire human race. The potential success or fall of humanity lay on his shoulders. In Genesis 3, Adam broke the covenant with God when he rebelled against God's Word. The result was that he fell in sin, and the entire human race with him (Rom 5:12). The Edenic covenant makes clear that all of humanity was in covenantal relationship with God, and that all of humanity broke their covenant with God.

Though man sinned and deserved immediate death, judgment, and wrath, God showed his people grace. Almost instantly after Adam broke the covenant, God comes looking for him, and gives him the promise. The serpent struck, but some day Adam's son will crush that serpent's head (Gen 3:15). Many have called this the mother promise of the Bible.<sup>78</sup> This *protoevangelium* ("first gospel") is the hope that threads the entire narrative of redemption. This is the story that has been passed down through every generation.

As redemptive history moves forward, YHWH makes a second covenant with Noah (Gen 6:8, 18; 9:9-17). The Noahic covenant is universal in scope. It promises a new creation and continues to apply to all of humanity. The evil of humanity has continued to grow after the fall, and God brings judgment in Genesis 6. Yet, there is still hope in God's judgment. Noah and his family are shown favor, and they begin their lives in the "new"

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<sup>76</sup>Fullerton, Orrick, and Payne, *Encountering God through Expository Preaching*, 45-46. Payne divides this covenant into two covenants – (1) the Edenic covenant, and (2) the covenant of grace. I have left them as one covenant because they appear to be a part of the same narrative, and there is a better literary mirror with Christological fulfillment – the first Adam of the first covenant is contrasted with the "last Adam" of the New Covenant.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 45. Payne notes that the essential parts of the covenant are present in their interaction. He writes, "a definition of the parties involved, a legally binding set of provisions that stipulates the conditions of their relationship, the promise of blessings for obedience, and the condition for obtaining those blessings." He also observes that Hos 6:7 says, "But like Adam they transgressed the covenant."

<sup>78</sup>Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 134.



world. God gives Noah the exact same command that he gave Adam (Gen 9:1), and God's redemptive program continues.

With his third covenant, YHWH narrows the scope from all of humanity to one man: Abraham (Gen 12; 15; 17; 22). After the Babel debacle (Gen 11:1-9), one is left to wonder how God will bring the blessing to the nations that he promised to Adam and reiterated to Noah. The answer is through the son of Abraham. The Abrahamic covenant gives further insight into God's redemptive program, and moves redemptive history forward as the worldwide scope is narrowed to one man and his descendants. This is the family through whom the skull-crushing son will come. Abraham has faith like Noah, and Adam before him, as he believes the promise.

Abraham's family grows until, after the Exodus, YHWH covenants with the nation of Israel (Exod 20:1-17, etc.). YHWH led his people, the sons of Abraham, out of slavery in Egypt. He then brought them to Mount Sinai. This is where he gave them his law. The Exodus was the defining moment for the nation of Israel for it was the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. It was also the event through which YHWH constituted Israel as his nation. In contrast to Abraham, in the Mosaic covenant, blessing was dependent upon obedience. Through their obedience, Israel would be witnesses to the nations (Isa 43:10-12; 44:8).

Dispensationalists and Covenantalists have persistently debated how the Mosaic Law is applied to Christians today. Jason Meyer has a helpful article arguing for a Progressive Covenantal approach to the Mosaic Law.<sup>79</sup> He argues that it has "direct authority as *Scripture* and indirect authority as *law*"; therefore, the law has an *indirect application* to our lives today."<sup>80</sup> He continues, "It is completely authoritative as

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<sup>79</sup>Jason C. Meyer, "The Mosaic Law, Theological Systems, and the Glory of Christ," in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker, (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016),69-100.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, 91. Emphasis original.



revelation, but now we are directly dependent on Christ and his apostles for guidance in how to approach all past revelation (including the law of Moses).”<sup>81</sup> Believers are bound to the law of Christ more so than the law of Moses because “the law of Christ more directly and explicitly ties the believer to Christ’s cross. The law of Christ has a greater gospel shape than the law of Moses.”<sup>82</sup> Meyer is correct. The law of Moses ruled the people of God during their covenantal epoch, but a new epoch has dawned. With the coming of Jesus Christ the New Covenant has been initiated, and God’s people relate to him through that. Certainly the law of Moses still maintains authority because it is Scripture, but that authority remains not as law, but as revelation. It is applied to God’s people through the lens of the New Covenant because that is the epoch in which the church now lives.

After years of waiting for a righteous king, YHWH anoints David and subsequently makes a covenant with him – the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7; 1 Chr 17; cf. Pss 89, 110, 132). The Davidic covenant is a partial fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant,<sup>83</sup> and was unconditional like the Abrahamic covenant. YHWH promised David that he would have a son, and that his son would sit on the throne of a kingdom that would last forever (2 Sam 7:12-13). This covenant, along with the Mosaic covenant, is particularly important for the book of Haggai. The people of Haggai’s day are living under the realities of these two covenants, and Zerubbabel is in David’s line. David’s covenant, like all of the others, is fulfilled in Jesus. He is the Son whose throne is established forever.

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<sup>81</sup>Jason C. Meyer, “The Mosaic Law, Theological Systems, and the Glory of Christ,” 92.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 95.

<sup>83</sup>Fullerton, Orrick, and Payne, *Encountering God through Expository Preaching*, 47-48. Payne notes, “The great *name* promise of the Abrahamic Covenant has been passed to the Davidic king (2 Sam 7:9; 1 Chr 17:8) as well as the promise of a great nation (cf. Gen 12:2). Hence, under the *Davidic king*, the Abrahamic promise of a “great nation” and “name” come together.”

The final covenant is the New Covenant that comes in Christ (Jer 31:31-34; cf. Heb 8, 10; see Ezek 34, 36-37; Isa 40-66). The New Covenant is the fulfillment of all other covenants. Jesus is the “eschatological Adam” (ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ, 1 Cor 15:45) who crushes the head of the serpent. Jesus is the head of the New Creation. He is the true Son of Abraham who brings blessing to the nations. He is the true Israel who keeps God’s law. He is the true Son of David who rules God’s people in righteousness and peace. While there is great continuity between the covenants, there is also some discontinuity. In the New Covenant God’s law will not be written on tablets of stone, but on his people’s hearts (Jer 31:33). This new covenant is “cut” through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

The covenantal system is essential to preaching Christ from the whole Bible, because it is the vehicle through which the story moves to Jesus. Daniel Doriani rightly notes, “Redemptive historical preaching emphasizes the progressive, organic revelation of God’s truth, disclosed ever more fully in successive covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus, in whose death and resurrection biblical history reaches its climax. This approach relates old-covenant events and earlier phases of Jesus’ life to that climax.”<sup>84</sup> If redemptive history is essentially covenantal in nature, then preachers have no choice but to discern the covenantal horizon of each, and every, pericope, in order to faithfully preach the text.

It will be beneficial to place Genesis 12 within its covenantal context prior to moving on to the third horizon. As noted above, Genesis 12 is one of the texts where God establishes his covenant with Abraham. This is key to understanding the contextual horizon. Abraham is a redemptive hinge. God uses him to move his people to a new epoch with further soteriological development. Also, Moses wrote this narrative for the

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<sup>84</sup>Daniel M. Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001), 294.

people of Israel living under the Mosaic covenant. The covenantal horizon will consider both of these realities.

### **Canonical Horizon**

The third horizon of Christ-centered preaching is the canonical horizon. The goal of the canonical horizon is to place the pericope within the big story of the Bible. It is not sufficient for the preacher to discern the immediate context of a given passage, nor is it enough to understand the covenantal situation that the text lives underneath. The passage must be understood in light of the totality of Scripture. As mentioned earlier, a “thick” understanding of the text was contrasted with a “thin” understanding.<sup>85</sup> This is the difference between Chapell’s magnifying glass and fish-eye lens. The Holy Spirit is the divine author of the Bible, and every passage is a part of the greater whole. Every text must be understood in light of its fullest context – the canon.

Payne uses the illustration of an oak tree.<sup>86</sup> When a person looks at an acorn, it is difficult to see the final result. However, after that person sees a matured oak tree, it is easy to envision how the acorn’s gradual growth. The same is true with interpreting the Bible. Perhaps Moses, Isaiah, or Haggai did not see the mighty tree, but we can look back and know what would become of the acorn. Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT. Jesus is the “yes” to all of God’s promises (2 Cor 1:20).

In addition to the over-arching theme of promise-fulfillment, David Murray gives seven ways in which the redemptive story leads to Christ.<sup>87</sup> The first way is through prophecies. There are many prophecies that are explicitly fulfilled in Christ. For example, Genesis 3:15 is explicitly fulfilled in Jesus.

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<sup>85</sup>Vanhoozer, “Exegesis and Hermeneutics,” in *NDBT*, 61-62.

<sup>86</sup>Fullerton, Orrick, and Payne, *Encountering God through Expository Preaching*, 51n3.

<sup>87</sup>David Murray, *How Sermons Work* (Carlisle, PA: Evangelical Press, 2011), 53-56.

The second way to Christ is through what Murray calls pictures, or types. The OT is filled with people, places, and institutions that are providentially established to direct people to Christ. Joseph is a person who is a type of Christ, the priesthood is an office that is a type of Christ, and the temple is a place that is a type of Christ.

God's presence is a third way to Christ from any pericope. There are several instances in the OT where God speaks to his people. One example is Moses' encounter with the angel of YHWH in Exodus 3:1-2.<sup>88</sup> These appearances lead us to the day when Immanuel would dwell with his people (Matt 1:23; John 1:14).

The providence of God is the fourth way that a preacher can connect any text to Jesus Christ. God governs the world by providence, and he has sovereignly been preparing the world for Christ since before its foundation. Payne asserts, "When preaching about Old Testament characters and events, it is crucial to remember that redemptive history is not arbitrary. It is on a trajectory that leads to Jesus."<sup>89</sup>

The fifth way to Jesus is through people. All believers, for all time, have been saved through faith in Christ. When preaching about any biblical character, OT or NT, it is crucial to recognize that they are depending on the promise. Hebrews 11 gives insight into people like Abel who offered his sacrifice "by faith." In what did Abel place his faith? The answer is the promise of Genesis 3:15. Abel believed the hope of the gospel, and his martyrdom still preaches the gospel (Heb 4:11).

Preachers can also organically tie texts to the gospel through precepts. God's commands and laws were always meant to point people to Christ. The law could never be followed perfectly by sinful man. It was leading people to the one who would come and keep the law. This is why God gives his people the Mosaic Law within the framework of

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<sup>88</sup>Fullerton, Orrick, and Payne, *Encountering God through Expository Preaching*, 54. Payne submits that these are Christophanies that clearly prepare God's people for the incarnation.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

redemption (Exod 20:2). Since God rescued the people from Egypt, they now have the joy of obeying his law. Their obedience does not purchase their redemption, but is a product of their redemption. The people must obey him because he has already saved them.

The seventh, and final, way that Murray gives to discern the canonical context is through problems. The OT presents problems with humanity and the world. Sin, the curse, and the inability to keep the law are merely a few of the problems. Jesus is the only one who can fix these problems, and he does solve the problems. Payne notes, “It is not an overstatement to say that one of the central purposes of the Old Testament is to make the definitive case that we need the Messiah.”<sup>90</sup> These seven ways will take a preacher from any text to its divinely inspired end in Christ.

Having surveyed the canonical horizon, it is prudent to discern the canonical meaning of Genesis 12. There are several sure methods to find Christ through this passage. The first is through promise-fulfillment. God promises a son to Abraham that would bring blessing to the nations. Jesus is the true son of Abraham who redeems the nations (Matt 1:1-17). A second way is through the picture in the text. Abraham is a type of Christ. Abraham leaves his homeland to sojourn at God’s request. He is actively participating in the *missio Dei*, which is to bless the nations through his seed. Jesus leaves his homeland to sojourn according to his Father’s will, and in doing so, he participates in the *missio Dei*.

One can also connect this pericope to Christ through presence. God speaks to Abraham. God promises to bless those who bless Abraham and curse those who curse him. Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1) who brings blessing, and cursing, through the gospel. Abraham’s faith is also made evident in Genesis 12, which is a connection to Christ through the avenue of people. Abraham has faith in the promise. Jesus is the

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<sup>90</sup>Fullerton, Orrick, and Payne, *Encountering God through Expository Preaching*, 55.

answer to the promise. Finally, a connection can be made from Genesis 12 to Christ through the problem. Immediately after God gives Abraham the promise, Abraham nearly jeopardizes the entire plan in Egypt. Abraham needed Jesus to die for his sin because Jesus “knew no sin” (2 Cor 5:21). Jesus is faithful to God, and to his bride.

### **Contemporary Horizon**

The final horizon is the contemporary horizon. The first three horizons answer the “what?” question (what does the text mean?). This last horizon will answer the “so what?” (Why is the text important?), and “now what?” (How should listeners respond?) questions of the text. This is where the crossroads of Christocentric hermeneutics and Christocentric homiletics intersect. This is where the preacher moves from interpretation to exhortation. The contemporary horizon is when God’s people move from understanding God’s Word to standing under God’s Word. Payne writes, “Ultimately, this horizon is intended to communicate that in light of what God has done supremely in his Son, we have Gospel stewardship responsibilities.<sup>91</sup>” This is what the apostle Paul calls, walking “worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Phil 1:27).

At this point, the preacher must apply the gospel to the call of obedience. He will ask questions akin to, “If this text is true, and if Jesus is the fulfillment of this text, then how am I to respond, since I am in Christ?” Sermons must apply the truth of the gospel to the lives of the hearers. The gospel beckons obedience. A sermon without application is dead.<sup>92</sup> At times application may be narrow, for example a sermon on Ephesians 6:4 for Father’s Day. Other times, such as during a time of political or national unrest, it may be broad, like a sermon on the hope of future glory from Romans 8:18-25. The key is that the application will always flow out of the gospel. Fathers are told not to

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<sup>91</sup>Fullerton, Orrick, and Payne, *Encountering God through Expository Preaching*, 58.

<sup>92</sup>Decker and York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 13.

provoke their kids not only because it might make for less productive children. They are not to abstain from provoking their children because Child Protective Services might come calling, or because they might embarrass themselves in front of a church member. These reasons might be legitimate, but fathers are to love their children because their heavenly father loves them in Christ.

Believers are not called to have hope in suffering because positive thinking is good for people. Christians are not called to fight hopelessness because it will merit favor with God, or because a politician who makes the world better may be elected. Believers are called to Spirit-driven hope because their resurrection is guaranteed, and because “we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28). The gospel is the prism through which preachers must make homiletical application.

In closing, this section will interpret Genesis 12 through this final horizon. What application can be drawn from this pericope? First, clearly God keeps his promises. The promise to Abraham was fulfilled in Jesus. When God makes a promise, he keeps it. Believers can trust that God is faithful because they have seen that God has secured his promise in Christ. Second, this text is a call to trust God even when one faces the unknown. Abraham was not given a redemptive blueprint that ended with the resurrection of his true son, Jesus. He had to have faith. Abraham had faith in the promise. This is the same promise to which the church must hold. She is called to be faithful in uncertainty just like Abraham.

A third point of application is that God forgives sins and continues to work in spite of weaknesses. In the scene that directly proceeds Genesis 12:1-9 Abraham sins against God and his wife. God redeems this broken situation and moves the redemptive program forward in spite of the sin of his people. Like Abraham all have sinned. Christians have abandoned the promise for an idea that seems more expedient. Like

Adam in the garden, Believers think they know better than God. Jesus died for these sins, and continues to work in spite of them.

In summary, the four horizons of Christ-centered preaching are the contextual, covenantal, canonical, and contemporary horizons. The contextual horizon discerns the immediate textual context through the grammatical-historical method. The covenantal horizon interprets the meaning of the pericope in light of its covenantal setting, or redemptive epoch. The canonical horizon establishes the meaning of the passage in light of the whole Bible. Finally, the contemporary horizon applies the text to the listener through the gospel.

### Conclusion

The burden of this chapter has been to define and defend Christ-centered preaching. After defining the hermeneutic, it addressed issues presented by HAC proponents who oppose the methodology. Once their qualms were surveyed, they were answered, and the Christocentric approach was defended. This hermeneutical method logically leads to a specific homiletical style; Christocentric hermeneutics give birth to Christocentric homiletics. Christ-centered homiletics are developed through the four horizons of Christ-centered preaching – the contextual, covenantal, canonical, and contemporary horizons. C.H. Spurgeon definitively summarizes the mindset of a Christ-centered homiletic in his lecture on the matter of sermons. He concludes, “Of all I would wish to say this is the sum; my brethren, preach CHRIST, always and evermore. He is the whole gospel.”<sup>93</sup> Sally Lloyd-Jones is correct in saying that “every story whispers [Jesus]’ name,”<sup>94</sup> in turn then every sermon from every pulpit should herald his name.

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<sup>93</sup>Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, 2010), 82. Emphasis original.

<sup>94</sup>Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, 17.



CHAPTER 4  
CHRIST-CENTERED EXEGESIS OF  
THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

**Introduction**

Now that the biblical and theological basis for Christ-centered preaching has been established, this chapter will apply the hermeneutical methodology to the book of Haggai. Haggai's prophecy is an ideal test case for application of the Christocentric homiletic for three reasons. First, the book of Haggai is in the OT, so it is not as easy to determine how it organically connects to, or is fulfilled in, Christ. Second, the prophetic genre begs the question of how to understand OT prophecy – and restoration prophecy specifically – in light of the gospel of Jesus. Finally, the book of Haggai ranks second in shortest length in the Hebrew canon, which potentially results in overlooking the volume.<sup>1</sup>

How does one understand the book of Haggai in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ? This chapter answers that question with a Christ-centered exegesis of the book of Haggai. The book is divided into its five natural pericopes: (1) Haggai 1:1-11; (2) 1:12-15; (3) 2:1-9; (4) 2:10-19; and (5) 2:20-23. The commitment of this chapter will be to read and understand the text of Haggai through the lens of the four horizons of Christ-centered preaching.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The book of Obadiah is the shortest book in the OT.

<sup>2</sup>Interaction with introductory material such as arguments about authorship, date, style, and purpose is beyond the scope of this paper. For an introduction to the book of Haggai, see Tremper Longman and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 477-83; Tim Meadowcroft, *Haggai, Readings: A New Biblical Commentary* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 1-87; Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, Anchor Bible

## Haggai 1:1-11

The book of Haggai opens with a call for Israel to rebuild the Temple. The people of Israel have been neglecting the dwelling place of YHWH, and as a result of their disobedience there have been covenantal curses. This section of the chapter will first explore the contextual horizon of verses 1-11. Then, the narrative will be placed within the covenantal, and canonical horizons of the redemptive story. Finally, the text will be applied to the contemporary situation.

### Contextual Horizon

Haggai 1:1-11 can be divided into three sub-sections: (1) verses 1-2, (2) verses 3-6, and (3) verses 7-11.<sup>3</sup> The first two verses of the story disclose the setting, characters, and problem of the book. In verses 3-6, YHWH instructs Israel to consider their economic situation in light of the state of the Temple. The final four verses of the pericope are a call to action. Israel must rebuild the Temple if they are to glorify YHWH and experience the blessings of the covenant.

**Verses 1-2.** The book of Haggai begins with a “word-event formula.”<sup>4</sup>

Readers of the narrative are given the setting, characters, and problem. With regard to the setting, this prophecy opens in a unique way. The dating given for the book of Haggai is

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(Garden City, NY: Doublday & Company, 1987), XXVII-LXXIII; Richard A. Taylor and Ray Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2004), 23-100; Pieter A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 3-40; Hans Walter Wolff, *Haggai*, Continental Commentary Series (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1988), 15-26.

<sup>3</sup>See Meadowcroft, *Haggai*, 88-107. Meadowcroft divides the book into six oracles. He uniquely views Hag 1:1-2 as its own oracle. Meadowcroft divides the remaining book in this manner – Hag 1:3-12; 1:13-15a; 1:15b-2:9; 2:10-19; and 2:20-23.

<sup>4</sup>John Kessler, *The Book of Haggai: Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud* (Leiden: Brill Academic Pub., 2002), 108-9. Kessler notes that the “Word-event formula” has two functions. First, it introduces and identifies the one event, which is foundational to everything else in the book – the reception and proclamation of the word from Yahweh. Second, it prepares the readers/hearers for the content of the divine word that will follow in verse two in the form of direct discourse.

not typical among OT prophets. Many of the OT prophets began with the dates of their oracles, however, they were usually dated in the years of Israeli kings (Isa 1:1; Jer 1:1-3; Hos 1:1; Amos 1:1; Mic 1:1; Zeph 1:1.). Goldingay succinctly states, “An earlier prophet’s book would be dated by the reigns of Israelite kings, but there’s no Israelite king.”<sup>5</sup> God’s people have returned to the Promised Land out of exile, but they have no temple and no king.

Haggai dates his prophecy “in the second year of Darius the king” (Hag 1:1). This date is a reminder to the people that they are no longer living as an autonomous nation with an anointed king. Israel is now a Persian province, and their king is Darius. Haggai speaks to the people on the first day of the sixth month. The first day of the month is the new moon festival for the people of Israel (Num 10:10; 28:11; 2 Kgs 4:23; 2 Chr 2:4; 8:13; 31:3; Neh 10:33; Ps 81:3; Isa 66:23; Ezek 45:17; 46:1, 3; cf. also Num 28:14; Ezra 3:5; Ezek 46:6). Motyer notes that special offerings mark the first day of the month “so that each month began in commitment to the Lord.”<sup>6</sup> Haggai stands before the nation – probably at the site of the ruined Temple – and addresses them on this monthly holiday.<sup>7</sup> There is some debate as to whether the people could actually celebrate the new moon with the Temple in ruins, but the point is that the people would have understood the significance of the day and the message that followed.<sup>8</sup>

A final note about the date is that it took place in the second year of Darius. The equivalent of Haggai’s date would be August 29, 520 BC. Taylor and Clendenen give

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<sup>5</sup>John Goldingay, *Daniel and the Twelve Prophets for Everyone*, Old Testament for Everyone (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 215.

<sup>6</sup>Alec Motyer, *Haggai*, in vol. 3 of *Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 973.

<sup>7</sup>Wolff, *Haggai*, 35.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid. Wolff argues that there would have been a provisional place set up near the site of the temple where the Israelites could have provision for prayer and sacrifice. Also see David L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984), 44. Petersen argues that the people should have been keeping the new moon festival, but could not because there was no temple.

a helpful visual chart for the modern equivalent of Haggai's dates, which is inserted below.<sup>9</sup> This specific date would be eighteen years after the commission of Cyrus to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 6:3-5; cf. Ezra 1:2-4). The foundation of the Temple had been laid (Ezra 1:7-11; 5:14-16), but it had never been finished. Now Haggai stands before the people, under Persian dominion, on the new moon, eighteen years after they had been called to rebuild the Temple.

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<sup>9</sup>Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, NAC, 106.

Table 2. Taylor and Clendenen's dating chart

Verse	Year of Darius	Month	Day	Modern Equivalent
1:1	Second	sixth	first	August 29, 520 B.C.
1:15b-2:1	Second	seventh	twenty-first	October 17, 520 B.C.
2:10	Second	ninth	twenty-fourth	December 18, 520 B.C.
2:20	[second]	[ninth]	twenty-fourth	December 18, 520 B.C.

After Haggai gives the setting, he reveals the characters of his narrative. The main actors in this prophetic drama are YHWH, Haggai, Zerubbabel, and Joshua. The secondary characters of the story include the remnant of the people, and Darius, the king of Persia. The most prominent character in the drama is YHWH, the covenant God of Israel. YHWH's name is mentioned thirty-five times in the thirty-eight verses that comprise this terse book. He is the one who does most of the speaking. It is his house that is in ruins (Hag 1:4). He is the one who has judged the people (Hag 1:9). YHWH stirs up the spirit of the people to do the work (Hag 1:14). He is the one who will shake the world (Hag 2:6), bless the people (Hag 2:19), and judge the nations (Hag 2:22). The book of

Haggai is truly about how YHWH deals with his people and his house for his glory (Hag 1:8).

After YHWH, the three most prominent actors in this drama are (1) Haggai, (2) Zerubbabel, and (3) Joshua. First, Haggai is called “the prophet” (Hag 1:1, 3; 2:1, 10). Aside from the nine times that Haggai is mentioned in this book, there are only two other mentions of his name in the Bible (Ezra 5:1; 6:14). The name Haggai (חַגַּי) is derived from the Hebrew word for festival or gathering (חַג).<sup>10</sup> It is noteworthy that the prophet named “Festal” stands up on a festival day, and calls for the people to rebuild the Temple, which is the center of all festivals.

The book does not give the patronymic origins of Haggai, as it does for Zerubbabel and Joshua. This lack of genealogy does not mean that Haggai was not an actual person. Meyers and Meyers prove that the name Haggai has been uncovered on a number of artifacts in different archeological finds.<sup>11</sup> While these discoveries may not be linked to the biblical Haggai, it does reveal that it was a name used in the ancient Near East, and not simply a pseudo-name coined for this one occasion in Israel. Little is known of the prophet’s genealogy but his background is insignificant for the purpose of the book.<sup>12</sup> It is the message, not the messenger, which is the focus of the text.<sup>13</sup>

Second, Zerubbabel is described as the son of Shealtiel, and the governor of Judah. His family tree is noteworthy because Zerubbabel comes from the line of David. Even though there was not a Davidide on the throne in Jerusalem, there is still a biological link to King David. Zerubbabel is the link between the past and the future for

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<sup>10</sup>Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub., 1994), 290-91.

<sup>11</sup>Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 8.

<sup>12</sup>Wolff, *Haggai*, 38.

<sup>13</sup>John L. Mackay, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi: God’s Restored People*, Focus on the Bible (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2003), 17.

Israel's Davidic hope. He may not be the king of Judah, but he is political leader of Judah, and that is more than Israel has known in several decades.<sup>14</sup>

While it is hopeful that the son of Shealtiel is back in Jerusalem, it is discouraging to the people that he is the governor, and not the king of Judah.<sup>15</sup> Zerubbabel's title is a reminder that the Persian king had appointed him, not YHWH. Israel may have returned from exile, but the throne had not been restored. The absence of the Davidic throne, along with the Temple, paints a dark picture for the people of God. In this political climate, the prophet stands to speak God's message.

Third, Joshua is the son of Johozadak, and the high priest. Joshua's lineage can be traced from Johozadak, through Zadok, to Aaron (1 Chr 6:11-15). He is called the high priest (lit. "The great priest;" הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל). Joshua may be the first man to ever bear this title, as it seems to become a more prominent title after the exile.<sup>16</sup> The first verse of the book of Haggai paints a picture of a semi-restoration of the anointed offices of Israel. As the people come out of exile, the prophet, Haggai, speaks to the (high) priest, and the (neo) king, on behalf of YHWH. Haggai is declaring that prophecy, monarchy, and the priesthood have been restored.<sup>17</sup>

The secondary characters in the story are the remnant of the people, and Darius the king of Persia. The people respond, with the leaders, in obedience to YHWH (Hag 1:12). Haggai also addresses the people, along with their leaders, in his second sermon (Hag 2:4). Besides these two instances, the people remain in the background of the

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<sup>14</sup>See Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 9. They note that Zerubbabel is the last male Davidic descendant to hold significant political power in postexilic Yehud.

<sup>15</sup>See Wolff, *Haggai*, 39 for an extended discussion of the historical nature of the Persian governorship.

<sup>16</sup>Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*, 46. Wolff, *Haggai*, 39-40.

<sup>17</sup>Mackay, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, 18. Paul L. Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1994), 18.

narrative. In the remainder of the book, they are not directly addressed, but are being instructed through the mediation of Haggai, Zerubbabel, and Joshua.

As noted above, Darius is not an active character in the narrative, but he looms in the background. Haggai preaches his sermons in the second year of Darius (Hag 1:1, 15; 2:10). He is the king of Persia, who rules over the people of Judah. Haggai's book is structured around these oracles, given on very specific dates, and all of the dates are governed by the Persian calendar. The main character of the narrative is YHWH and other major characters are Haggai, Zerubbabel, and Joshua. The secondary characters are the people of Israel, and Darius.

Haggai's 1:2 bears redemptive significance, for it is the first time in the postexilic era that YHWH addresses his people.<sup>18</sup> The prophet lectures the people on behalf of YHWH of hosts (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת). This title is prominent in Haggai's prophecy in comparison to the rest of the OT. The book of Haggai constitutes about .2 percent of the OT, and yet 5 percent of the OT occurrences of "YHWH of hosts" are found in the book. By evoking this name for God, Haggai is reminding the people of the covenant and is encouraging them that God is the sovereign ruler, who commands the angel armies.<sup>19</sup> Even though Darius is the king, he is not the Lord of hosts.

YHWH's message in verse two exposes the problem of the pericope. The prophet indicts the people with their own words. They say that the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of YHWH.<sup>20</sup> Haggai's stress of the word "time" indicates that Jeremiah's seventy years of exile are over.<sup>21</sup> The people say it is not the time to rebuild,

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<sup>18</sup>Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 39; Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 45.

<sup>19</sup>Meadowcroft, *Haggai*, 103. Meadowcroft explores the covenantal significance of this title for God. He writes, "For [Israel], the Lord of hosts is the God who rules from Mt. Zion and the Temple in Jerusalem and who has established an everlasting covenant with David and his heirs."

<sup>20</sup>The text literally reads, "The time has not come, the time to rebuild the house of YHWH (לֹא (עַתָּא עֲתִיבִית יְהוָה לְהַבְנֹת)." )

<sup>21</sup>Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 20.



yet the time has indeed come. They have long delayed rebuilding the Temple. YHWH shows his disapproval by calling Israel “these people” (הָעַם הַזֶּה) instead of “my people.” The demonstrative pronoun is conveying distance between God and his people. By ignoring the Temple, Israel is acting as if they are not the people of God.

Longman and Dillard give four possible reasons why the people did not think it was time to rebuild the Temple.<sup>22</sup> First, it is possible that their homes were in great despair, and needed work after the exile. A second reason is that there may have been some tensions over property and possession between the returnees and those who had stayed in Jerusalem. Third, Israel faced opposition from neighboring peoples, and Persian officials (Ezra 4:1-5; 5:3-5). Finally, the people were discouraged because the new Temple would not live up to the glory of Solomon’s Temple (Ezra 3:12-13; Hag 2:3; Zech 4:10). Baldwin also suggests that the people had eschatological reasons for delaying the construction.<sup>23</sup> Regardless of the reason, the people had neglected to rebuild YHWH’s Temple and the Lord is unimpressed with their excuses. Israel’s neglect then became fertile ground for weeds of despondency.

**Verses 3-6.** The third verse recapitulates the first two verses, but now states that the word of YHWH came “by the hand of” (בְּיַד) Haggai. This phrase occurs over forty times in the OT, and is typical of Moses.<sup>24</sup> It stresses instrumentality and authority.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Longman and Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 479. Also see Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 55-56. Wolff, *Haggai*, 41.

<sup>23</sup>Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 42. Baldwin notes, “Rebuilding was a betrayal of eschatological hope.” She says that the people would seemingly have good reason to believe that YHWH would not have them to rebuild. First, Ezekiel said nothing of rebuilding the temple. Second, the order to rebuild came from Cyrus, and not specifically from YHWH. Finally, there were, conceivably, too few men for a project this large.

<sup>24</sup>Motyer, *Haggai*, in *Minor Prophets*, 3:973.

<sup>25</sup>Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 7; Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 116. Kessler notes the grammatical significance of the phrase. He states that the term is an “intensification of *beth instrumentalis*. It stresses a specific human agent as the mediator through whom the divine message is communicated.” Contra, Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 152, who says there is no distinction between the phrases “by the hand of” and “to.”

The point is that YHWH is speaking through Haggai; Haggai's words are YHWH's words.

YHWH interrogates the people about whether or not it is “the time” for them to be living in paneled houses while his house is in ruins. Again, the Lord uses the people's own words against them. There is tragic irony in the conversation between God and his people about the Temple. Haggai illustrates a picture that is very similar to the founding of the original Temple. The three-fold anointed offices surrounding the Temple harkens back to the book of 1 Kings, where Solomon, Nathan, and Zadok built the first Temple.<sup>26</sup> Haggai's intentional vocabulary also echoes David's conversation with Nathan when he longed to build the Temple (2 Sam 7:5-16).<sup>27</sup> David had longed to build God's house. He felt guilty that he was living lavishly, while God was homeless. Solomon, Nathan, and Zadok actually built the Temple (1 Kgs 6-8). After the exile, the people are not acting like their fathers. They prefer their own homes to YHWH's.

Debate ensues over the meaning of the word “paneled” (פֶּנֶל). The term can range in meaning: “Cover, covered in, or panel.”<sup>28</sup> Some commentators believe it simply refers to the roofs of the houses.<sup>29</sup> Since the people were financially struggling, it is improbable that they were living in decadent homes. Both the LXX and the Vulgate support this translation.<sup>30</sup> Others think the people were living in luxury, while God lived in ruins.<sup>31</sup> This seems to be the case, as Haggai contrasts Israel's postexilic situation with

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<sup>26</sup>Meadowcroft, *Haggai*, 99-100.

<sup>27</sup>Mark J. Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 88. Meadowcroft, *Haggai*, 106.

<sup>28</sup>BDB, 706.

<sup>29</sup>Wolff, *Haggai*, 41. Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 19.

<sup>30</sup>The LXX uses the term *κοιλόσταθμος*, which means ceiling, and the Vulgate uses the term, *laqueatis*, which means paneled.

<sup>31</sup>Micah Fries, Stephen Rummage, and Robby Gallaty, *Exalting Jesus in Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, Christ-Centered Exposition (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2015), 49; Mackay, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, 21; Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, 124-25; Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 89.

Solomon's Temple.<sup>32</sup> YHWH describes their houses with language similar to the language used to describe the beauty of Solomon's Temple. Whether the word refers to the roof or to the luxury; the people were neglecting God's house. Therein lies the problem.<sup>33</sup>

After questioning their commitment to the Temple, the Lord commands the people, "consider your ways." This imperative is important in the book of Haggai; it is used five times in thirty-eight verses. Boda notes that the vocabulary is unique to Haggai, and it calls for deep reflection of past behavior and experience.<sup>34</sup> Israel is being challenged. They have ignored the Temple for years. They must consider – how has it worked out for them? This neglect is not merely misplaced priority; the people were committing spiritual treason.<sup>35</sup>

Haggai surveys Israel's struggling situation. He lists five ways in which the people are hurting: (1) they sow much, but harvest little; (2) they eat, but never have enough; (3) they drink, but are never filled;<sup>36</sup> (4) they clothe themselves, but are never warm; and (5) they earn wages, but it is as if the wages fall out of a bag with holes. The people were working hard, but there was diminutive return of their efforts. Their dilemma was embodied in the Pennsylvania Dutch expression, "the hurrier I go, the behinder I get."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>See Eugene H. Merrill, *Haggai* in vol. 8 of *Expositor's Bible Commentary* ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 709. Merrill writes, "In a ironic twist the Lord describes the houses they have built in terms of certain features of the old Solomon temple. So lavish are the interiors of their dwellings that they are paneled . . . like that glorious house of the Lord (see 1Ki 6:9; 7:3,7)."

<sup>33</sup>Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 58-59.

<sup>34</sup>Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 90.

<sup>35</sup>Walter C. Kaiser, *Micah-Malachi* in vol. 21 of *The Communicator's Commentary*, ed. Lloyd John Ogilvie (Dallas: Word Books, 1992), 255.

<sup>36</sup>See Robert Alden in *Haggai, Malachi* in vol. 7 of *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 581. Alden writes, "The Hebrew word . . . usually means inebriation. These people were unable to drown their sorrows because of inadequate vintage." He basically says, the people do not even have enough wine to get drunk!

<sup>37</sup>James Montgomery Boice, *The Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 2:470.

**Verses 7-11.** The Lord does not leave his people in the dark. He reveals why they are experiencing economic hardship, and what they must do to fix it. First, the people are hurting because of their neglect of their covenantal responsibilities. These tribulations are the consequences that YHWH had promised for unfaithfulness to the covenant.<sup>38</sup> The curses of Deuteronomy included drought and famine (Deut 28:16, 18, 38), lack of wine (Deut 28:39), and poverty (Deut 28:19, 22-24, 44). Because God's people had neglected their covenantal duties, they were experiencing covenantal curses. In verse 9, God tells the people that he blew away their profits.

YHWH has called for a drought upon the land because Israel has allowed his house to lie in ruins. The Lord takes credit for the plight of the people; he is responsible. The people bypass God's house, while they busy themselves with their own houses.<sup>39</sup> Their unfaithfulness has rendered YHWH's cosmic discipline. The Hebrew word play confirms what YHWH has declared. Israel is experiencing drought (חֶרֶב) because God's house lies in ruins (תִּרְב).

The Lord has called upon the heavens and the earth to aid him in his chastening. God's creation obeys him even when his people do not.<sup>40</sup> Haggai recapitulates earlier language in Scripture to teach Israel about their sin. The terminology that he enlists, including heavens, earth, land, man, and beast, all echo the creation narrative in Genesis 1-3.<sup>41</sup> As Adam sinned against God in Eden so Israel has sinned against God in the Promised Land. Their sin not only affects them but it also affects the land and the animals, just as the curse in Genesis 3.

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<sup>38</sup>Merrill, *Haggai*, 709-10.

<sup>39</sup>Literally, "and you run, every man to his own house." (וְאַתֶּם רָצִים אִישׁ לְבֵיתוֹ).

<sup>40</sup>Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 44.

<sup>41</sup>Anthony R. Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 61. Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 94.

In his grace, the Lord does not leave his people in their sin. He informs them of what they must do to rectify their circumstance. He calls them again to “consider.” They must (1) go up to the hills, (2) bring the wood, and (3) build the house. If Israel is going to receive the Lord’s blessing, then they must renew their covenantal faithfulness. This is only possible if they rebuild the Temple. When they inaugurate the construction project, YHWH will take pleasure in his house and he will be glorified.

### **Covenantal Horizon**

To understand the covenantal horizon of Haggai 1:1-11, it is imperative to take stock of Israel’s epochal setting. God’s kingdom is – and always has been – “God’s people, in God’s place, under God’s rule and blessing.”<sup>42</sup> In the book of Haggai, the people of Israel have returned from exile, and are back in Jerusalem. While their land has been restored, the people are currently without a temple, and without a king. The absence of the Temple would have been tragic for the nation. The Temple was not merely an historic building or a place of worship. The Temple was God’s dwelling place among his people – the place where heaven and earth intersected. N. T. Wright comments,

The Temple on Mount Zion in Jerusalem was the primary place, according to Israelite tradition, where heaven and earth met. “The Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his residence: ‘This is my resting-place forever; here will I live, for I have desired it’” (Psalm 132:13-14). When Israel’s God blessed people, he did so *from* Zion. When they were far away, they would turn and pray *toward* the Temple. When pilgrims and worshippers went up to Jerusalem and into the Temple to worship and offer sacrifices, they wouldn’t have said that it was *as though* they were going into heaven. They would have said that they were going to the place where heaven and earth overlapped and interlocked.<sup>43</sup>

Without the Temple, the people could not meet with YHWH; they would have no connection to heaven. The covenant relationship could not be satisfied apart from the

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<sup>42</sup>Vaughn Roberts, *God’s Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2003), 21.

<sup>43</sup>N. T. Wright, *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* (New York: HarperOne, 2006), 64-65. Emphasis original.

Temple. At this point in redemptive history, God is interacting with his people at the intersection of three covenants: (1) the Mosaic covenant, (2) the Davidic covenant, and (3) the New Covenant. A brief survey of these three covenants will give proper context for the covenantal horizon of the book of Haggai.

First, Israel is still living under the Mosaic covenant. This law was the governing rule for Israel's theocratic system from the time of Sinai through the end of the OT. YHWH had cut this covenant in stone with Israel after he had redeemed her from slavery in Egypt. God's salvation through the Exodus was the catalyst that birthed Israel's national identity. Now Israel had experienced something of a second Exodus from exile. As the prophet – through the priest and neo-king – calls the people to obedience here, they are reminded of their covenantal responsibilities and the consequences of disobedience.

The Mosaic covenant is the reason that the people are experiencing their hardship. They have disobeyed the covenant. They have neglected the dwelling place of God for their own homes. They were not zealous for God's presence – the Temple. Much of Haggai's theology is grounded in the Deuteronomic blessings and curses (Lev 26; Deut 28).<sup>44</sup> Under the Mosaic administration, the Jerusalem Temple was an integral element of God's dealing with his people. It was the "right place" where God would rule his people.<sup>45</sup> When Israel ignores their covenantal obligations, they experience the curse of YHWH.

The second covenant in the life of Israel at this time was the Davidic covenant. YHWH had promised David that he would have a son whose throne would be established forever (2 Sam 7:12-17). This promise seemed to be in jeopardy. YHWH had sent his people into exile and there was no Davidic king on the throne in Jerusalem. Had the Lord

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<sup>44</sup>Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 153.

<sup>45</sup>Boice, *The Minor Prophets*, 2:466.

abandoned his people? Did he renege on his promise? These are covenantal concerns for Israel during the restoration period.

At this intersection, the final covenant is the New Covenant. The New Covenant had been promised (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36-37), but it had not yet been established. This is the covenantal tension of the people of Israel in this narrative. YHWH had given them the covenant at Sinai and had given another covenant to King David. Then he promised that there would be a New Covenant, and that it would be different than the others. God's people already lived with the hope of this New Covenant but their hope was not yet realized. All three of these covenants – Mosaic, Davidic, and New – are looming in the shadows of the Haggai narrative.

### **Canonical Horizon**

The prophet's charge against the people of Israel is that they are not zealous for the presence of the Lord. They are more concerned with their own comfort and commerce than they are with YHWH's covenant. Their neglect of the presence of God in the Temple leads them to judgment. This has been the struggle of God's people throughout the story of redemption. Adam rejected God's presence in the garden when he fell in sin (Gen 3). Abraham rejected God's presence when he left the Promised Land and went to Egypt (Gen 12:10-20). The people of Israel rejected God's presence in the Promised Land when they refused to follow the report of Joshua and Caleb (Num 13-14). God's people have always struggled to have an appropriate zeal for his presence.

This struggle changes with Jesus. Jesus is true Israel, who is zealous for the presence of God. Jesus fights for and cleanses the Temple when no one else will do so (John 2:13-22). He drives out the moneychangers. He cleanses his father's house. Like no other man who ever lived, Jesus is truly obedient to God (2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15). He kept the law perfectly (John 8:29, 55); he never broke the covenant. Jesus did what Israel did not and could not ever do.

Haggai 1:1-11 is fulfilled in Jesus Christ through both precepts and problems. God's people were called to be zealous for the presence of God for this fulfilled their covenantal obligations. Israel ignored God's precept in this pericope. Jesus kept this precept through his zealous love for God's presence. Israel's disobedience was a problem that led to curses from God. Jesus solves the problem between God and men through his righteous life, penal substitutionary death, and resurrection. God could only forgive the sins of the people because on his appointed day Jesus would die for their sins. Haggai 1:1-11 is organically fulfilled in Christ through precepts and problems.

Jesus' covenantal obedience is then the gospel link between Israel and the church. Israel was supposed to be zealous for the house of God, but they were not. They were unfaithful to the covenant. Jesus was faithful. Through his righteous life, Jesus was the obedient Israelite; he was the covenant keeper. Jesus' covenant faithfulness is what links his people back to the text of Haggai. This leads to the contemporary horizon.

### **Contemporary Horizon**

Through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, the church is made the people of God, that is, just as Judah was delivered out of Babylonian captivity, the eschatological Judah, Jesus Christ, was delivered from the bondage of death to build his temple. Like postexilic Israel, the church is now God's people, in God's place, under God's blessing and rule by virtue of their union in the one who was delivered "for us and our salvation."<sup>46</sup> Believers can and must be zealous for God's presence because Jesus has been obedient on their behalf, and they are found in him. In Christ, now God's presence is made manifest in the church, which is the house of God (Eph 2:19; 1 Tim 3:15; Heb 10:21; 1 Pet 2:5; 4:17) and the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21; Rev 3:12). As Israel was called to build the second Temple, so are Christians called

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<sup>46</sup>See the Nicene Creed in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 1, *The History of the Creeds* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), 28.



to spiritually build the church.<sup>47</sup> This task is possible because Jesus rebuilt his temple in three days (John 2:19, 21).

Zealousness for the presence of God is first and foremost an issue of the heart. Capill comments on Haggai chapter 1, “At the end of the day, the issue Haggai was raising was the issue of where the people’s passions lay – their house or God’s house? What were they serving? What was their heart set on? . . . They had succumbed to the more subtle idolatry of selfish, comfortable materialism.”<sup>48</sup> It is possible that the hearts of the people were set on safety, for they had faced opposition from without and economic hardship within. Even if that is the case, the people’s hearts were set on themselves.

When Haggai calls the people to consider, he literally tells them to set their heart upon their ways (שִׁמּוֹ לְבַבְכֶם עַל-דַּרְכֵיכֶם). In the New Covenant, the gospel calls believers to set their heart most fundamentally on Christ. It is through the church – the body of Christ – that hearts are trained to properly love God and neighbor.<sup>49</sup> The rhythms of grace that have been left by Christ (preaching, baptism, communion) help God’s people to habitually *inhabit* the story of the gospel. This weekly liturgy enables the church to continually consider (set their hearts on) Jesus, which produces obedience to Jesus.

When Jesus sits at the seat of Christians’ affections, then they are zealous for the presence of God and they work to build the church. Believers build the church by praying for the church, serving the church, giving to the church, and building their lives on the church. It is imperative that a believer’s life is built on the church because God’s covenantal presence is only experienced through the church. The church is the body of

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<sup>47</sup>Ronald Hanks, *The Coming of Zion’s Redeemer* (Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2014), 29-32.

<sup>48</sup>Murray Capill, *The Heart Is the Target: Preaching Practical Application from Every Text* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2014), 122.

<sup>49</sup>For further reading on the spiritual power of liturgical habit, see James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016).

Christ through which the Word and the Sacraments are administered. If believers neglect the church, it is like the people of Israel neglecting the presence of God in the Temple. Christians must prioritize God's presence and his glory or else they will beckon the discipline of God in their lives.<sup>50</sup>

### **Haggai 1:12-15**

Haggai 1:12-15 recounts the response of Israel to the call of Haggai 1:1-11. In this pericope, the leaders of Israel lead the people in obedience to the Word of YHWH. First, this section of the text is placed within its contextual horizon. Then the scope is broadened to understand how the obedience of the people is to be interpreted in light of the covenantal, and canonical horizons. Finally, the narrative is interpreted within the contemporary horizon and applied to the church.

#### **Contextual Horizon**

Haggai 1:12-15 is the beautiful reaction to the story's first eleven verses. This terse narrative reveals obedience on the part of the nation of Israel that is rare in OT prophetic literature.<sup>51</sup> More often than not, the Hebrew prophets were met with disobedience and neglect when they chastised the people on behalf of YHWH. Haggai experiences a very different response. The people actually obey the Word of God. Hill says that the story "simply reports that the whole community responded to Haggai's preaching."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 100-5.

<sup>51</sup> Longman and Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 481.

<sup>52</sup> Andrew E. Hill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 70.

**Verse 12.** The seeds of Haggai’s message fell on fertile soil.<sup>53</sup> The text recapitulates the language of verse 1 by stating that Zerubbabel and Joshua obeyed the voice of YHWH. These men led the effort in national covenantal obedience.<sup>54</sup> The governor and the high priest were addressed directly in the first eleven verses and now they lead the people into action. Meadowcroft rightly says that Zerubbabel and Joshua “should be read as representing a collective of the royal and priestly ideals.”<sup>55</sup> The royal son of David was always meant to lead the people in obedience. The same is true of the Aaronic priesthood. In the book of Haggai, these anointed offices are functioning properly in the Kingdom of God.

Haggai places the emphasis of the leaders on their covenantal function. Zerubbabel is not called the governor of Judah, but the son of Shealtiel.<sup>56</sup> Joshua is the son of Jehozadak, the High Priest. These men have been called and anointed by YHWH to lead the nation in covenantal obedience, and here they lead the people well.

Haggai not only speaks of the obedience of the leaders, but he also announces that “all the remnant of the people” obeyed his warning. There is some debate about who constitutes the remnant of the people. Some scholars propose that the title refers to the group of Israelites who were taken into exile and have now returned.<sup>57</sup> Their understanding creates a dichotomy between people who left for Babylon and those who stayed through the exile. Another group of commentators believe that the remnant refers

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<sup>53</sup>Merrill, *Haggai*, 711.

<sup>54</sup> Hanko, *The Coming of Zion’s Redeemer*, 36. Hanko notes that the people are not mentioned in Ezra’s account of the narrative only Zerubbabel and Joshua are mentioned (Ezra 5:2). This detail emphasizes the prominent role of the leaders in the Temple reconstruction project.

<sup>55</sup> Meadowcroft, *Haggai*, 131.

<sup>56</sup> Wolff, *Haggai*, 51. Wolff notes that calling Zerubbabel the Governor of Judah at this point in the narrative would be too much of a reminder that he is under Persian rule. The emphasis is on his covenantal responsibility, for “Zerubbabel is in the ultimate resort Yahweh’s servant (2:23).”

<sup>57</sup> Mackay, *Haggai, Zechariah, & Malachi*, 31. Wolff, *Haggai*, 52. Wolff contends that the remnant would be made up of prominent members of Jewish society because poorer Israelites would not have been deported.

to all of Israel who are living in Jerusalem at the time.<sup>58</sup> A third understanding of the title remnant is that it refers to true Israel.<sup>59</sup> Not all ethnic Jews participated in the rebuilding of the temple, but all of the faithful Jews participated.

This third understanding seems to be the most likely case for two reasons: (1) not all of Israel is living in or around Jerusalem at this time. Only a small population had returned from exile (Ezra 2:64-65), and these are the remnant who are rebuilding. (2) The Scriptures trace the theme of remnant from the beginning. Adam and Eve have two sons – Cain and Abel. Abel (and later, Seth) is God’s remnant; Cain is not. Noah and his family are God’s remnant in Genesis 6. Abraham is God’s remnant in Genesis 12. There was always a believing remnant among the nation of Israel (Gen 47:7; Judg 5:13; 2 Kgs 19:4, 30-31; 2 Chr 30:6; Ezra 9:8, 14-15; Neh 1:3; Isa 10:20), for not all who descend from Israel belong to Israel (Rom 9:6). The remnant here is the faithful people of God who hear his Word and obey.

The collective reaction of Haggai’s hearers is two-fold: (1) they obey, and (2) they fear. First, the people obeyed the voice of YHWH. This is the lone use of the word “obey” in the book of Haggai.<sup>60</sup> The Hebrew word, *שמע* means, “to hear or listen to.”<sup>61</sup> The people heard and responded to God’s Word. Notice also that the voice of YHWH is equated with the words of Haggai the prophet. When the prophet spoke to the people, he spoke the Word of God.

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<sup>58</sup>Meadowcroft, *Haggai*, 132. Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 22. Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 141-42.

<sup>59</sup>Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, 138. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 81.

<sup>60</sup>Hill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 71. Hill says that Haggai’s use of “obeyed” is “significant, in that it is measure of the prophet’s success.”

<sup>61</sup>BDB, 1033.

Second, the people feared.<sup>62</sup> Their fear is a response to God’s judgment and awesome presence.<sup>63</sup> There is some debate as to whether the fear of the people referred to terror<sup>64</sup> – they were frightened of YHWH – or, reverence<sup>65</sup> – they respected and worshipped YHWH. The answer is a combination of the two. Haggai’s point is that the obeying (or hearing) and the fearing are connected. The fear led to action. As Baldwin said, “They *feared* in the sense that they had been startled awake by the voice of God.”<sup>66</sup>

In verse 12, the voice of YHWH and the words of Haggai the prophet are one and the same; they are two sides of the same coin. The authority of the prophetic voice in Haggai 1:1-11 has already been noted. The obedience of the people is mediated through the word of the prophet, which is synonymous with the voice of God. God sent Haggai.

**Verse 13.** Haggai is called the messenger of YHWH. He is the “angel” (מִלְאָךְ)<sup>67</sup> of God sent with the “message” (מִלְאָכּוֹת)<sup>68</sup> of God. The emphasis is on Haggai’s representation of the Lord. In verse 13, Haggai is not referred to as the prophet (which is his most prominent title in the book), but is called YHWH’s messenger. Westermann notes, “The prophets are best understood on the model of the messenger dispatched by a

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<sup>62</sup>Literally, “And the people feared before YHWH” (וַיִּירָאוּ הָעָם מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה).

<sup>63</sup> Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 107-8.

<sup>64</sup>Mackay, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, 33. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 83. Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 62. Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 146-47.

<sup>65</sup>Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, 138. Meadowcroft, *Haggai*, 133.

<sup>66</sup> Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 45. Emphasis original.

<sup>67</sup>For discussion of the term “messenger,” in relation to the ANE understanding of divine counsel, see Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 35. Cf. Hill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 72.

<sup>68</sup>Meyers and Meyers note that this noun is only found here in the OT. See Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 35. This curiosity may speak to the unique success of Haggai in contrast to other OT prophets. The answer may also lie in the word play of the text between מִלְאָךְ, מִלְאָכּוֹת, and מְלָאכָה. It also may simply be a coincidence.

king to convey his word to others.”<sup>69</sup> The king of the world sent Haggai to convey this message to Israel.

Hanko emphasizes the synonym “angel” with the term “messenger.” He says, “The message of comfort that [Haggai] brings is heavenly.”<sup>70</sup> The prophet is also enlisting language reminiscent of Moses to invoke imagery of Exodus and the covenant. As Moses was a messenger of YHWH, so now is Haggai.<sup>71</sup> Just as YHWH led Israel out of slavery, so now he has led them out of exile. Just as God had given the covenant through the prophet, Moses, so now he is renewing the covenant through the prophet, Haggai.

YHWH’s covenantal intentions become clear when Haggai speaks the words, “I am with you, declares the LORD.” Scripture is brimming with this covenantal formula. YHWH has a storied history of calming the fears of his people with the assurance of his presence (Gen 15:1; 26:24; Josh 1:9; 2 Sam 7:9; 1 Chr 28:20; 2 Chr 20:15, 17; Neh 4:14, 20; Ps 56:4, 11; Isa 41:10; 43:1-2, 5; Jer 1:8, 19; 15:20; 30:10-11; 42:11; 46:28; Hag 2:4). Baldwin suggests that Haggai is alluding to Isaiah 42:18-43:7, where YHWH declares that he will save his plundered people.<sup>72</sup> Israel must not be afraid because now that the exile is over, the Lord will restore the covenant.

Meadowcroft also notes the connection of this covenantal language with the Temple.<sup>73</sup> Haggai’s words echo David’s words when he charged Solomon with the construction of the Temple (1 Chr 22:18-19). Also, when David wants to build the Temple, Nathan tells him that YHWH is with him (2 Sam 7:3).<sup>74</sup> Here stands another

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<sup>69</sup>Quoted in Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 23.

<sup>70</sup>Hanko, *The Coming of Zion’s Redeemer*, 41.

<sup>71</sup>Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 108.

<sup>72</sup>Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 45.

<sup>73</sup>Meadowcroft, *Haggai*, 140-41.

<sup>74</sup>Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 108.

instance where the prophet is linking the rebuilding of the Temple with its inaugural construction. Just as David and Solomon led the people in the initial building effort, so now Zerubbabel and Joshua must lead this people to build God's house. They will have God's presence just as their fathers had experienced.

YHWH's declaration of assurance also has eschatological ramifications. There is future significance in God's statement.<sup>75</sup> In Jeremiah 30:10-11, and Isaiah 41:10, and 43:5, YHWH's "fear not" formula is followed by promises of future restoration.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, Haggai may be hinting at future hope by enlisting this language. This aspect of God's covenantal goodness will become clearer in Haggai 2.

**Verses 14-15.** C.S. Lewis wrote, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."<sup>77</sup> In Haggai 1, YHWH used the megaphone of covenantal cursing to stir up the spirit of his people. It is almost as if the people were sleeping, and the Lord roused them from their slumber.<sup>78</sup> While there are certainly political undertones to God's stirring of the nation,<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*, Old Testament Library, 57-58.

<sup>76</sup>In Jer 30:11a, YHWH declares that he will make "a full end to the nations among whom I scattered [Israel]. There will be no full end for God's people. In Isa 41:10, YHWH tells his people that he will hold them up with his victorious right hand. In Isa 43:5, YHWH says that he will bring their offspring from the east, and gather them from the west. The language in all three passages speaks to victory over the enemies of Israel, and restitution in the Promised Land. If Haggai is specifically invoking Jeremiah and Isaiah here, then he is emphasizing the future victory of Israel. Even though they are currently under Persian rule, God will bring their enemies to a full end. Though there are still many Jews scattered outside of the land, one day YHWH will bring them back into the land.

<sup>77</sup>C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain: How Human Suffering Raises Almost Intolerable Intellectual Problems* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1962), 93.

<sup>78</sup>Motyer, *Haggai*, 3:982-83.

<sup>79</sup>Meadowcroft, *Haggai*, 144-45; Wolff, *Haggai*, 52-53; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 35-36; Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 86. Verhoef notes that the Hiphil of *יָעַר* means to "wake up" (Zech 4:1), "disturb" (Deut 32:11), "stir up," and "set in motion." It often refers to political heads of state (1 Chr 5:26; 2 Chr 21:16; Ezra 1:1; Isa 41:2; Jer 50:9; 51:1, 11). In Hag 1:14, the directive is given to Zerubbabel, the Governor, and to Joshua, the High Priest. These men represent the political history and hopes of the nation of Israel. YHWH is stirring them up as he has stirred other national leaders in the past. This is for the purpose of accomplishing his will. Israel's national theocratic hopes remain alive because of the work of the Lord.

the pericope has a grander point. God has stirred them up; he is responsible for the obedience of his people. He has moved in their affections to make them want to obey.<sup>80</sup>

Haggai recapitulates the order of verses 12-13 to emphasize the unity of the community. He names Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the remnant of the people again to reinforce that the entire community is involved.<sup>81</sup> Meyers and Meyers aptly summarize Israel's unified obedience, "If there was a dissenting opinion about whether or not to proceed with the temple project, we do not hear about it . . . . Yehudite unity, in spirit and in deed, is an important theme."<sup>82</sup> Israel's former inactivity would suggest that they are not God's people; however, verse 14 proves otherwise. The people "came and did work on the house of YHWH of hosts, their God (וַיָּבֹאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ מִלְאכָה בְּבֵית־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵיהֶם)." Their receptivity to the prophet is the beginning of covenant renewal and obedience.

Verse 15 states that Israel responded in obedience to YHWH on the twenty-fourth day of the month. The date at the end of the pericope is instructive in two ways: (1) the date demonstrates the obedience of God's people and (2) it bookends the narrative. First, the date is proof of Israel's quick response. Considering the need for Temple materials, and their other daily work, the people responded fairly quickly to Haggai's call. Second, the date mirrors the opening verse – Haggai first preached to the people on the first day of the month, now they began work on the twenty-fourth day of the month.

Haggai 1 and 2 transition on the hinge "in the second year of Darius the king." Scholars debate whether this phrase belongs with verse 1:15a or 2:1.<sup>83</sup> The argument for

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<sup>80</sup>Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, 143; Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 108.

<sup>81</sup>Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 150-53.

<sup>82</sup>Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 43.

<sup>83</sup>See Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 23. Redditt argues that 1:15b belongs with 1:15a. Also see Motyer, *Haggai in Minor Prophets*, v. 3, ed. McComiskey, 983-84; Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, 144-45. Motyer and Taylor and Clendenen argue that 1:15b belongs with 2:1.



including the year with verse 15a is that the date would be a true mirror of Haggai 1:1. Those who believe that it belongs with 2:1 note that all other dating formulas include the year, so it must also be included in chapter 2. Wolff argues that 1:15b belongs with an undated oracle found in 2:15-19, and that a redactor altered the text.<sup>84</sup> Many commentators disagree with Wolff's conclusion, citing a lack of evidence.<sup>85</sup> Meyers and Meyers seem to have the best answer. They propose that the date does "double duty."<sup>86</sup> Since both oracles happened in the same year, the date is a bridge between narratives. It serves 1:12-15, and 2:1-9. Regardless of this textual note, the people went to work on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month that year.

### **Covenantal Horizon**

If Haggai 1:12-15 is read apart from its broader understanding within the framework of the Sinai covenant and the anointed offices, then the narrative will be misunderstood. God stirred his people to covenantal obedience through their leaders. The anointed offices – prophet, priest, and king – were given to mediate the covenant between YHWH and Israel. Now the Lord uses those offices to bring revival in the Promised Land.

Hill observes that the theological emphasis of the passage is the faithfulness of God in preserving his elect people and re-establishing them in the land of covenant promise.<sup>87</sup> God preserves and re-establishes his covenant people through his prophet, priest, and (neo) king. YHWH preserved the Davidic and Aaronic lines through the exile. He provides Haggai the words to give to the people. The Lord "stirred up" their spirits,

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<sup>84</sup>Wolff, *Haggai*, 59-63.

<sup>85</sup>See Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 23. He notes, "There is not textual support for changing the text."

<sup>86</sup>Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 36-37.

<sup>87</sup>Hill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 71.

beginning with Zerubbabel, and Joshua. These men led the remnant of the people to obey YHWH; the people followed their leaders in repentance.<sup>88</sup>

Just as Moses led the people out of Egypt, and Joshua led them into the Promised Land, so now these men will lead Israel back into covenantal faithfulness. Just as David and Solomon led Israel to build the first Temple, Zerubbabel, Joshua, and Haggai will lead God's people to build the second Temple. The picture of covenantal leadership portrayed in Haggai 1:12-15 is nicely summarized in the song of Deborah and Barak, "That the leaders took the lead in Israel, that the people offered themselves willingly, bless the LORD!" (Judg 5:2). YHWH is indeed responsible for the response of the people, – for he is the one who stirred them up – but he worked through Israel's leaders. Faithful covenantal leadership is provided for God's people in this pericope.

### **Canonical Horizon**

Interpreters cannot merely view the book of Haggai through the lens of the old covenant, but must ultimately view the narrative through the lens of the New Covenant. God's ultimate purposes... find their fulfillment in Jesus.<sup>89</sup> Jesus is the true prophet, priest, and king who came to lead God's people in covenantal obedience. God's people have always looked to their leaders to administer the blessings of the covenant on their behalf, and Jesus is the true and final leader who does so perfectly. Verhoef quotes John 3:16 and then comments, "In the NT God's initiative is predominantly revealed in the vicarious work of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>90</sup> Jesus is the true covenantal leader, who leads God's people in obedience to his word.

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<sup>88</sup>Fries, Rummage, and Gallaty, *Exalting Jesus in Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, 58.

<sup>89</sup>Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 64.

<sup>90</sup>Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 90.

Haggai, Zerubbabel, and Joshua were all pictures, or types, of the coming Christ. Jesus is the true prophet who calls God's people to covenantal obedience. Jesus is the true priest who mediates the blessings and cursing of the New Covenant between God and his people. Jesus is the true king who rules God's people righteously. While Zerubbabel is only a pseudo-king, Jesus is the true king who is not only sovereign over Israel, but sovereign over all the cosmos.

Haggai 1:12-15 is also organically fulfilled through God's presence. Jesus adopts the covenantal language of YHWH to bring comfort to his people. He specifically applies OT covenantal language to his kingdom. Phrases like "do not be afraid," and "I am with you," are part and parcel of the vocabulary of Christ (Matt 14:27; 28:10, 20; Mark 6:50; Luke 5:10; John 6:20; 14:27; Acts 18:9-10; 27:24). Just as YHWH was present with his people through the covenants, and the offices, now Jesus – who is the Lord – fulfills the covenants and the offices for his people. God's people do not have to fear because Jesus is with them. He is their leader.

Jesus' leadership is both exemplary and vicarious. Not only is Jesus the only true Israelite who kept the covenant, but he also did so on behalf of his bride. Jesus purchased covenantal obedience on behalf of the church through his righteous life and his substitutionary death. As a result, believers can now look to Jesus' life and learn how to obey. Hanko notes, "Ultimately Christ leads us in obedience, not only by example, but also by giving us the grace to obey."<sup>91</sup> Haggai, Zerubbabel, and Joshua were providentially ordained to lead Israel in this covenantal renewal, because several hundred years later Jesus would come to fully and finally lead God's people in the New Covenant.

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<sup>91</sup>Hanko, *The Coming of Zion's Redeemer*, 36.

## Contemporary Horizon

Without discerning the contemporary horizon of Haggai 1:12-15, the hermeneutical task is not complete. While there is a plethora of application that can be made for the church, three specific applications will be mentioned. Because Jesus is the true prophet, priest, and king who purchased obedience on behalf of his people, there are three elements of truth that can be applied from Haggai 1:12-15. These applications are summarized in three terms: (1) rest, (2) response, and (3) remnant.

First, Christians can rest in the finished work of Jesus on their behalf, and his continual presence with them. Since Jesus faithfully kept the covenant on behalf of his people, they can be assured that their hope is not dependent upon their faithfulness. While the New Covenant certainly requires obedience to God, it is not predicated on obedience to God. The foundation of the New Covenant is the righteousness of Christ. Followers of Christ do not have to be afraid of the wrath of God because Jesus bore God's wrath for them on the cross.

Believers can also rest in the abiding presence of Christ. Jesus fulfills the OT covenantal language of YHWH when he declares, "I am with you" to his disciples (Matt 28:20).<sup>92</sup> He applies the promise of the old covenant to the people of the New Covenant. Just as YHWH was with Israel in the old covenant, so will Jesus be with the church in the New Covenant. Jesus' promised presence brings rest to the people of God. There is no task, great or small, that Christians will face apart from the Lord Jesus.

The second point of application for the church is that she must respond to the Word of God. Israel's response to the word was to fear and work.<sup>93</sup> The same must be true for the church today. There is a healthy tension in the New Covenant. Believers' rest in the gospel of Jesus Christ does not produce a lazy church. The opposite is true. The

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<sup>92</sup>The language is almost identical in Matt 28:20 and Hag 1:13. The LXX version of Hag 1:13 states, Ἐγὼ εἰμι μεθ' ὑμῶν. Matthew 28:20 reads, ἐγὼ μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰμι.

<sup>93</sup>Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 112.

result of spiritual rest in the work of Jesus is work for Jesus. The church preaches the gospel to all people. She loves the people of God. Christians give to those in need. Believers serve the church. Jesus' followers respond to God's Word because they have been made new through the gospel. Just as God stirred up the spirit of the Israelites, he has given his Spirit to contemporary believers (Ezek 36:27). The gospel is a call to action, and that call comes through the Word of God.

The final point of application in light of the gospel is remember that the church is the remnant of God's people. Not all of the Israelites returned to the land to rebuild God's temple. There was a remnant of people who were faithful to the covenant, and it is this remnant that responds in obedience (Hag 1:12, 14). The church can seem outmatched in contrast to the rest of the world. The values of the world are at odds with the gospel, and the church can look and feel impotent. Many within Christendom have capitulated to the world's understanding of truth and ethics. God's elect are his faithful remnant. These believers are being renewed day by day. They can rest in the gospel and respond to the word because Jesus will sustain his remnant. He declared that the gates of Hell would not conquer his church (Matt 16:18 NLT).

Jesus has purchased obedience on behalf of his people. He is the only true covenant-keeping Israelite. Now his people live in light of this reality. They can rest in the finished work of Jesus. Believers are secure in his covenant righteousness. They can respond to God's Word because Jesus not only responded to the Word in their place, but Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1). Christians can maintain gospel hope when it seems as if the church is small, defeated or culturally irrelevant because Jesus promised to keep his church. The Belgic Confession sums up this thought well: "The Church hath been from the beginning of the world, and will be to the end thereof . . . [and] is preserved or

supported by God against the rage of the whole world; though she sometimes (for a while) appear very small, and, in the eyes of men, to be reduced to nothing.”<sup>94</sup>

### **Haggai 2:1-9**

Haggai’s second oracle is overtly more eschatological than the first. To convey the redemptive significance of the Temple, he first gazes back into Israel’s past before peering into their future. YHWH reminds the people of their deliverance from Egypt, which was the inauguration of their covenantal relationship (verses 4-5). He then bolsters them with an optimistic future where all of the treasures of the nations belong to them (verses 6-9). The past is bright, but the future is brighter still. The past and future of God’s people intersect at the Temple.

### **Contextual Horizon**

This pericope can be divided into three sections: (1) verses 1-2 contains YHWH’s call to speak again to the people; (2) verses 3-5 harken back to the Exodus to assure the people that God is still with them; and (3) verses 6-9 envision a future that is better than anything that they have experienced thus far.

**Verses 1-2.** Haggai brings his second message to Zerubbabel, Joshua, and all the remnant of the people of Israel on the twenty-first day of the seventh month in the second year of Darius. Kessler notes that this is the anniversary of Solomon’s dedication of the first Temple (1 Kings 8:2, 65; 2 Chr 7:8-10).<sup>95</sup> Over a month and a half has passed since Haggai first approached the people and he uses this festal opportunity to bring them encouragement. It is during this season that the people of Israel would be celebrating the

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<sup>94</sup>See the Belgic Confession in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, *The Evangelical Protestant Creeds* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), 417.

<sup>95</sup> Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 163.

Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:33-43). The Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths) was an annual feast of celebration in memory of the Exodus where the people would leave their homes and dwell in tents just as they did in the wilderness. In so doing, the nation would always remember that YHWH brought them out of slavery (Lev 23:43). It is almost as if they would relive the Exodus every year as they sojourned in their booths for a week.

Baldwin gives two reasons why there may have been this noteworthy delay in the work.<sup>96</sup> First, the people would have been working to clear the rubble. Construction work can be time consuming for a modern-day crew with heavy machinery; imagine how much work it would have been for ancient Israel without power tools. Second, the people would have been celebrating major festivals that would not have allowed them to work. The first day of the seventh month was the Feast of Trumpets, and the tenth day of the seventh month was the Day of Atonement (Lev 23:23-32). On the fifteenth day, the Feast of Tabernacles would begin. With the Sabbath that would come every week, it is easy to imagine that the people may be tired and dejected after continuous celebration at these unsightly ruins. "As God's people are overwhelmed by their external circumstances and their internal expectations, Haggai is moved to deliver his second oracle."<sup>97</sup>

**Verses 3-5.** Haggai asks the people a barrage of questions to rekindle their national imagination about the Temple. A majority of the population had not seen the first Temple, which was destroyed decades earlier. Yet, there would have been some elderly people who remembered seeing the grandeur of the Temple in their youth. This particular group of citizens function as *dramatis persona* in this pericope. They cause readers to view the situation through their eyes.<sup>98</sup> These people wept at the laying of the Temple's

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<sup>96</sup> Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 49-50; Cf. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 92-93.

<sup>97</sup> Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 118.

<sup>98</sup> Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 165.

foundation because they remembered the former Temple's glory (Ezra 3:12-13). They remembered the grand ornamentation of Solomon's structure.<sup>99</sup>

While there were some who personally remembered the pre-exilic Temple, Haggai is still addressing the entire crowd. He is evoking the collective memory of the nation.<sup>100</sup> Jewish children who were born and raised in Babylon would have heard stories from their parents and grandparents about the magnificence of the Temple. They would have known how important the structure was to their people. They would feel the collective pain, for Temple is an integral part of the identity of the nation. It is where YHWH dwelled with his people. Whether or not they had actually seen the building, everyone listening to Haggai's sermon remembered the Temple. However, now there appeared to be a great chasm between Israel's recollection of the Temple and the rubble that stood before them. Haggai asks, "Doesn't it seem like nothing to you?" (HCSB). The text literally reads, "Is it not like it, like nothing, in your eyes (הֲלוֹא כְּמָהוּ כְּאֵין בְּעֵינֵיכֶם)?" Taylor and Clendenen argue that Haggai's use of the preposition "like" (כְּ) is equating the Temple with nothingness. They note, "This building and nothingness amounted to the same thing! In other words, the disappointment that the people felt could only be formulated in terms of nothingness."<sup>101</sup> Haggai is addressing a dejected people. Where once stood a beautiful house of worship, now stands nothing. That which was a symbol of their history and monarchy was void. God's dwelling place among the nation was like nothing in their eyes.

In the midst of this sadness, Haggai brings a message of hope from YHWH. Verse 4 starts, "Yet now . . ." (וְעַתָּה). Even though verse 3 is true, there is more to come. Motyer says, "The עַתָּה that human eyes see (2:3) is not God's עַתָּה. The עַתָּה of human

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<sup>99</sup>Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*, 64.

<sup>100</sup>Meadowcroft, *Haggai*, 150.

<sup>101</sup>Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, 151.



depression and defeatism becomes a different עִתָּה when it is embraced by the divine word of promise.”<sup>102</sup> Haggai reminds them of another time in their history when they seemed to be without hope.

The call to “be strong” seems to be reminiscent of YHWH’s speech to Joshua (Josh 1:6-7, 9). The first chapter of the book of Joshua was another time of national skepticism in Israel’s history. The children of the Exodus generation were preparing to enter the Promised Land, which was frightening because it was different. Wilderness wandering was all they had ever known. Their parents had died and now Moses was dead. Moses is the one who had led them out of slavery. He had brought the Decalogue down from Sinai. Moses was their leader. In that pivotal redemptive moment, YHWH called on Joshua to “be strong!” Now Haggai is evoking that narrative to a people in another significant redemptive moment.

The thought of rebuilding Solomon’s temple was equally fearful as the thought of following Moses as national leader.<sup>103</sup> Israel needed to be strong like Joshua. The LORD speaks again to Zerubbabel and Joshua the High Priest, but this time he speaks also to the “people of the land.”<sup>104</sup> If Israel is going to get behind the rebuilding of this house, then everyone needs to catch the vision. It cannot merely be the leadership that captures this vision. This is an “all hands on deck” effort. They are the people of the land. They are back in the land that Joshua conquered. They will have success as he did for one reason: God is with them. They can do the work that they need to do because YHWH is in their midst.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup>Motyer, *Haggai*, 3:987.

<sup>103</sup> Mackay, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, 40. Cf. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 157.

<sup>104</sup>See Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 50. Meyers and Meyers note that Joshua’s title is mentioned and Zerubbabel’s is not. This may be a sign of the ascension of the office of priest over that of administrative ruler in the economy of restorative Israel.

<sup>105</sup>See Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 122. Boda notes that there are three imperatives in vv. 4-6: (1) be strong, (2) work, and (3) fear not. He argues that “work” is the central imperative in YHWH’s speech. The people are being called to work. They can be strong and fear not in their work because YHWH

The presence of God among his people is predicated upon the covenant that he made with them. Haggai harkens back to the covenant that YHWH cut with Israel to give the comfort and hope in this seemingly hopeless season.<sup>106</sup> As the task of rebuilding the Temple appears insurmountable, God leads them back into their past; back to other moments that seemed hopeless. Escaping slavery in Egypt and becoming a nation seemed unattainable, but Sinai reminds them that what is impossible with man is possible with God (Luke 18:27). Conquering Canaan after Moses died seemed indomitable, but they had God on their side. Haggai is engaging the imagination of the people to stir them out of fear and into action. They were lamenting that things were not as good as they used to be; they missed the “good ole’ days.” The prophet now addresses their “good ole’ days” problem with “good ole’ days” language – the Exodus.<sup>107</sup>

Israel does not have to fear because YHWH’s Spirit remains in their midst. The Hebrew text says that the Spirit of God “is standing” (עֹמֵד) in their midst. Taylor and Clendenen assert that the use of the participle instead of a finite verb may reflect God’s permanent standing among his people; this is not a momentary reality.<sup>108</sup> Haggai may also be referencing the pillar of cloud that led the people through the wilderness as they left Egypt (Exodus 13:21).<sup>109</sup> Just as YHWH was faithful to lead his people at the time of Moses and Joshua, so now he will lead them in the time of Zerubbabel, Joshua, and Haggai.

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is with them, but the thrust of the command is actually to do the work of rebuilding the Temple.

<sup>106</sup>Verse 5 literally reads “The word which I cut with you . . .” (אֶת־הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר־כָּרַתִּי אִתְּכֶם). The word “to cut” is sometimes used in the establishing of a covenant (1 Chr 16:15-16; Ps 105:8-9). When a covenant is established there would be animals that were literally cut up and used for sacrifice during the covenantal ceremony (Gen 15:9-18; Exod 24:4-8). In Hag 2:5, the “word which was cut” refers simply to the covenant that was established at Sinai between YHWH and the nation of Israel. Cf. Motyer, *Haggai in Minor Prophets*, v. 3, ed. McComiskey, 988.

<sup>107</sup>Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*, 66.

<sup>108</sup>Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, 154.

<sup>109</sup>Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 100. Verhoef notes the similarity between the word “stand” (עָמַד) and the word “pillar” (עֹמֵד). For a survey of the different understandings of God’s Spirit standing in Israel’s midst see Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 171-72.

**Verses 6-9.** The children of Israel can also maintain hope in this dark season because of the future that God has planned for them. YHWH was faithful in the past and he will remain faithful in the future. Verse 6 begins with the conjunction, “For” (כִּי). Israel is commanded to “fear not” for (or because) the LORD is not done working through Israel. At the beginning of this section, God is called “God-of-the-Angel-Armies” (MSG).<sup>110</sup> Haggai’s vision may seem unlikely because of Israel’s current weakness but it makes perfect sense when they remember that God has an army of angels that serve him steadfastly.

YHWH’s promise for the people begins with a curious statement: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. Baldwin translates the beginning of the verse “Wait, just one little while.”<sup>111</sup> Meyers and Meyers translate it “In only a moment,” which emphasizes the nearness of the event.<sup>112</sup> Kessler translates the phrase “One more time, and it will be soon,” which emphasizes both the nearness of the shaking and that there is continuity between the past acts of YHWH.<sup>113</sup> The unique expression seems to connote both urgency and a period of waiting.<sup>114</sup> Regardless of the exact phrasing, there is going to be some kind of shaking that will affect the entire cosmos. The heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land will all experience the power of YHWH of hosts. Haggai is evoking the language of Genesis 1 to remind Israel that YHWH is the Creator God who rules the nations.

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<sup>110</sup>Haggai calls God, “YHWH of hosts” (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת) twelve times in this terse book. Five of the twelve occurrences are in vv. 6-9. The emphasis in this portion of the oracle is on YHWH’s military prowess. Though Israel is under Persian rule, the God of Angel Armies governs them.

<sup>111</sup>Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 51.

<sup>112</sup>Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 52.

<sup>113</sup>Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 175.

<sup>114</sup>Hill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 79.

The result of this divine earthquake is that all of the nations will bring their treasures to the Temple and the Temple will be filled with glory. Haggai says that the gold and the silver belong to the LORD and that he will fill his house with these treasures. What are the shaking, the treasures, and the glory to which the prophet is referring? Verses 6-9 contain the most debated section in the book of Haggai. The debate is over whether or not the promise should be viewed as messianic or not. Do the treasure and the glory refer to Jesus Christ, or is there a different referent?

Throughout the church history, the treasures of Haggai 2:7 were viewed as messianic.<sup>115</sup> This hermeneutical emphasis is partly a result of the Vulgate's translation of Haggai 2:7. In the Vulgate, the phrase "the treasures will come in" is translated as "the desired one will come."<sup>116</sup> This translation is likely the product of a Christocentric hermeneutic that has existed since the inauguration of the church. But is this hermeneutic correct? Some commentators still emphasize the Christ-centered reading of Haggai 2:6-9.<sup>117</sup> Others have abandoned this hermeneutic.<sup>118</sup> The disconnect lies in a misunderstanding of the four horizons of Christ-centered preaching. Some in church history have leaped from the contextual horizon to the canonical – Haggai is pointing to Jesus Christ. This is true, but there is no organic unity between the text and the

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<sup>115</sup>See chap. 2 of this thesis, where the sermons of Augustine, Thomas, Martin Luther, John Flavel, and Charles Spurgeon all understand Haggai's promise to be fulfilled in some aspect of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

<sup>116</sup>The Hebrew uses the phrase *וּבָאוּ הַמְּדָתָה*, which is plural: "The treasures will come." The Latin translates the phrase as *et veniet desideratus*. In the Latin, the verb is third person singular, and the noun is masculine singular. The grammar implies that there is not a plurality of treasure that will come in, but a single individual that will come. The logical conclusion for much of church history has been that Jesus Christ is the desired one.

<sup>117</sup>See Boice, *The Minor Prophets*; Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*; Mackay, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*; Merrill, *Haggai*; Kaiser, *Micah-Malachi*; Fries, Rummage, and Gallaty, *Exalting Jesus in Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*; Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*; Hanko, *The Coming of Zion's Redeemer*; Motyer, *Haggai in Minor Prophets*; Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*. Some of these commentators tie Christological fulfillment directly to the meaning of the text and others say that it was not the intention, but it was fulfillment.

<sup>118</sup>See Goldingay, *Daniel and the Twelve Prophets for Everyone*; Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*; Meadowcroft, *Haggai*; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*; Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*; Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*.

Christocentric destination. Others overreact against this interpretive *faux pas* by leaving Haggai in his contextual horizon and ignoring the covenantal and canonical horizons. Haggai 2:6-9 must be understood in its original context first, but it cannot remain there. After discerning the original intent of the prophet Haggai, it is imperative to place this pericope in its covenantal and canonical context.

When Haggai first preached this sermon to the people of Israel, the treasure most surely referred to actual monetary treasure of other nations. YHWH declares, “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine” (v. 8). The silver and gold of the nations actually belongs to God and he will do as he pleases with his treasure. When the LORD proclaims that he will shake the nations and bring their treasures into the Temple, he is announcing that the Temple of Israel will literally be filled with the silver and gold of other nations. Wolff notes that the shaking of the nations will not be destructive, but salvific. God will retire all of the lost treasure of the Temple that the nations have taken, namely Nebuchadnezzar (2 Chr 36:10).<sup>119</sup>

Some commentators argue that the treasures will be acquired through the context of war or political upheaval.<sup>120</sup> Others believe that the nations will pay tribute because of the greatness of YHWH.<sup>121</sup> Either way, it seems that Haggai is seeking to give hope to the people that the best is yet to come. Solomon’s temple will not be the climax of Israel’s history. Baldwin argues – convincingly – that Haggai’s prophecy was initially fulfilled when Darius gave of Persia’s treasure to help Israel rebuild (Ezra 6:6-14). Israel has a political future and there will be a finished second Temple.

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<sup>119</sup>Wolff, *Haggai*, 81.

<sup>120</sup>See Meadowcroft, *Haggai*, 168; Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 25; Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 104-5.

<sup>121</sup>See Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, TOTC, 51-52; Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, NIV Application Commentary, 125; Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 180-181; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, Anchor Bible, 53.

Verse 9 says that this new house will be greater than the former. The rebuilt temple will supersede the glory of the former temple. YHWH also promises that there will be peace. The political turmoil of the exile will be reversed. Meadowcroft observes that Haggai re-directs the metaphor of shaking in judgment.<sup>122</sup> Israel was judged in the exile and the language of shaking was used to describe their judgment. But now the tables have turned. In the exile, God dispersed Israel into other nations (Assyria, Babylon, and Persia), now the nations will come to Israel. The glory and peace associated with this second Temple are more eschatologically focused than Solomon's temple. The Temple will now be the center of the created universe.<sup>123</sup> God will shake the world and the world will come to his house.

### **Covenantal Horizon**

The contextual horizon of Haggai 2:1-9 is focused on the work that God has done and will do with Israel, namely the financial restoration of the Temple. While Haggai promises a restoration of the treasure that was lost, the greater emphasis of Haggai 2:1-9 is the re-centering of the cosmos around the Temple of YHWH and the ingathering of the nations to that Temple. God's plan for Israel had always been for them to be a conduit of his Word to the world. When YHWH called Abraham out of the post-Babel chaos, he promised that all of the families of the earth would be blessed through their relationship (Gen 12:3). Isaiah reiterated that goal when he called Israel to be a light to the nations (Isa 49:6).

While national autonomy and restoration of wealth are the most immediate applications of the pericope, God's plan for Israel was much bigger than "Make Israel Great Again!"<sup>124</sup> God's plan has always been cosmic in scope. Israel was the vehicle

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<sup>122</sup>Meadowcroft, *Haggai*, 164-65.

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>124</sup>This chapter was written in August of 2016, which was in the middle of the 2016

through which God was going to redeem the nations and restore the cosmos. The reconstruction of the Temple was urgent because that is where YHWH dwelt. If there were no temple, then there would be no place for God's people to interact with him. There would be no place for the nations to come and meet the God of the universe.

N. T. Wright argues that Israel was longing for YHWH's return to the Temple.<sup>125</sup> God's glory left the Temple before it was destroyed (Ezek 10). Now that the people have returned from exile, their hope is that with the reconstruction of the Temple, YHWH would return to bring victory to his people. This anticipation is in view in verse 9 – the latter glory of this house will be greater than the former. But did that ever happen?

Wright notes,

Never do we hear that the pillar of cloud and the fire which accompanied the Israelites in the wilderness has led the people back from their exile. At no point do we hear that YHWH has now gloriously returned to Zion. At no point is the house again filled with the cloud which veils his glory. At no point is the rebuilt Temple universally hailed as the true restored shrine spoken of by Ezekiel. Significantly, at no point, either, is there a final decisive victory over Israel's enemies, or the establishment of a universally welcomed royal dynasty.<sup>126</sup>

Israel must have been brimming with hope in Haggai's day, and yet, God's glory never returned to the Temple structure. In AD 70, the second Temple was destroyed and has not been rebuilt since. After the destruction of the Temple, the Jews applied Haggai's prophecy in an eschatological way. The book of 2 Baruch employs the language of Haggai 2, "You, however, if you prepare your minds to sow into them the fruits of the law, he shall protect you in the time in which the Mighty One shall *shake the entire creation*. For after a short time, the building of Zion will be *shaken* in order that it will be

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presidential election. The slogan for Donald J. Trump's campaign was "Make America Great Again!" The premise of the slogan (and his campaign) is a restoration of a more focused nationalism. Haggai's sermon to Israel can be read in the same way if one simply moves from the contextual horizon to the contemporary horizon.

<sup>125</sup>N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 615-24.

<sup>126</sup>*Ibid.*, 621.

rebuilt. That building will not remain; but it will again be uprooted after some time and will remain desolate for a time. And after that it is necessary that it will be renewed in glory and that it will be perfected into eternity” (2 Baruch 32:1-4, emphasis added).

Baruch wants to encourage Israel to follow the law because even though the Temple has been destroyed, it will be re-established eternally.<sup>127</sup> Rabbi Akiba applied Haggai 2:6 to his discussion of how long the world would last.<sup>128</sup> Their hope was no longer tied to the second Temple. Was Haggai wrong? Did he lie about the glory of the future Temple? Is this promise of God unfulfilled? Or did the greater glory of the Temple come in a most unexpected way?

### Canonical Horizon

The glory of YHWH did return to the Temple, but the children of Israel did not receive him (John 1:11). The NT fulfills the Temple through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus is God who became man and “tabernacled” among his people (John 1:14).<sup>129</sup> Matthew tells us that Jesus is “greater than the Temple” (Matt 12:6). In John 2:18-22, Jesus fulfills the Temple in light of himself; he is the true Temple. If the Jews were to tear down the Temple – destroying all of the work that Haggai had called Israel to do centuries earlier – then Jesus would rebuild that Temple in three days (John 2:19). John tells us that Jesus was speaking about his own body (John 2:21). John did not say that Jesus referenced the physical Temple merely as an illustration for his body, but that when Jesus spoke of Jerusalem’s Temple, he was speaking *of his body*. Jesus is the true Temple of God. He is the place where God dwells among his people (Matt 1:23; 28:20).

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<sup>127</sup>See George H. Guthrie, “Hebrews,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. D. A. Carson and G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 989.

<sup>128</sup>*Ibid.*, 989-90.

<sup>129</sup>John says, “The Word became flesh and dwelt (ἐσκήνωσεν) among us.” The Greek word for dwelt, σκηνώω, seems to harken back to the LXX word for tabernacle, σκηνή. Just as the tabernacle was God’s initial dwelling place among his people (Exod 25-27) – before the construction of Solomon’s temple – so is Jesus the final dwelling place of God among his people.



The Temple was a God-given picture, or a type, to prepare his people for the coming of his Son. The Tabernacle and Temple were both God's dwelling place among his people in their given epoch. With the coming of Christ, there is no longer any need for a physical Temple because the sign has served its purpose. That is why there has never been a third Temple in Jerusalem sanctioned by God. That which was commanded in the old covenant would now be sacrilegious under the New Covenant. The Temple system has eternally been eliminated through the death and resurrection of Christ.

Not only is Jesus the true Temple, but he also is the true king of Israel who reigns in God's place through righteousness. Throughout most of church history "the treasures of the nations" was associated with Jesus Christ, who is the "Desired one." While it is wrong to ignore the contextual horizon and move directly to Jesus, it would be an equal sin to leave the interpretation in the contextual horizon and ignore the canonical nature of revelation. Hamilton argues that the reference to "the desire of all the nations" in Haggai 2:7 is reminiscent of Samuel's words in 1 Samuel 9:20.<sup>130</sup> Samuel says to Saul, "And for whom is all the desire of Israel" (Hamilton's translation). Hamilton continues, "The echo of 1 Samuel 9:20 in Haggai 2:7 seems to indicate that the desire of all nations that Haggai says will come is a king who will bring righteousness and peace to the world."<sup>131</sup>

Haggai is making another reference to Israel's past – and most notably their monarchy – to sustain their hope. That which they desire is coming. The one whom God's people have desired since the fall will come to make things right (Gen 3:15). Jesus is the desire of Israel and he is the desire of the nations. He is the desire of God's people

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<sup>130</sup>James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 257. Hamilton sees similarity between Haggai's "desire of all the nations" (תִּמְדַת כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם) and Samuel's "And for whom is all the desire of Israel" (וְלִמִּי כָל־תִּמְדַת יִשְׂרָאֵל).

<sup>131</sup>Ibid.

because he will truly bring the glory and peace of God to this world. Israel desired Saul, but Saul was a disobedient king. Jesus is the truly godly king because he is the God-king.

Haggai 2:1-9 is also a promise that is explicitly fulfilled in the NT. Because Jesus inaugurated the new creation with his resurrection, believers now share the hope of a fully consummated new creation at the Second Advent of Christ. The only place in the NT where the book of Haggai is quoted is in Hebrews 12:26-27. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews applies Haggai's prophecy to the return of Christ, the judgment, and the re-creation of the cosmos. Just as the earth shook when God gave the law to Israel, so will the earth shake again in the end.

When God initiates this great eschatological shaking, he will shake not only the earth but also the heavens (Heb 12:26). N. T. Wright says that God will transition to his new world with "not only an earthquake but also, so to speak, a heavenquake."<sup>132</sup> When God shakes the cosmos, everything will fall away except for the kingdom of Christ. That kingdom cannot be shaken. The kingdom where Jesus reigns as the righteous king of his people and the dwelling place of God is with humankind (Rev 21:3). In this new world, Jesus will be the eternal Temple of the people of God (Rev 21:22). Jesus is the true Temple that is greater than the former (Matt 12:6).

### **Contemporary Horizon**

Believers who live under the New Covenant can follow God faithfully and fearlessly because they have God's power, peace, and presence through Jesus Christ. Haggai promised God's power, peace, and presence in the second Temple, and Christians have these things through the true Temple – Jesus Christ. As a result, God's people never have to fear. The church will always face trouble in this world, but Jesus is their peace (John 16:33). Whether she faces persecution, tribulation, illness, pain, financial ruin,

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<sup>132</sup>N. T. Wright, *Hebrews for Everyone*, New Testament for Everyone (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 164-65.

relational hurt, or even death, the church does not have to fear because God is with her in Christ. He is her king. He is her Temple.

When God's people are discouraged – as they were during the time of the restoration – they can find solace in Jesus, who is God's power, peace, and presence. When the past seems incomparably better than the present, and the present seems much less worthwhile, believers can still work to build the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19) both personally and corporately.<sup>133</sup> Because Jesus Christ has inaugurated the Kingdom of God, his people can rest secure in his unshakable Kingdom. The “Desired One” has come and he has overcome the world (John 16:33).

The gospel of Jesus also fuels believers to faithfulness in missional living. The *missio Dei* motivates believers to build the church and make Christ known among the nations.<sup>134</sup> The “Desired One” of the nations has come! The mission of the church is to make him known among the nations (Matt 28:18-20). Just as Haggai called Israel to rebuild the temple for the benefit of the nations, Jesus rebuilt the Temple in three days for the benefit of the nations. He has commissioned his people to make his name known to every people group so that the glory of Christ might fill the earth like the waters cover the seas (Hab 2:14). The people of God have fearlessness and fuel for ministry because they have God's power, peace, and presence in the greater Temple – Jesus Christ.

### **Haggai 2:10-19**

Haggai delivers his third sermon about two months after his second. In this oracle, the prophet addresses the ceremonial uncleanness of the people of Israel. God's people are unclean and ultimately the Temple will not change that. Their defilement has led to cursing and they must be made clean. Again, in the midst of a seemingly hopeless

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<sup>133</sup>Motyer, *Haggai*, 3:987.

<sup>134</sup>Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 135-37.

situation, Haggai brings a word of hope to God's people. God will cleanse them; he will bless them. This cleansing will finally come through Jesus of Nazareth, who is the true Israel of God.

### **Contextual Horizon**

Haggai 2:10-19 can be divided into two sections: (1) verses 10-14, and (2) verses 15-19. In the first section of the oracle, Haggai asks the priests two questions. His inquiry is used as an object lesson for the people about their defilement. In the proceeding section of the pericope, Haggai applies the object lesson to their gloomy circumstance. The people are experiencing the curses of the covenant because they are unclean, but he does not leave them in their despondency. Haggai ends the homily with a word of hope.

**Verses 10-14.** After YHWH's climactic declaration in Haggai 2:1-9, he is silent for two months. God speaks again to the nation of Israel by Haggai the prophet on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius.<sup>135</sup> Wolff comments, "It is a new event of God's Word that determines the new date."<sup>136</sup> From the context of verse 15, it appears that Haggai delivers this sermon on the day that the second Temple was dedicated, which would make it the background for other passages from the early Persian period (Ezra 3:10-13; Zech 4:6-10; 8:9-13).<sup>137</sup> In a sense, this is the day that Haggai's vision was realized. This is the purpose for which the people are working. The

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<sup>135</sup>See Motyer, *Haggai*, 3:994. Motyer notes that Haggai's receptive preposition shifts from **בְּ** to **לְ**. Motyer gives two possible reasons for the change of vocabulary: (1) it demonstrates both sides of the "prophetic coin." Haggai both receives and delivers the message of God. (2) It is also possible that Haggai genuinely wanted to know what was going to happen. In that case, this message was as much for him as it was for the people.

<sup>136</sup>Wolff, *Haggai*, 90.

<sup>137</sup>Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 141.

dividing line between the past and the future is the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month; everything changes on that day.<sup>138</sup>

YHWH instructs Haggai to ask the priests about the law (תּוֹרָה).<sup>139</sup> One major responsibility for the priests was to distinguish between what was ceremonially clean and unclean for the nation (Ezek 44:23). The people would have been familiar with this custom. Haggai's questions pertain to the ceremonial purity and physical contact. The first question considers whether or not bread or wine or stew or oil can be made holy by contact with holy meat.<sup>140</sup> The answer is no. The second question asks if bread, *et al* would be unclean if a person who had been made unclean – through contact with a dead body – handled it. The answer is yes.

Under the Mosaic economy, cleanliness cannot be spread. It must be maintained.<sup>141</sup> Defilement, on the other hand, can be spread. The most radical of cases has to do with death. Any Israelite who touched a dead body was unclean (Num 5:2; 9:6-7; 19:11). Everything they handled subsequently was considered unclean (Num 19:22). Anything that is connected with death has no place in YHWH's presence.<sup>142</sup>

There is nothing in the ruling of the priests that would have been shocking to the remnant of Israel. The startling declaration comes from the prophet in verse 14. Haggai applies the verdict of unclean to a new subject: this people.<sup>143</sup> He declares that

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<sup>138</sup>Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 202.

<sup>139</sup>See Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*, 73-76, for discussion of the different responsibilities of the priests in relation to *torah*. Petersen makes three notes on Hag 2:11-14: (1) it was a major responsibility of the priests to provide *torah* instruction for the people (Lev 10:10-11; Deut 17:8-13; 33:10; Jer 18:8; Ezek 7:26; and Mic 3:11); (2) the priests would be indicted if they did not provide *torah* instruction (Ezek 22:26); and (3) the priestly *torah* instruction in Hag 2:11-14 seems to refer specifically to the Aaronite responsibility of distinguishing between holy and unclean (Lev 10:10-11).

<sup>140</sup>For discussion of priestly procedure in handling holy meat (Lev 6:25-27), see Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*, 76-77, and Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 54.

<sup>141</sup>Meadowcroft, *Haggai*, 182.

<sup>142</sup>Wolff, *Haggai*, 91.

<sup>143</sup>Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 27.

this people and every work of their hands are unclean before YHWH. The people of Israel are unclean.<sup>144</sup> It turns out that Haggai's two questions are a parable of the people's condition in relation to the Temple.<sup>145</sup> Wolff notes that the triple "so" (כֵּן) of Haggai's response is a devastating indictment of the people, for it compares the unclean objects to "this people."<sup>146</sup>

The nation is unclean because they have neglected reconstruction of the Temple. Israel had broken communication between themselves and YHWH (cf. Hag 2:17; Ezek 36:22-38).<sup>147</sup> Without the Temple, YHWH would not dwell among his people. Without the Temple, the people could not accurately follow the law. By keeping their hands away from rebuilding, it is almost as if the people had touched death and it was contaminating everything they handled.

The only other time in the OT that the terms "this people" (הָעַם-הַזֶּה) and "this nation" (הַגּוֹי הַזֶּה) appears is in Exodus 33:12-13.<sup>148</sup> In Exodus 32, the people had rebelled against YHWH with the golden calf. In a similar way, after neglecting the Temple, the people are again called "this people/nation." The demonstrative pronoun is damning. YHWH did not say, "my people," but "this people." Their disinterest has distanced them from their deity. In Exodus 32, the activity of their hands was their sin, but now, in Haggai 2, the inactivity of their hands is their downfall.

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<sup>144</sup>See Wolff, *Haggai*, 92-94. Wolff, among others, argues that "this nation" refers to the Samaritans, and not the nation of Israel. Detailed interaction with his hypothesis is beyond the scope of this thesis. This paper will assume, based on the context of the pericope, and it's Spirit sanctioned order, that "this nation" refers to the children of Israel.

<sup>145</sup>Meadowcroft, *Haggai*, 185-86.

<sup>146</sup>Wolff, *Haggai*, 92.

<sup>147</sup>Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 120.

<sup>148</sup>Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 145.

**Verses 15-19.** Once again the people of Israel are in a seemingly hopeless situation. They are unclean. Can their situation be made right? Can they be made clean before their God? Is there hope? Haggai comes to them with an answer from God.

It appears that Haggai delivered this oracle on the day that the Temple was dedicated and the actual construction began (verses 15 and 18). Haggai calls the people again to “consider.” He had used this term twice in his first oracle and does so three more times in this sermon.<sup>149</sup> In many ways it seems that this talk is a recapitulation of the first.<sup>150</sup> The people’s problem stems from their indifference. They have experienced economic and agricultural hardship because of their sin; they are unclean.

Petersen argues that the Israelites were participating in a form of *kālû* ceremony, which would have found its roots in Babylonian and Seleucid sources.<sup>151</sup> The ritual would have included laying the foundational stones along with sacrificial liturgy. This pericope seems to be connected with Ezra 3 and Zechariah 4:4-10, which all use similar ceremonial language. The day of the *kālû* ceremony would have been a monumental day for the nation. They were to consider “from this day onward.”<sup>152</sup>

The people must reflect on their covenantal, economic, and agricultural conditions. How had they been faring before stone was placed upon stone in the second

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<sup>149</sup>Wolff, *Haggai*, 88-89, argues that Hag 2:15-19 does not belong with 2:10-14, but with Hag 1:15a. He claims there is “no apparent connection . . . either in style or theme.” He argues that all of Haggai’s oracles begin with dating so Haggai 1:15b belongs at the beginning of this pericope. Wolff also contends that it would not have taken the Israelites three weeks to begin working on the Temple (cf. page 59). Wolff’s argument is not convincing. First, it is the presupposition of this paper that the Spirit of God was the divine superintendent of the crafting of Haggai’s written prophecy (and the entire canon for that matter). Also, Hag 2:15-19 does fit with Hag 2:10-14. The people of Israel are unclean because of their sinful neglect of YHWH’s house. The problem of Hag 1 is the problem of Hag 2. It is the covenantal issue of the book. For a thorough analysis of the argument against Wolff’s position see Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 113-14.

<sup>150</sup>Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 53.

<sup>151</sup>Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*, 89-90.

<sup>152</sup>Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 81, imply that the three-fold use of “reflect” (consider in the ESV) means that Israel is called to reflect on the (1) past; (2) present; and (3) future. There is a textual note in the ESV that consider (חָשַׁב) can be translated “onward,” or “backward.” Regardless of one’s interpretation, the nation of Israel had a past that testified to the truth of YHWH’s promise, which would give hope for their future.

Temple?<sup>153</sup> Israel had been struggling because of their sin. When they came to the heaps and the wine vats for their yield, there was only half of what they had expected. Because they had neglected God's house, their houses neglected substance. This is the yield of their impurity; this is how they had fared.

The LORD does not leave Israel in uncertainty as to the origin of their obstacles. "I struck you," YHWH thunders. The blight, mildew, and hail have not been random chance, but the chastening of their covenant Lord. God beckons the nation, he invites them three times here, consider these words. Consider how you have acted and where it has brought you. Consider the state of the people. Consider and change. From this day onward, change.

YHWH invites the people to look at their barns. Are their barns full? Has their hard work yielded reward? The answer is no. The barns are empty, but they won't be for long.<sup>154</sup> Haggai ends the pericope once again on a note of hope, but this time it comes in a terse package. YHWH comforts his children, "From this day on I will bless you."<sup>155</sup> In spite of their sin, God is going to bring blessing. Their wrongs will be made right; their impurity will be made clean. Wolff summarizes the notion of blessing,

Now, however, in the last sentence, with its brief "I will bless," everything is said – everything that is going to change the situation "from this day onward" and in the future. The curse about which Haggai had to remind his hearers in his first discourse (1:6, 9-11) is ended. The blessing makes the failed harvest, the drought, and all the resulting want and privation a thing of the past. The blessing brings with it the means of life. The turn to blessing comes from Yahweh's own assurance.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup>Wolff, *Haggai*, 63, observes that this is the only time in the OT that the phrase, "stone upon stone" is used.

<sup>154</sup>Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 210.

<sup>155</sup>Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*, 95, comments that of the seventeen occurrences of the first-person common singular piel of בָּרַךְ this is the only usage in the OT without and object. The ESV assumes the second-person plural object, but it is not there in the Hebrew. Certainly YHWH would bless the people, but it seems that God's blessing is more broad and holistic than the ESV acknowledges. YHWH says, "From this day on I will bless." The blessing that will come in fulfillment of Haggai's sermon will affect more than the ethnic people of Israel, but all the nations. This blessing will affect the globe (Rom 8).

<sup>156</sup>Wolff, *Haggai*, 66-67.



In the midst of want, abundance is guaranteed. In the filth of defilement, purity is promised. In the wake of death, life flows from the lips of the prophet. But what is this blessing? What did the people need? Israel's covenantal situation will set the scene for the ultimate blessing of God.

### **Covenantal Horizon**

The covenantal emphasis of Haggai 2:10-19 is on the ceremonial impurity of the nation of Israel and the consequences of covenant unfaithfulness. Because Israel had neglected the Temple, they were experiencing the curses of the covenant (Deut 28:16, 18-19, 23-24, 38-39, 44). Israel was defiled. They needed to be made clean. Rebuilding the Temple was the initial step in covenantal refocus. The Mosaic covenant could not be obeyed apart from the Temple, which makes this "refoundation event...one of the many glorious redemptive-historical events that are recorded in the Bible."<sup>157</sup>

Boda notes three important epochal elements of the pericope: (1) Temple and sacrifice; (2) defilement; and (3) future blessing.<sup>158</sup> First, the Temple was necessary for Israel's covenantal obedience because they needed to make sacrifices. Israel was impure and they needed the Temple system to fulfill the covenantal obligations under which they lived. Second, the people were defiled because of their sin. God is holy and cannot abide with sin. Under the Mosaic covenant, the sacrifices would temporarily cover their sin until the serpent-slaying son of Eve came to their rescue (Gen 3:15). Finally, God promised his people future blessing. This blessing was predicated upon their rebuilding of YHWH's house. Haggai's epochal situation required the Temple system to please God, but it was temporary. A greater Temple would come and he would bring a permanent purity. Israel needed to be cleansed and there was one coming that would bring that cleansing, once and for all.

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<sup>157</sup>Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 150.

<sup>158</sup>*Ibid.* 150-52.

## Canonical Horizon

The purity that Israel needed dwelt among them when the Word became flesh (John 1:14). Haggai 2:10-19 is organically fulfilled through the problem of Israel's uncleanness. The gospel is the answer to the stain of sin. Jesus of Nazareth brought true and final cleansing to God's people through his life and ministry. Jesus purified God's people by living a righteous life in their place. He is the true Israelite who followed the law perfectly. He was tempted as all men are, but he did not sin (Heb 4:15).

Throughout his ministry, Jesus demonstrated that he brought cleansing with his Kingdom. In Luke 5:12-16, a leper confronts Jesus. The diseased man asks Jesus to heal him. Jesus then proceeds to reach out his hand, touch the man, and command his riddled body to be clean. Jesus demonstrates the power that he has over defilement. Haggai said that an unclean person will spread their impurity through contact, but just the opposite happens with Christ. When Jesus touches the leper, Jesus does not become unclean, but the leper becomes clean.<sup>159</sup> The impurity of the leper does not spread to Jesus, but the purity of Jesus spreads to the leper.

In Luke 8, Luke, the physician, tells us that Jesus healed a woman with a discharge of blood when she touched him (v. 44). Jesus was not defiled when this unclean woman grabbed his garment, but she was healed. Later in the chapter, Jesus hears of the death of Jairus' daughter. He travels to Jairus' house and then takes the girl by the hand (v. 54) and she is raised from the dead. Jesus is not made unclean by touching this dead body, but the dead is raised to life. The priests told Haggai that, according to the law, if someone touches a dead body, they are unclean. The unclean person will spread their impurity to everything they touch, but not Jesus. He does not become unclean; he makes the unclean clean. Jesus brings the cleansing that God's people need because he is both the covenant Lord and the covenant keeper; he is both YHWH and Israel.

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<sup>159</sup>Ligon Duncan, "Jesus Makes the Unclean Clean," in *Unashamed of the Gospel*, ed. Jonathan Leeman (Nashville: B&H Books, 2016), 145-46.

## Contemporary Horizon

God's people are made clean through the gospel of Jesus. When unholy people are united to Jesus Christ, the "holy one," by faith, they are definitively "sanctified" [Acts 20:32, 26:18; 1 Cor 1:2; 1 Cor 6:11]. When sinners walk in the light with Christ, his blood cleanses them (1 John 1:7). The guilt and shame of sin can be washed away by the vicarious death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. New Covenant members do not depend on sacrifices or the Temple system to bring God's cleansing and approval, but they look to Christ. Jesus is the better high priest of the New Covenant; he is both the priest who made the sacrifice and the lamb that was offered (John 1:29; Heb 8).

After believers trust in Christ, they can be sure that God accepts them. "If we confess our sins, [Jesus] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to *cleanse* us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, emphasis added). Believers may still hear condemnation from the enemy, the world, or even from themselves, but when the Father looks at them, he sees his Son. Nothing can separate the elect from God's love in Christ because they have been eternally cleansed through the blood of Jesus (Rom 8:34-39). The cleansing that Israel needed is the same purification that the church needs today. The final cleansing of the people of God has come through the life, death, and resurrection of his Son. He is now the sitting High Priest, for there is no longer a need for sacrifice; the cleansing is eternal.

## Haggai 2:20-23

The book of Haggai ends with a roar. Some have even found this last oracle to be a puzzling conclusion to the Haggai saga.<sup>160</sup> The prophet employs political and military language in a message delivered directly to Zerubbabel. God is going to "Shake the heavens and the earth" (v. 21), "overthrow the throne of kingdoms," and "destroy the

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<sup>160</sup>Meadowcroft, *Haggai*, 198.

strength of the kingdoms of the nations” (v. 22). YHWH leaves Zerubbabel – Israel’s pseudo-king – with this political and royal message to renew Israel’s messianic hope. Through the re-establishment of the Temple and the return of the Davidic line to Jerusalem, the hope of the eternal king (2 Sam 7:16; Ps 110:1) lives on. Haggai’s prophecy will find its fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth, who is the King of kings.

### **Contextual Horizon**

Haggai 2:20-23 is a terse, yet full, royal declaration of the coming Kingdom of God. The pericope can be split into three subsections. Verses 20-21a set the scene for the final oracle. Verses 21b-22 describe God’s actions toward the heathen nations that rage against his throne. And finally, verse 23 declares the action that God will take toward his king and kingdom.

**Verses 20-21a.** Haggai preaches his fourth, and final sermon on the same day as his third (Haggai 2:10, 20). This must have been an important day for the restored people of God.<sup>161</sup> The word of YHWH comes a second time to Haggai on that day. The passivity of the prophet is once again pronounced. Haggai did not concoct his message; it came to him. The “coming” of the Word of God has been the driving force of the entire book of Haggai; this final pericope is no exception.

Haggai is directed to speak specifically to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah. There would certainly be implications for Joshua, the high priest, and the rest of the people, but the central concern of this sermon is the royal son of David.<sup>162</sup> The imperial

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<sup>161</sup>Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 66.

<sup>162</sup>See Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 82-83. Petterson argues that Joshua would have been implicitly included in the previous oracle (Hag 2:10-19) to the priests. If that is true, then it’s not surprising that Zerubbabel is dealt with individually here because it balances the rest of the oracles where both men are addressed. Petterson could be correct, but it does not matter either way. The solo emphasis on Zerubbabel in this final pericope pertains to his Davidic heritage that will culminate in the coming of the messiah, Jesus, who will rule God’s throne forever.

tenor of the message validates the choice of Zerubbabel as recipient. He currently occupies the Davidic office, for he is the son of David by family and via vocation. The irony is that Zerubbabel should be king but he is not; he is governor. Darius is the king (Haggai 1:1). That may be true for Israel at this time, but it will not last forever.

**Verses 21b-22.** YHWH thunders again that he is about to “shake the heavens and the earth.” This is certainly a recapitulation of the language used in Haggai 2:6.<sup>163</sup> In both sections the “flow of words is from cosmos to nations.”<sup>164</sup> This is not surprising because it is the same God giving the same message to the same people – Israel must rebuild the Temple for the hope of their salvation and the glory of God. Hill rightly notes that the three key elements of Haggai’s eschatology are (1) the restored glory of the second Temple (2:6-9); (2) divine judgment in the “shaking of the nations” (2:6-9, 20-22); and (3) the restoration of Davidic leadership for Israel (v. 23).<sup>165</sup> Two of these elements are found in this final pericope, and the triple-corded thread is weaved in and out of the whole narrative.

When God shakes his creation, he will overthrow the throne of kingdoms and destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations. The prophet’s language is similar to language used to describe the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:25).<sup>166</sup> It is “battle imagery drawn from Israel’s heritage.”<sup>167</sup> Just as God “overturned” Sodom and Gomorrah and preserved Abraham and Lot, so will he overturn the nations for the

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<sup>163</sup>The LXX even adds “and the sea and the dry land,” which appears to be an effort to synchronize this verse with Hag 2:6. See Meadowcroft, *Haggai*, 202.

<sup>164</sup>Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 161.

<sup>165</sup>Hill, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 94.

<sup>166</sup>See Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 162, and Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 143.

<sup>167</sup>Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 162.

preservation of his people, Israel. YHWH is not a passive deity, but a warrior-king, who will fight for his bride.<sup>168</sup>

Redditt confesses that “throne of kingdoms” may refer to Darius, and “kingdoms of the nations” may refer to Persia, but it is more likely that the terms refer to the gentile nations in general.<sup>169</sup> God’s universal sovereignty is not unique to the book of Haggai, but is foundational to the entire Hebrew Scriptures (and the Christian canon, for that matter). From the very first page of the Bible, God is the creator-king who spoke the universe into existence (Gen 1). He created mankind in his image and issued a divine decree (Gen 2). Psalms 2 and 110 both describe what YHWH will do to foreign kings and their nations if they do not acknowledge him and his king.<sup>170</sup> Haggai’s announcement that God is going to “shake” the cosmos into submission is not unanticipated, in fact, it is in line with the history of God’s people.

Haggai then states that God will overthrow chariots and their riders. Once again, the prophet is invoking the Exodus to paint his redemptive masterpiece. Hearing of chariots and riders would certainly evoke images of the Exodus for God’s people (Exod 14:26-31).<sup>171</sup> Israel has experienced a type of second Exodus as they have come out of exile. Questions of covenant faithfulness, the Davidic throne, and the Temple clouded their national psyche, and again YHWH reminds them that he lovingly delivered them.

These enemy soldiers will go down, “every one by the sword of his brother.” There was a well-documented history of fratricide in the Persian saga.<sup>172</sup> Haggai is

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<sup>168</sup>For a full theology of the divine warrior theme in Scripture, see Phillip Ross Bethancourt, “Christ the Warrior King: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Analysis of the Divine Warrior Theme in Christology” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011).

<sup>169</sup>Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 32.

<sup>170</sup>Peterson, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 84.

<sup>171</sup>Hill, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 203.

<sup>172</sup>Wolff, *Haggai*, 103-4.

emphasizing that “the powerful and violent will ultimately put an end to one another in their panic.”<sup>173</sup> Persia will not rule over Israel forever, in fact, from the inside out they will destroy one another. This is true of any nation that does not serve God’s king. They cannot help but self-destruct because idolatry is unsustainable. Only when the peoples’ affections, attitude, and actions are yielded to God’s king, can any nation experience the good life.

**Verse 23.** After Haggai 2:6-7, the final verse of the book is certainly the most debated. The prophet ends his sermon baptizing Zerubbabel in a river of royal expectation. God declares that on the day that he shakes the cosmos he will take Zerubbabel and make him like a signet ring.<sup>174</sup> Zerubbabel would have known exactly what YHWH meant when he evoked the signet ring. This is a clear allusion to, or continuation of Jeremiah 22:24-25.<sup>175</sup> God had threatened to take the Davidic signet ring off of his finger because of Israel’s unfaithfulness. The result of the ring’s removal was the Exile. Under Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim, David’s throne was left vacant. Now the word has come that it will not remain eternally empty.

The Lord had removed the signet ring for a time, but now Zerubbabel will be made like a signet ring; the throne will be restored. Lest the people of Israel make the mistake of thinking that this restoration is of their own power, Haggai makes it clear that YHWH alone has the right to remove and restore his signet ring. The three verbs in this verse – take, make, and chosen – all describe the action of God. YHWH will *take* Zerubbabel and *make* him like a signet ring because YHWH *had chosen* him. God will do

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<sup>173</sup>Ibid., 104.

<sup>174</sup>See Wolff, *Haggai*, 100. The phrase “declares YHWH (נִאֶמַר יְהוָה)” occurs 376 times in the OT: 12 of the occurrences (3 percent) are found in the book of Haggai. The Word of God is the foundation of Haggai’s content and application.

<sup>175</sup>Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 230-31.

the hard work of restoring Israel's king. Zerubbabel, who is a son of David, would now restore David's place. Petersen paraphrases the verse thus: "I set you as a signet on my right hand and, in so doing, designate you as my earthly representative, equivalent to a king in significance."<sup>176</sup>

The signet ring represents not only the authority of God's king, but also the security of God's kingdom. James Boice eloquently explains, "God was going to place the governor on his finger or hang him around his neck so that, though the nations and even heaven and earth should be shaken, Zerubbabel would remain safe."<sup>177</sup> Haggai's words may have seemed absurd to this small band of Israelites who were still under Persian reign, but these are the words they were given. Not only would the throne be restored, but it would last. God's kingdom would outlast every other kingdom.

What are interpreters to make of this concluding word to Zerubbabel? Is it unfulfilled? Zerubbabel never reigned as a king in Jerusalem. Redditt concludes that Haggai was "too optimistic."<sup>178</sup> He hoped for the reign of Zerubbabel, but it never came. Meadowcroft seeks to relieve Zerubbabel of the burden of anticipation by arguing that there was no messianic expectation attached to the message.<sup>179</sup> Meyers and Meyers simply state that the oracle was never fulfilled.<sup>180</sup> How does one understand this majestic language that ends Haggai's ministry? Readers fall into error, as Redditt does, when they avoid the covenantal and canonical horizons of interpretation. Haggai's prophecy is not unfulfilled when read in light of the metanarrative of the Bible.

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<sup>176</sup>Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*, 104.

<sup>177</sup>Boice, *The Minor Prophets*, 2:480-81.

<sup>178</sup>Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 34.

<sup>179</sup>Meadowcroft, *Haggai*, 206-7. Meadowcroft argues that the phrase, "on that day" oscillates between historical and eschatological expectation. Because Zerubbabel is not viewed as a messianic figure, the oracle is not a failed prophecy.

<sup>180</sup>Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 70.



## Covenantal Horizon

The covenantal problem being addressed in this specific pericope is whether YHWH will remain faithful to his promise. He promised King David that his throne would be established forever (2 Sam 7:16). God's people need a king to rule their hearts, hands, and hopes. The book of Judges chronicles how the kingdom suffers when there is no king (Judg 21:25). In Haggai 2:20-23, Israel receives a resounding "yes" to the question of whether the Davidic covenant still stands.

Haggai resurrects language used of David and then cloaks it around Zerubbabel.<sup>181</sup> YHWH *took* (תָּקַח) David from shepherding the flock to ruling Israel (2 Sam 7:8; Ps 78:70). There are Davidic overtones to the phrase, "my servant," which is used thirty-one times of David, including twice in 2 Samuel 7 (vv. 5, 8; cf. Pss 78:70; 89:3; 132:10; Isa 42:1; 53:11; Ezek 34:23; 37:24).<sup>182</sup> Zerubbabel is the son of Shealtiel, which places him in the Davidic line (1 Chr 3:17), and David was *chosen* by YHWH (1 Sam 16:8-12; 2 Sam 6:21; Ps 78:70; Isa 42:1). Haggai is unequivocally affirming that the Davidic covenant is alive and well and will continue through Zerubbabel.

Even with an understanding of the covenantal horizon, the question remains: is the prophecy unfulfilled? Zerubbabel never ruled as king of Israel. The answer is found not in the historic Zerubbabel, but the eschatological Zerubbabel.<sup>183</sup> Haggai's prophecy is realized in true Son of David who would come from Zerubbabel's line. But this reality is only realized by moving to the canonical horizon of scriptural interpretation.

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<sup>181</sup>Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 84-85.

<sup>182</sup>See Stephen G. Dempster, "The Servant of the Lord," in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity*, ed. Scott Hafemann and Paul House (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 128-78.

<sup>183</sup>Merrill, *Haggai*, 720.

## Canonical Horizon

There is organic fulfillment of this text through the picture, or type, or king that YHWH promised to make Zerubbabel. Jesus Christ is the true and final king who will rule the hearts, hands, and hopes of God's people. Those who bemoan the failure of Haggai's prophecy fail to see the canonical context within which this pericope resides. Ever since Genesis 3:15, and specifically within the line of David, the messianic hopes of Israel were transferred down via descendants.<sup>184</sup> The Davidic covenant was initially fulfilled in the birth of Solomon, but continued to live on through his sons. This is what is happening in the sermon to Zerubbabel. The charred remains of the messianic expectation have been all but extinguished by the Exile. Now YHWH reignites the Edenic flame through the line of Zerubbabel. Jesus is the son of Zerubbabel, the son of David (Matt 1:1, 6, 12-13, 16).

Zerubbabel is certainly a forefather of Jesus, but this is not his only role in the drama of redemption; he is also a type of Christ. It is beyond doubt that Zerubbabel is a type of a greater one to come.<sup>185</sup> The language applied to Zerubbabel does not merely harken back to King David, but it also peers forward to King Jesus. Phrases like, "Servant of YHWH," and "chosen," are not simply Davidic, but they are also messianic.<sup>186</sup> Jesus is the *servant* who was *chosen* by God (Matt 12:15-21; cf. Luke 22:37). In Zerubbabel, the people of Israel have a signpost pointing them forward to one who would rule as the king of God's people.

While Zerubbabel is not technically ruling as the king of Israel, he is a sort of neo-king who stands as an ambassador between YHWH and Israel in their post-exilic situation. He will rule their hands as he leads them in rebuilding the Temple. He will rule

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<sup>184</sup>Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 141.

<sup>185</sup>Merrill, *Haggai*, 719.

<sup>186</sup>Kaiser, *Micah-Malachi*, 280-81.

their hearts as he leads them in righteousness. He will rule their hopes as the covenantal promise is regenerated under his administration. Fries sums up the optimistic atmosphere, “What was initially a kingdom in shambles, slowly dying in its disobedience, is now a robust and blessed kingdom, led well by a repentant and God-focused leader. The miserable has been made majestic, which is the power of God’s redemptive activity.”<sup>187</sup> Through his death and resurrection, Jesus has inaugurated the Kingdom of God and presently rules as the king of the cosmos. He has ascended to the right hand of the Father (Acts 7:55-56; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22; Rev 3:21). Jesus is the King of kings (Rev 19:16), and one day every knee will bow and tongue will confess his kingship (Phil 2:10-11).

### **Contemporary Horizon**

As the king of God’s people, and the head of the New Covenant, Jesus rules the hands, hearts, and hopes of God’s people today. Haggai 2:20-23 reminds the church that God is faithful even when the church cannot see how his promises will immediately come to fruition. Zerubbabel was not the king described in this prophecy, but God was working to bring about his purposes through Christ. Today, in the same way, even when Christians cannot see how God’s promises will be realized, they can trust that he will keep his promises.

Since the church now lives under the New Covenant with Jesus as king, he rules the hands of his people. Like Zerubbabel led the people of God to obey God (through the rebuilding of the second Temple), Jesus is the righteous king who leads his people in obedience to the Father. Because Jesus is the King of kings, his followers owe him complete allegiance. His will governs the work of their hands. Following King Jesus means death to self and complete submission to the law of Christ (Matt 16:24-25).

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<sup>187</sup>Fries, Rummage, and Gallaty, *Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi*, 78.

Jesus is not only the king of his saints' hands, or deeds, but he is also the king of their hearts. Haggai's promise to Zerubbabel would have brought joy to the hearts of the Israelites because God's plan of redemption would continue through him. In the same way, the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant in Christ Jesus brings joy to his New Covenant people. Jesus governs their affections. The first and greatest commandment given to the covenant people was to love God with all their heart, soul, and mind (Deut 6:4-5; Matt 22:34-40; Luke 10:26-28). Not only did Jesus do that on behalf of his people, but, through his Spirit, he also enables them to love God. God created mankind to follow his king. Now that Jesus reigns as the king of God's kingdom, he rules the hearts of God's people righteously.

Jesus not only rules the hands, or deeds, of his people, and the hearts, or affections, of his people, but he also rules the hopes of his people. Hope may be the most prominent theme in Haggai's entire saga. The people of God have hope that the gospel promise lives on. This final pericope is the most hopeful yet. Zerubbabel will bring about God's king. Zerubbabel stood as a living beacon of hope for the covenant people in that day. Now, under the New Covenant, King Jesus stands as the hope for his people. Children of God have hope that Jesus will one day return to recreate the world (Rev 21-22). This hope is based on his sinless life, substitutionary death, resurrection, and ascension. Because Jesus is the first born of the New Creation and because he is ruling the church and the world currently (Col 1:18), there is hope that his kingdom will one day be fully consummated and all things will finally and fully be united in Christ (Eph 1:9-10).

### **Conclusion**

The book of Haggai finds its *telos* in Christ Jesus. This chapter has proven that when an exegete examines the book of Haggai through the four horizons of Christ-centered preaching (Contextual, Covenantal, Canonical, and Contemporary), it is clear

that this terse tome is only properly understood in light of the Christ event. Jesus Christ is the true Israelite, he is the great leader of God's people, he is the final Temple, he brings the ultimate cleansing to the covenant people, and he is the eschatological king of God's Kingdom. Now that the Christocentric exegesis is complete, chapter five will provide five sermons that are the results of this hermeneutic. These sermons will put flesh to bone, homiletic to hermeneutic. The thesis will now commit the preaching into Christ-centered *preaching*.

CHAPTER 5  
CHRIST-CENTERED SERMONS FROM  
THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

**Introduction**

The question of this thesis is not merely how should the book of Haggai be interpreted in a Christocentric manner, but how the book of Haggai be preached in a Christocentric manner. It is not simply a matter of hermeneutics, but also a matter of homiletics. This chapter answers that question with five Christ-centered sermon manuscripts derived from the book of Haggai. Each sermon will align with the natural pericopal divisions of the book. Also, each homily will be loosely structured according to a three-point grid – original meaning, gospel connection, and contemporary application.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter does not contend that this is the only way to preach Christ from the book of Haggai. It is simply applying the exegesis of chapter four, which organically demonstrated how to see Christological fulfillment in the book of Haggai. This is but one way to preach Christ from the book of Haggai. Every preacher will have different emphases based upon his church and that season in the life of the church, but one thing is certain, Christian preaching from the book of Haggai must be centered in Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This tri-structural grid does not mean that every sermon will have these three points. Every sermon is structured differently based on the demands of the text and the homiletical choices of the preacher. All of these elements will be included in every sermon, though not always spelled out. This is especially true when the sermon is received aurally, and not read.

<sup>2</sup>These five sermons were preached sporadically at Christ Community Church (formerly Heritage Baptist Church) of Sterling Heights, Michigan, from October 15, 2015 – April 3, 2016.

### **Consider Your Ways: The House of God, HGTV, and Heritage Baptist Church (Haggai 1:1-11)**

My wife, Bethany, really enjoys watching HGTV. Her current favorite show is *Fixer Upper*. She loves Chip and Jo Jo. If you're unfamiliar with the series, in every episode Chip and Joanna Gaines are tasked with making a broken down house beautiful. The job of the hosts is to find a house for a local buyer in Waco, Texas and then make it livable for them. Chip and his crew do all of the construction and then Joanna does the interior decorating. Every episode ends with a big reveal where the buyers are given a tour of the remodeled house. We live the reveal with the homebuyers as the audience is given a side-by-side comparison of what the house originally looked like and the home that it has become. This is the mission of the Gaines'. They seek to restore fixer uppers; they want to make shabby, old houses homes. The only reason to watch the show is to see how Chip and Joanna take these houses that are in ruins and make them beautiful and worthy of adoration.

Can you imagine if Chip and Jo Jo didn't do anything to the dilapidated houses and, at the end of the episode, the house looked just as bad as it did when they found it? Can you imagine if they told the buyers that they were too busy working on their own home renovations to do their job? "We'll get to your house when Magnolia Farms is done." That show would be terrible! It would be pointless. No one would watch it. They would be out of a job.

Now imagine something far more important. What if the people of God had been commissioned with rebuilding the house of God and they had neglected it to work on their own houses. What if the covenant, and, in turn, the plan of redemption, was intricately tied to the house of God for the nation of Israel, and they had left the Temple in ruins while they redecorated their own homes. This is the situation that we find as we open our Bibles to Haggai 1:1-11. After the Exile, the people of Israel were supposed to rebuild YHWH's temple upon return to Jerusalem. There is nothing more important to these people than the construction of the Temple because the Temple is where YHWH

dwells. It is where the people worshiped. It was a picture to the outside world to let them know that the one true God of the universe lived among the nation of Israel and that the covenant was still intact. But the people didn't rebuild God's house. They had been neglecting God's house and there had been consequences.

Believers today can be guilty of the same neglect. We can become so busy with our own lives that we neglect Jesus and his house. This story from Haggai shows us that the only way that we can enjoy God's blessing is to be faithful to his place – the community of faith, the church. God's people can only experience God's blessing when they are zealous for God's place. God blesses believers through the local church.

### **The Problem**

The book of Haggai opens up with the setting and the characters. The story takes place on the first day of the sixth month of Darius' second year on the throne of Persia. This would be the 29<sup>th</sup> of August, 520 BC. The Israelites have returned from the Exile and they are back in Jerusalem, which is under Persian rule. The simple dating of the book is a reminder that things are not the way that they're supposed to be. Many other OT prophetic books open up with a date based on the king of Israel, but there is no king of Israel here. It is the second year of Darius, king of Persia. God's people are being ruled by a foreign entity; they need restoration indeed.

The main actors of Haggai's drama are the leaders and the remnant of the people. Zerubbabel is the governor of the province, Joshua is the high priest, and Haggai is the prophet. Haggai, whose name means "feast," stands up to preach to the people on the first day of the month, which was a holiday, and he addresses their dilemma.

The people of Israel have neglected to build the Temple for the last sixteen years. In verse two, God plays back the tape and uses their own words against them. They have said that it is "not the right time yet." He stresses their issue with time. They know the Temple must be rebuilt, they just think it isn't the right time. There are a number of



possible reasons why they may have thought that they shouldn't rebuild the Temple. First, they were facing pressure from other nations not to rebuild the Temple. Not only did they face persecution, but they also had property disputes between those who had gone into exile and those who stayed in Jerusalem. On top of those two reasons, they also had to reestablish themselves in the land and rebuild their own homes after the Exile. All of these reasons may seem legitimate, but the point is that God is not impressed with their reasons. They have been neglecting his temple; they have not been zealous for YHWH's house. That's why God does not call the Israelites "his people," but he calls them "these people." The demonstrative pronoun is damning in this instance. Israel has not been acting like "God's people." They have been practically rejecting God by neglecting his house.

The lack of zeal for the Temple was a problem for Israel because they needed the Temple to fulfill their covenant obligations. The Temple is where YHWH dwells. It is where they offered sacrifices. It was the picture to the nations of the true and living God. Without the Temple, they couldn't follow the law or experience YHWH's presence; they couldn't truly be covenant people.

### **The Results**

Haggai tells us why the people have neglected God's house and the consequences of neglecting God's house. First, the people have ignored the Temple because of their own idolatry. They have loved themselves more than they have loved God. The prophet says that the people are living in paneled houses while God is homeless. They are living in comfort while the house of the LORD is in ruins. This is a dramatic reversal of what happened with their king, David (2 Sam 7:5-16). David was ashamed that he lived in a paneled house while God had no home, but Nathan told David that he must wait to build the Temple. Here, there is a reversal. The people are living in nice homes and neglecting God's house. The prophet rebukes their negligence.

The problem in the book of Haggai is the same problem that seeps from the pages of the Bible. People love other things more than they love God. In the garden, Adam loved himself more than God and that's why he disobeyed God's Word. The history of Israel is replete with story after story of God's people choosing themselves over the Lord. This story is no different. The people have loved their comfort more than God. They have been zealous for their own house and not the house of God. The idolatry of their hearts is made visible by the idleness of their hands. This problem may have not been evident to the people. Their difficult circumstances were real. Their lives were being threatened. They were experiencing political and economic complications. But through Haggai, YHWH, the good physician, is diagnosing the real issue. All of these circumstances aren't the real problem. The circumstances are exposing the real problem, idolatry and self-love.

The result of their unfaithfulness has been economic hardship (verse 6). God informs them that this hardship is a direct consequence of their disobedience. We see that God is providentially disciplining his people for their sin. In verse 9, Haggai says that God blew away their resources. In verse 11, God called for the drought. Why? Because they have loved themselves more than God (verse 10). Haggai even uses a little Hebrew word play between the words ruins and drought. The people are experiencing a drought because the house is in ruins. These were the curses of the covenant. Israel had been unfaithful to their covenant with YHWH and they were now experiencing the curses that follow unfaithfulness.

### **The Solution**

If God's people are to make things right in their community then there are two steps they must take – (1) consideration, and (2) obedience. First, they must consider their ways. Twice in this pericope God calls on the people to consider. In verse 11, they're called to consider their current state of affairs. When they reflect on their

circumstance and the Word of God, they will see that they are in sin and that they must repent, believe, and obey. The LORD is shepherding the hearts of his people. He doesn't want them to blindly obey, like a dog that won't leave the yard for fear of being shocked by his collar. God wants his people to obey willingly and joyfully.

Consideration is not enough though. It must produce obedience. The people cannot simply consider. They must also go. They must go to the mountain, get the supplies, and rebuild the house. The result of their obedience will be the pleasure and glory of God. This is the reason for which God's people were called. The Westminster Shorter Catechism rightly proclaims that man exists to glorify God and enjoy him forever!<sup>3</sup> If the people want to make things right with God, they must consider and obey.

### **Gospel Connection**

The problem that God's people experienced in the book of Haggai was not a new problem. God's people have never had a proper zeal for his place, because of their sin. Throughout the history of Israel, the people have always struggled to love and understand the tabernacle and Temple because they struggled with idolatry; they struggled to love God with all of their heart. There is only one man in the history of humanity who has had true zeal for the place of God and he is Jesus of Nazareth. This is nowhere more evident than in John 2:13-17:

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, [Jesus] drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

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<sup>3</sup>Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, *The Evangelical Protestant Creeds* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), 676.

Jesus had zeal for God's house and confronted those who abused it (Matt 21:12-17; Luke 19:45-48). The interesting thing here is that Jesus did what the faithful Israelites *should have done*. If there had been faithful Israelites that were zealous for God's house in the first century, they wouldn't have allowed these moneychangers to come in and defile the Temple. None of them cared enough to fight for God's house. Just like the Israelites in Haggai's time didn't care enough, but Jesus did. He cared like they should've cared. Jesus did what Israel, and all other people, didn't and couldn't do. He truly loved, respected, obeyed, defended, and feared God's house. He offered perfect worship in God's presence and he brings true blessing to God's people as our representative. Jesus is the covenant Lord who demands obedience and zeal for God's presence, and he is also the true covenant keeper who is zealous for the house of God.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus didn't only die in our place, but he also lived in our place. He is the truest of humans, bearing God's image rightly in this world. Jesus fulfilled the law, which included a proper zeal for God's presence. Church, hear the gospel preached to you this morning. Now, by grace, the righteous life of Jesus is imputed to his people. When we trust in Christ by faith, God then looks at us and sees the righteousness of Jesus. Because that is true, we are freed to truly love the presence of God in our hearts and minds.

### **Application**

This is the good news, church. Because of the gospel, we can be zealous for the house of God too! Because we are in Christ, we can love God's place rightly. Apart from Jesus, we are dead and enslaved in sin, but Jesus frees us to love and worship God. Our affections are changed. This is how the story of Jesus connects our story to the story of Haggai 1:1-11. Jesus comes and he completely redefines the presence of God. There is no longer a temple where sacrifices must be offered, but the presence of God is in his church, the temple of the Holy Spirit. God's dwelling place has nothing to do with a

building but everything to do with his people. God's covenant presence demanded the Temple is Haggai's day because that was their covenantal situation. Our situation has changed because of the gospel. Now God dwells with his people in his church.

Church, we must also understand that our covenantal discipline will not be the same as Israel under the Mosaic economy, for we are members of the New Covenant. Unfaithfulness to the New Covenant will not yield drought and economic hardship but the Bible says that God disciplines his children (Heb 12:5-11). There are negative consequences for those who mishandle the bread and wine of the New Covenant (1 Cor 11:27-32). So, this morning the Word is not calling us all to move to Jerusalem and start building a third temple, so that we can avoid economic collapse. In fact, that would be sinful, because Jesus is the true and final temple. The Scripture beckons us this morning to build God's New Covenant place – the church!

Like the people of Israel, we must consider whether or not we are zealous for God's place. The phrase "consider your ways," in Hebrew literally reads, "set your heart upon your ways." The church is Jesus' body, and the rhythms and rituals of the church's liturgy help train our hearts to love God and neighbor better. Brothers and sisters, Jesus has left the Word, the bread, and the wine to help us inhabit the story of the gospel. Under the New Covenant, we consider – set our hearts upon – the gospel of Jesus every week together. We train ourselves and our children how to properly love Christ by inhabiting his story in a weekly, ecclesial way. But it won't happen if you forsake assembling together (Heb 10:25). Let God's Word be a catalyst for your schedule this morning. Do you value God's family? Does the body of Christ shape your family's schedule? Are you offering a living sacrifice to the temple of the Holy Spirit in a regular way (Rom 12:1-2)? Consider that this morning. Set your heart upon this gospel home.

Israel had a number of excuses to neglect YHWH's temple, and many of them seemed legitimate. So many Western Christians have what they believe to be legitimate excuses for their failure to immerse themselves in Jesus Christ's temple project. If Israel

was chastened for neglecting the Second Temple, how much more will believers be disciplined by God for neglecting his final temple, Jesus Christ, and his body, the church? Let the text sound a warning for us this morning, consider your ways! Is your heart inclined toward Christ and his boy, or are you building your own kingdom?

Second, the Bible is calling us to obey; simply obey. All that Jesus asks of his people is simple obedience. Walk worthy of the gospel every day. Like it was for Israel, God's blessing is tied to obedience in his place. God's place – his kingdom – is the church. Obey God by serving his family. Obey Christ by giving to his body. Obey the Spirit by praying for the members of his temple. If you are not building your life in the local church, then you are in disobedience to Jesus. Consider and obey this morning, not because you have to, but because you get to! The gospel is true. Jesus is alive. You are freed to consider and obey the gospel in this body.

### **Sermon Conclusion**

One of the things that people love about *Fixer Upper* is that the Gaines' are so excited about the work that they do. Chip and Jo Jo have fun rebuilding and redecorating dilapidated houses. The show isn't merely a behind-the-scenes look at a construction site. The fun and flirting of the hosts bring life to *Fixer Upper*. Not only do they work on the houses of their clients, but they do so zealously. Israel was not zealous for God's house and they experienced covenantal discipline. Church, let's be zealous for God's house. Let's love Christ's bride. Let's rejoice in our service to the temple of the Holy Spirit. Israel was building their houses to the neglect of God's house. Let me encourage you husbands and fathers this morning, build your houses within the context of God's house, the church.

God's people can only experience God's blessing when they are zealous for God's place. God's place in the New Covenant is the body of Christ – the temple of the Holy Spirit. There is no such thing as biblical Christianity that is disconnected from the

local church. The means of grace for gospel living are only found in the body. Don't neglect God's presence. Consider your ways. Obey. Look to Jesus, who had true zeal for the house of God. Rejoice that Jesus is Immanuel – God with us – and he has promised that he will never leave us or forsake us.

**Hear the Word. Love the Word. Obey the Word.  
(Haggai 1:12-15)**

One of the greatest Christmas movies of all time is the classic, *A Christmas Story*. The movie is full of great scenes; one of the best being when Flick sticks his tongue to the flagpole outside in the wintertime. Schwartz believes that if it's cold enough the tongue will stick to the pole. Flick digresses. Schwartz double-dog dares Flick to do it and everyone gets quiet. Ralphie, who is narrating as an adult, notes, "Now it was serious. A double-dog-dare. What else was there but a 'triple dare you'? And then, the coup de grace of all dares, the sinister triple-dog-dare."<sup>4</sup> Before anyone can say anything else, Swartz exclaims, "I TRIPLE-dog-dare ya!" The boys gasp as Ralphie reveals that this is a "slight breach of etiquette." Well, of course Flick can't resist a triple-dog-dare and his tongue gets stuck to the pole. The triple-dog-dare stirred something up inside the boy. He couldn't defy the dare when that challenge was laid down. Like a rousing political speech or the beauty of wedding vows, some statements affect us. They make us want to act.

If this is true of recess antics and political endeavors, how much more is it true of God? When God speaks to his people, it changes their hearts. It stirs their emotions and it reigns supreme on the seat of their affections. This brings about action. God's word moves from the head of his people, to the heart of his people and finally mobilizes the hands of his people. It makes them do things that they aren't normally given to do. In and

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<sup>4</sup>Bob Clark, *A Christmas Story*, DVD (Los Angeles: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1983), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0085334/fullcredits/>.

of ourselves we're given to selfishness, but when we experience God's grace, we change. This is what we see here in Haggai 1:12-15. The prophet Haggai has rebuked the people for their disregard of God's house in chapter 1:1-11. He explained to them that they are experiencing agricultural and economic hardship because of their sin and now God's word stirs their affections and brings them to obedience. God's people hear his word, they love his word, and they obey his word.

### **Hear**

The people hear God's word because it comes with his authority. When the prophet of God speaks, it's as if God himself is speaking. Haggai is God's prophet, the Lord's ambassador, YHWH's angel. He is his messenger. He is not merely speaking of his own accord, as a political leader or something of the sort, but he is communicating to the people as God's representative. Verse 12 says that the people "obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him." Haggai brings God's authority and they recognize it. This is still true for us when we hear the Bible. When we hear the Scripture being taught, preached, or lectured, we are hearing the words of Christ. It is as if Jesus himself is standing here speaking them. Every letter in the Bible is red.

This is important because the content of Haggai's message would not be that meaningful unless it was coming from YHWH himself. God promises his people that he will always be with them. Verse 12 also says that Israel heard the message and it made them fear. The word "obeyed" in the ESV can also be translated "heard." When Israel heard how their disobedience had brought about cursing, it caused them to fear. The end of verse 12 reads, "And the people were afraid before the face of YHWH."<sup>5</sup> They are afraid because they understand the weight of their disobedience and the power of God.

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<sup>5</sup>This is my own translation.



But God does not continue to condemn them; he assures them. God does this throughout the Scripture. When his people fear, he gives them the promise “I am with you.” Just as God promised to Jacob, Moses, Joshua, and others, now he assures Israel again that he is with them. This promise has nothing to do with what theologians call God’s omnipresence (the teaching that God is everywhere at once). YHWH is re-establishing his covenantal presence with his people.

Some nights, we’ll be getting the kids ready for bed and they will have left their blankets downstairs. Bethany will tell Alex, Jr. to go get his blanket and he won’t want to go alone because he’s afraid. The lights are already turned off downstairs and he doesn’t want to go down alone in the dark. Even when we assure him that there’s nothing down there, he’s still afraid. He wants one of us to go with him. Our presence is comforting to him. Everything is “ok” if mom or dad is there. This is infinitely truer with God and his people. God’s people can move forward knowing that he was in their midst once again.

## **Love**

But Israel did not simply hear God’s word, when they heard the word their hearts were changed and they loved the word. Now there is a sense in which this is not something that they could do on their own. Verse 14 says that God stirred up the spirits of the leaders and the people. The reason that their hearts were changed is because God changed them. In the same way, we are stubborn and hard-hearted. We have to cry out to God to change our hearts. This is why we pray that God would soften the hearts of unbelievers so that they might receive the gospel. God must move for his word to be effective.

With that being said, don’t fall into the trap of thinking that because God stirred their spirits that they were unwilling robots. When God changes a heart, it is genuinely changed. Because the people were stirred up, they genuinely wanted to build

the Temple. I used to dislike watching baseball. I thought that it was boring and slow. Football and basketball always seemed like more fun. Well, when my brother Andrew started taking an interest in watching baseball, he would talk to me about it and eventually we'd start watching it together. I saw how he enjoyed it and I wanted to enjoy it with him. He won my affections for baseball. Now, I genuinely like to watch baseball. I will watch the Tigers without him. I don't just watch the game to appease him anymore; he changed my heart toward the game. In a much larger way, the affections of the people are legitimately changed because God has spoken to them and he is with them.

### **Obey**

After the people heard the word and loved the word, it caused them to obey the word. Verse 14 goes on to say that, "they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God." Notice that Haggai calls YHWH, "their God." This is covenantal language. In their disobedience, the people were living like practical atheists. Now, they are re-oriented toward their God. Haggai gives us the precise date of when this happened because it was important to the nation. Like an anniversary or birthday that is celebrated in the life of a family, this was a day to remember. Not many OT prophets experienced the success of Haggai. The people actually repented and obeyed the words of the prophet. This is rare among OT prophets. Haggai gives us some insight into why this was the case. It's hard to see in English, but in Hebrew there is a word play between the words, "messenger," "message," and "work." Haggai is God's messenger who brings God's message that causes the people to do God's work. The people obeyed because God moved in them. He made their hearts believe.

### **Gospel Connection**

When we take a step back and understand the redemptive context here, we realize that Haggai is telling us something much bigger than simply that the people needed to erect a building. Haggai prophesies in the time between the Davidic covenant

and the promised New Covenant. Israel had experienced David's rule and knew that a better king was coming. They also knew that God had promised a New Covenant that would be written not on stone but on their hearts. This was a precarious intermediate time where the people had come out of exile but they still felt like they were in a sort of spiritual exile. They needed the new king and the new covenant.

In Haggai 1:12-15, God changed the hearts of his people and led them in obedience through their leaders – the prophet, priest and a neo-king. Notice that YHWH speaks through his prophet, Haggai, and uses the priest, Joshua, and the neo-king, Zerubbabel to motivate and mobilize his people. This beautiful picture is a signpost pointing Israel to what God was going to do in the future. A day would come, hundreds of years later, when the true prophet, priest, and king would come to God's people. His name was Jesus of Nazareth. He would not only lead the people in obedience but he would purchase obedience on their behalf. Not only would he be the covenant Lord, but he would also be the covenant keeper. Because of his obedience, his people now have the liberty to obey without fear.

### **Application**

Because Jesus is the true Israel and those who follow him are the new Israel, we are connected to this text and what God calls his people to do. Just like Israel was God's people, in God's place, under God's rule, we are too! So, like Israel was called to physically build YHWH's temple, we are called to spiritually build the temple of the Holy Spirit – the church. Ephesians 4:12 says that Jesus' vision statement for his church is "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." Because the gospel is true this morning, I have three questions of application for us about building the church. The first question is do you pray for the church? Israel was God's people in God's place under God's rule at that point in redemptive history. We are God's people in God's place under God's rule at this point. The NT tells us that Jesus is the true

temple and because we are in him that the church is the temple of the Holy Spirit. If that's true, then for us to build the temple means to build the church. One way to do that is to pray for the church. So I ask again, do you pray for the church?

Examples abound in Scripture of church leaders praying for people, people praying for church leaders and people praying for other people. As we saw last week, Jesus himself prays for the church (John 17). Do you pray for these people? Not just in corporate settings on Sunday and Wednesday. When God brings someone to your mind do you lift him or her up to him? Do you pray for the spiritual health of the homes represented here? Do you pray for gospel witness in this community? Do you pray for the Elders who lead this flock?

A second question is do you give to the church? Jesus said that where your treasure is your heart will be also (Matt 6:21). Do you give? If you were to look at a percentage of where your total income went this past year, where would local church giving be on that list? Are you building your own paneled house and neglecting the house of God?

A final question is, do you serve the church? Do you come to work on the house of the Lord? Giving of your treasure is not enough. Jesus calls us to be a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1). Where do you give your time and talents? Is your time too valuable to be wasted on God's people? Are there more important things to spend your energy on than the bride of Christ? Do you find many things more worthy of energy and effort than the temple of the Holy Spirit?

### **Sermon Conclusion**

The great promise of God that mobilized his people through his prophet, priest, and king was that He was with them. We have the true prophet, priest and king who promised to never leave us. In Matthew 28:20, Jesus, who is "God with us" said, "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Church, Jesus is with us! Let us

come and work on the house of the Lord. Those words carry power. They create a love and desire for Jesus. They are words that motivate and mobilize, even more than a triple dog dare.

**Make the Temple Great Again: God's Power, Peace,  
and Presence in Jesus Christ (Haggai 2:1-9)**

Many people view the past with rose-colored vision. They look back to former times like there was nothing wrong, or at least things were better than they are now. Times used to be good. Jane Austen sums up the thought well in a quote from her work, *Pride & Prejudice* “you must learn some of my philosophy. Think only of the past as its remembrance gives you pleasure.”<sup>6</sup> We can be prone to view the past unrealistically. The present is dim and the future is darker still. If only we could go back to the way things used to be. That’s the whole premise of the GOP platform in this 2016 election cycle. Things are terrible, we need to make them good again. The Republican frontrunner, Donald Trump is spearheading the effort and promising to “Make America Great Again.” The premise of his slogan is that America used to be great and it’s not anymore. Whether people reminisce about how much they loved Ronald Reagan or their nostalgia goes back further to men like Lincoln, Jefferson, and Washington, the sentiment is that the past was bright and the future is dim.

Whether you’re a Trump supporter or not, this romanticism is unhealthy. This is the melancholy that Israel was feeling in Haggai 2:1-9. Haggai had called them to rebuild the Temple in chapter 1:1-11 and in chapter 1:12-15 they actually obeyed and started working on the Temple. Chapter 2 opens and about a month has passed and the people are stalled. They have realized the magnitude of the task and they remember the glory of how the Temple used to be. In this pericope, Haggai gives the people a word of

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<sup>6</sup>Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2005), 356.

hope to know that the best is yet to come. God's people do not have to be afraid because they have God's power, God's presence, and God's peace in his temple.

### **The Past**

The people of Israel went to work on the Temple on September 21<sup>st</sup> and now it is October 17, 520 BC. Not much has been accomplished yet for a number of reasons. First of all, there's the enormity of the task. Rebuilding the Temple would be a massive job; they would have to clear rubble, collect supplies, and prepare blueprints. A second reason for the delay would be that the crops would be coming in for the season. It was autumn and the people would need to harvest their crops to survive. The third reason for the delay would be the holidays and festivals that they were required to observe. As we peek into the scene of Haggai 2:1-9, the people are celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles and Haggai speaks to them on the next-to-last day of the celebration.

As the people stand at the ruins of God's house, they are reminded of its former glory and this depresses them. In his address, Haggai asks the people three questions about their memory of the Temple (vs. 3). There probably would have been older people in the crowd who actually remembered Solomon's temple. They would have seen the Temple before its destruction and these ruins are a sad sight. But he's also speaking to the collective memory of the people. As a community, Israel knew the glorious stories of the Temple and now it lies before them in shambles. This would speak to the national collective memory, like the American memory of WWII. I personally wasn't there to witness D-Day, but I'm part of the nation that remembers. This was similar for Israel. If you want an idea of the beauty of the Temple, read 1 Kings 6 and you'll see why they're downcast.

The Temple is now in ruins. It is as nothing in their eyes. Describing the syntax of Haggai's statement, one theologian retorts, "The temple and nothing are the same

thing!”<sup>7</sup> This scene is reminiscent of Ezra 3:8-13, where the younger people rejoiced at the erection of the Temple building and the older people wept because they remembered the first Temple. The task before them now seemed impossible and pointless. They could never have what they had before.

### **The Present**

In the midst of seeming hopelessness, God speaks. He encourages his people with two imperatives – be strong and work! Thrice he commands them to be strong. This harkens back to his call to Joshua to “be strong” as he leads the people into the Promised Land (Josh 1:1-9). It is as if the people have come out of exile and now they are being led into a new Promised Land and they need to be strong as their fathers were strong. Though their strength and courage are not merely ceremonial. They must be strong to do the work that YHWH has called them to do – build God’s house. Like Adam in the garden and Israel in the Promised Land, they are called to cover God’s place with his glory like the waters cover the sea (Hab 2:14). This is the Temple’s purpose. It will make YHWH famous among the nations!

God’s Word then dismounts their fear. They can only be strong and work because God is with them. He reiterates the covenantal language that he used in Haggai 1:12-15. He is present among his people. God specifically invokes imagery from the Exodus to remind them of where they’ve been. They can’t give in to defeat simply because they remember what the Temple used to be like. They must remember further back than that. YHWH is their God who delivered them from Egypt and he is their God now.

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<sup>7</sup>Richard A. Taylor and Ray Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2004), 151.

## **The Future**

God gives his people hope to follow him by promising them his power, his presence, and his peace. First, he says that he's going to shake the entire world and bring in the treasures of the nations. The Temple had lost all of its goods when it was plundered decades earlier. Now some of those treasures will be restored. With that stated, what Haggai is truly emphasizing here is the sovereignty of God. God has the right to plunder the nations because the gold and the silver belong to him; he owns all things. God's people don't have to fear because he is sovereign over all.

Not only can God's people rely on his power but they can also depend upon his presence. YHWH says in verse 4 that he is with them and he also says in verse 7 that he will fill the Temple with his glory. The word "glory" speaks to God's weight, substance, and authority. He carries the most weight of any ruler in history and he is present with his people.

The final promise that God gives his people is peace. This is the word *shalom*. It does not merely speak to the absence of war or violence, but to wholeness and completeness. What's more, this is what Adam had in the Garden of Eden and he lost through sin. The peace that was lost through our rebellion will be restored through God's covenant. *Shalom* will be restored!

## **Gospel Connection**

God had promised his power, presence, and peace through his place – the Temple. As we move further along in history, we realize that God's promise was much bigger than a building in Palestine. John 1:14 tells us that Jesus became a man and literally "tabernacled" among his people. Matthew 12:6 says that Jesus is the one who is "greater than the temple." Turn to John 2:18-22 to see how Jesus fulfills the Temple to the people,

So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" Jesus



answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Jesus is the true temple. The Temple was pointing to him. When Haggai says “the glory of God’s house will be greater than the former,” he’s pointing us to Christ! There has not been a temple in Jerusalem since AD 70 and there never will be again. Why? Because Jesus is the true temple. He is God’s presence among his people. We have access to God through Christ. This was started with his death and resurrection and will be completed at his second coming when he ushers in the New Creation. Turn to Hebrews 12:26-29. This is the only place in the NT where the book of Haggai is quoted. The author quotes Haggai 2:6,

At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

Haggai 2 is finally fulfilled in the judgment at the end. Someday Jesus is coming back to raise the dead, judge the world, and make all things new. Believer, this is your hope!

### **Application**

Brothers and sisters, because this is true, we do not have to be weary in work. God has always been with his people and he still is. This is true in the individual trials of your life. Whether it is a tough season in marriage, or rebellious children. Maybe you’re having financial issues, illness, or you’re struggling with your faith. God’s power, presence, and peace have been made manifest in the gospel of Jesus. Look to Jesus. Rest in Jesus. He is your personal prophet, priest, and king. He died and rose for you!

But Jesus’ work doesn’t stop there. Christianity is certainly personal, but it isn’t merely personal. Jesus died for a body, not simply for individuals. Jesus came for his bride, the church. His grace is made manifest among his people – the new temple of the

Holy Spirit. For Heritage, this means that we need to trust and rest in Jesus through trying times as a body, whether it is concern over the building debt or building issues like a roof or parking lot. When people leave the church, which always hurts, or when there is disunity among the brothers, Jesus needs to be the answer. He is God's power, presence, and peace for this church.

Jesus is not just Lord of the church though; he is the sovereign God of the world. That means that global issues are not above his pay grade. As we assess the condition of the world, it can be easy to say that this place is "going to hell in a hand basket," and things just aren't like they used to be. The redefinition of marriage, border issues, national debt, ISIS, gun violence, job loss, these are all issues that worry people. I want to comfort you this morning, while it is important to work for change; Jesus is God's power, presence, and peace for this hurting world. And, one day he is coming to make everything sad untrue.

### **Sermon Conclusion**

There certainly are elements of the past that were good. We should look back on those times with joy, but brothers and sisters, don't be confused. The joy of the past will pale in comparison to the hope of the future. "The future glory of this house will be greater than the former."

This is true because Jesus' kingdom has come with his death and resurrection. We're reminded of this every time we come to the table to commune with Jesus. He is God's power, God's presence, and God's peace for his people. Do not be afraid, church, Jesus is alive and Jesus is better!

### **Cleanliness Is Next to Godliness (Haggai 2:10-19)**

There's nothing worse than getting sick on vacation. It's terrible when you've waited and planned for months to take a trip, you've spent all of this money, everyone's excited, and then you get sick. This happened to our family when we went to Disney

World in September. It started with Haddon. He got sick one night. The next day, Alex threw up on our way back from the Magic Kingdom. That night, I got sick and was out of commission the whole next day. My downfall was trailed by Jack and then finally Bethany on our drive home. It was sad. It was because Haddon got sick, that we all got sick. His sickness spread to the entire family. You would think that we could've surrounded him with our cleanness and this could've prevented the spread of illness; after all, four clean people outnumber one sick person. But this isn't how it works, is it? Sickness spreads; health must be maintained.

This is the same principal that Haggai is teaching the people with his little parable. Covenantal purity must be maintained. Uncleanness, on the other hand, is transmittable. God's people have been given great promises for the future after they have recommitted to build the Temple, but they are not automatically clean now by osmosis. They are an unclean people and they are spreading their uncleanness with the works of their hands. They need to be made clean and God will give them hope of cleansing. God's people are made clean through Jesus.

### **Unclean People**

As we look to Haggai 2:10-19, we find ourselves on December 18, 520 BC, which is the three-month anniversary of when the Temple work began. It is on this day that YHWH will have Haggai give two more sermons, the first of which we will look at this morning. God has Haggai go to the priests and ask them two questions. We see the first question in verse 12. Haggai asks the priests if holiness is transferable. He begs the question of whether holy meat, carried in a garment, can make another object holy if it touches it. The answer is no. Holiness is not transferable under the Mosaic Law.

Haggai now asks the priests a second question. If someone was unclean and they touched another object, would the touched object become unclean? The answer is a resounding yes; uncleanness is transferable. Under the Mosaic covenant, contact with a

dead body, among other things, would make one unclean (Lev 11:24; Num 19:11).

Whatever they touched would then be unclean until they were ritually cleansed. This was a part of Israel's way of life for hundreds of years under the Sinai covenant.

Haggai gives this little Socratic parable to apply it to the people – Israel is unclean. This would be shocking to them because they were God's chosen people. For Israel, cleanliness was not next to godliness, cleanliness literally was godliness. Their entire theocracy was predicated on that they were God's people who were made holy through election. Sure, gentiles, pigs, and the dead are unclean but not Israel! God begs to differ. He again calls them "this people," and "this nation," as he did in chapter 1. His near demonstrative pronouns are conveying distance. They are unclean and that makes them "this people," instead of "my people." Because the people are unclean, their work is unclean. Everything they touch is unclean. The people are unclean because of sin. Though they have begun to rebuild the Temple doesn't change the fact that their hearts are uncircumcised. This is another reminder that they need a new king and a new covenant. They are not holy simply because they are in proximity to the Temple; they need a heart that is in proximity to God.

### **Unfavorable Consequences**

Haggai tells the people to "consider" three times in this pericope, as he did in chapter 1 verses 5 and 7. He tells them to consider two things; first, consider how you've fared. Their rebellion was affecting their economy. When someone came to the heap for twenty, there were only ten. When one came to the wine vat for fifty measures, there was only twenty. That's a fifty percent or less return on their work!

Verse 17 tells us why this happened – "I struck you," declares YHWH. The first person singular is unapologetic. God has caused the plight that has come upon his people. He has used the weather conditions to rebuke his people. He says that he used the hail, which seems to be an allusion to the Exodus that was mentioned earlier in chapter 2.

Hail was a part of the plagues that YHWH used to free the people from Pharaoh (Exod 9:13-35), but now in this new Exodus, he's using it against them. Even with these conditions, they did not turn to YHWH. Just like Pharaoh did not heed the warnings, they hadn't listened until Haggai came to reprimand them.

The second issue that they must consider is from this day onward. After reminding them of their recent rebellion, he gives them another glimpse into their glorious future. This is another day to remember. They can look back on this day when the bountiful harvest comes in next season and remember the promise of YHWH. Just like you can always look back on the day you made your wedding vows, the day your child was born, or the day you were baptized and remember the joy and blessing that has come since. The seed is not in the barn yet, but it will be. Notice that Haggai speaks specifically of the vine, fig tree, pomegranate, and olive tree. All of these plants were native to Judah but they also carried eschatological significance. YHWH's blessing would be much bigger than a barn full of crops.

### **Undeserved Blessing**

God's unclean people will receive his undeserved blessing. He ends verse 19 saying that he will bless them. Actually, the Hebrew literally reads, "I will bless." It's more of a general statement. After alluding to the blessing by mentioning those specific plants, he now pronounces an all-out guarantee. God will redeem their economic and agricultural dilemma, which is certain. But his blessing will be much bigger than that – God will make them clean!

### **Gospel Connection**

God's promise of cleaning will come through the Temple, only not the temple that they're building. As we saw last week, Jesus is the true and better temple of God and he will bring cleansing to his people. Turn to Matthew, chapter 8, and we'll see the beginning of the cleansing that Christ brings. Let's start in verse 1:

When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.” And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I will; be clean.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Did you notice that the leper was unclean – there would be no debate about this between second Temple Jews – and Jesus reached out and touched him? When Jesus touched him the man became clean.

The priests told Haggai that uncleanness could be transmitted through contact but not cleanness; this was the law. Jesus comes and completely overrides what is possible with man. When Jesus touches that which is unclean, he does not become unclean. When Jesus touches that which is unclean, *it becomes clean*. Jesus is God’s blessing for his unclean people. Jesus brings cleansing to sinful people through his life, death, and resurrection. As one poet said, “by his life [we are] lovely and by his death [we’re] justified.”<sup>8</sup>

The only reason that Jesus can bring this cleansing to his people is because he lived a completely righteous, or clean, life. He loved the Lord his God with all of his heart. He obeyed the law to the “T.” Jesus loved righteousness and hated wickedness. When he died, he took our uncleanness on himself and gave us his cleanness. This is called the great exchange. Christ won definitive sanctification for us. Now through the power of the Holy Spirit, and the means of grace in the church, Christians are progressively made holy as they sojourn toward the eternal city. Jesus comes a few hundred years after this prophecy and he is the blessing that God promised Haggai and Israel at the reconstitution of the Temple.

### **Application**

The gospel of Jesus brings cleansing to God’s people. Because this is true, I want to make an appeal to some of you and comfort others of you. First, if you’re sitting

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<sup>8</sup>Derek Webb, “The Church,” on *She Must and Shall Go Free*. Ino, 11, 2003, MP3.

here right now and you're not a believer, if you're running from Jesus, if you don't care about the gospel, if you're hiding from God, if you're not following Jesus, come to Jesus. Repent of your sin, confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead (Rom 10:9). If you do this, Jesus promises that he will save you. He will lift the burden of your guilt. He will bring cleansing to your shame.

If you've never read the book *Pilgrim's Progress*, you really should give it a read.<sup>9</sup> The story is an allegory about a man named Christian who journeys from the city of destruction (death) to the Celestial City (heaven). At the beginning of his journey, Christian first comes to what's called the wicket gate, which is his entrance in to faith. He goes from there to the place of deliverance where there he loses his burden, which is represented by a larger pack he's been carrying on his back. Some of you this morning are carrying the burden of guilt and shame and you're not sure why. You feel dirty, you feel ashamed, and you feel a burden that you may not be able to explain. The answer is that you've been created in God's image and he made you to long for Christ. Come to Jesus this morning and experience the cleansing that you long for.

Now, for the group that I want to comfort; believer, if you're here and you're struggling with guilt and shame. If the accuser is hot on your neck, I want to remind you of the cleansing you have in Jesus. Jesus died for every sin you've ever committed and every sin you'll ever commit. This doesn't excuse sin of course. You may feel shame because you're living in unrepentant sin. If that's the case, then run to Jesus and confess your sin to him. He promises to renew your soul when you do. He will lift that burden that's suffocating you; he will cleanse you of that guilt. I promise that the moment you confess it, the shame will be gone. Some of you aren't living in unrepentant sin though and you still can't shake guilt from the past. Take heart, Jesus is alive and Jesus is better. He is bigger than the regret you can't shake. He's bigger than pornography, he's bigger

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<sup>9</sup>John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress* (Abottsford, WI: Aneko Press, 2015).

than those lies you told, and he's bigger than the way you used to treat people. Jesus is bigger than your teenage rebellion. He's bigger than that abortion, divorce, or unplanned pregnancy. He's bigger than drug addiction or alcoholism. He's bigger than the self-righteousness and judgmentalism that you've conveyed. He's bigger than those words you said that you wish you could take back. Jesus is the cleansing for God's people, run to him and find refuge from the storms of Satan, sin, and death.

### **Sermon Conclusion**

When you leave service here this morning, notice the snow. The snow is a beautiful white that contrasts with the mud and the dirt. This is a reminder that God has given his people the cleansing that Jesus offers. Isaiah 1:18 says "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Isaiah was talking about Jesus. Jesus is the one who makes us white as snow. As the hymn so beautifully expresses, "Jesus paid it all. All to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow."

### **Hobbit-Sized Theology: Seeming Hopelessness and the Kingdom of Jesus (Haggai 2:20-23)**

I was in middle school and high school when *The Lord of the Rings* films were released. I remember going to see the movies and being awed not only by the beauty of the production, but also by Tolkien's timeless tale. To say that trilogy was successful would be an understatement. The third film, *The Return of the King*, won best picture at the Oscars that year. Because the original films were so prosperous, it should be no surprise to anyone that Peter Jackson just recently directed another trilogy based on the prequel to *The Lord of the Rings* – *The Hobbit*.

*The Hobbit or There and Back Again*<sup>10</sup> is the story of a hobbit named Bilbo Baggins and his adventure with the Dwarves from the Lonely Mountain. Their de-

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<sup>10</sup>J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit or There and Back Again* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966).



throned king, Thorin, leads the dwarves. Thorin is the son of Thrain and the grandson of Thror, who was the king under the mountain, that was, until the day that Smaug the evil dragon came to steal the dwarves treasure, kill many of their race, and destroy the kingdom that they had built. The dwarves are on an adventure to reclaim their kingdom when they are joined by Mr. Baggins. The tale chronicles how the company journey from the Shire, where Bilbo lives, to the Lonely Mountain to face their reptilian foe. The dragon had overrun their kingdom, but there was a prophecy that said that the king under the mountain would return.

The seemingly hopeless situation in *The Hobbit* is reminiscent of what we see at the end of Haggai's prophecy. God's kingdom had evidently been destroyed. His people had been carted into exile and the throne of David had been vacated. Now, years later, Israel had come out of exile, but the Temple was still in ruins, and there was no king on the throne. It seemed hopeless. We can have similar experiences as God's people living today. Sometimes we can experience trials, tribulation, persecution, and temptation. This pain can cause us to question our hope. Is the gospel really true? Is Jesus ever going to make things right? Will we ever experience relief from sin and sorrow? God's word to the people of Israel is still an important word for his people today who struggle with hopelessness from time to time. Believers can maintain hope that God is restoring the world through Jesus because Jesus is the king of the world, and because Jesus keeps his promises.

### **Jesus Is the King of the World**

Haggai's final sermon, in 2:20-23, was given on the same day as the previous sermon in 2:10-19. There are two important things to note at the outset of Haggai's speech. First, the oracle is given specifically to Zerubbabel. Most of the sermons in Haggai are directed at Zerubbabel and Joshua, the leaders of the people. This final sermon is for Zerubbabel alone. The second thing to note is that the last two speeches are

given on the same day. This is the day that the foundation of the Temple was laid. It was a meaningful and memorable day. God has a message for Zerubbabel on this day that will give his people hope in the midst of, what has been, seeming hopelessness.

God tells Zerubbabel that he's going to "shake the heavens and the earth." This is exactly what he had already told him in chapter 2:6-7. Even though the language is the same, there is a different emphasis in this oracle. In 2:6-7, YHWH is talking about bringing the nations in to his temple. Here, he is talking about judging the political entities that reject his king. Notice the military language that Haggai uses. God is going to overthrow thrones. He's going to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations. This is the same kind of language used in the story about Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:21, 25). God's power will exceed every world superpower. He will pit the nations against one another and they will destroy each other. The nations will not prevail. In the end, God will prevail.

Also notice the Exodus imagery that Haggai continues to thread through his narrative: YHWH will overthrow chariots and their riders. There's no doubt that this word picture would've conjured up images in the mind of Israelites of how God saved them from Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Listen to Exodus 14:26-31:

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the Lord threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained. But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

God will judge the nations that reject his king as he judged Egypt in the Exodus.

Why does God have this kind of authority? Because he is the creator of the world and he has appointed Jesus to be the king of the world. Psalm 2 says that God will judge the nations that do not submit to his king. Hebrews 1:5 says that Christ is the true Son and king of Psalm 2. God is giving his people hope that even though things look grim, even though they are under Persian rule, even though there is no Davidic king on the throne in Jerusalem, that he is the true king, and they can hope in that!

We have a dachshund that weighs about ten pounds. Our dog is harmless, but dachshunds like to bark and yip because they have little man complex. Sometimes when we take him for a walk, we may pass by a small child. If a kid is 18 months old, and our dog is barking at him, the child usually gets scared. When you're that small, even the tiniest of dogs may frighten you. But I assure you, I would never be afraid of our dog. I'm 20 times bigger than he is, and furthermore, I own him. Their political climate may have frightened Israel, especially since the Babylonians had subjected them into exile, and the Persians currently ruled over them. But God was not afraid of the Babylonians, or the Persians, or the Greeks, or the Romans. In the last day, he would destroy those who would rebel against him because he is the king of the world. He is the rightful owner of his creation.

### **Jesus Keeps His Promises**

The second reason why God's people can have hope in the midst of hopelessness is because Jesus keeps his promises. In the final verse of the book of Haggai, God reiterates his promise to Zerubbabel using four intentional phrases. First, he says that he's going to *take* Zerubbabel. The emphasis here is on the action of God. God is the one who is going to work. He will take Zerubbabel.

Second, He calls Zerubbabel his *servant*. This specific word harkens back to YHWH's covenant with King David. In 2 Samuel 7, God called David, "my servant." God is going to take Zerubbabel and make him his servant, just like David was.

Third, God says he's going to make Zerubbabel like a *signet ring*. In the ancient Near East, the king would wear a signet ring and it was basically his signature. He would stamp documents with the ring, and that seal represented his authority. God is using this specific imagery to tell his people that he is restoring the Davidic throne; he has not forgotten them. In Jeremiah 22:24, God rebukes King Jehoiakim for his rebellion and declares that he will remove him like a signet ring from his finger. Listen to Jeremiah 22:24-25:

“As I live,” declares the Lord, “though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet ring on my right hand, yet I would tear you off and give you into the hand of those who seek your life, into the hand of those of whom you are afraid, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of the Chaldeans.”

You can see how the judgment in Jeremiah is a problem. God promised David that his throne would be established forever (2 Sam 7). Now there was no king on the throne. Zerubbabel, who is the grandson of Jehoiakim, and a descendant of David, is the *governor of a Persian province*. The people are wondering if YHWH will keep his promise. Will the Davidic throne be re-established? Will Abraham's people bring blessing to the world? Will the seed of Eve crush the head of the serpent? God answers with a resounding, “yes!” Zerubbabel will be placed back on his finger as a signet ring. The throne will continue. The promises are still true.

The fourth term used is *chosen*. David's throne will be established because Zerubbabel is the chosen one. He is of the line of David, and God has preserved him through the Exile to lead Israel. Even when the promise seems to be in jeopardy, God's people do not have to fear because Jesus keeps his promises. When a church struggles to maintain unity because of sin, the gospel is still true. When the doctor calls and tells you that the cancer has returned, the gospel is still true. When you have another miscarriage, and you're struggling to understand why some women have no trouble sustaining a pregnancy, the gospel is still true. When your marriage is falling apart, and it seems like

divorce is the only option, the gospel is still true. When you're getting older, and everything aches, and you're taking more medication than you can even keep track of, the gospel is still true. When your wife has dementia, and she doesn't know who you are, the gospel is still true. When you're struggling to find work, when you fall back into that sin, when your children reject the faith, when people lie, cheat, or steal from you, in the darkest moments of your darkest days, when your heart feels like it's in exile, the message that Haggai is bringing you this morning is that the gospel is still true!

### **Gospel Connection**

It's interesting, looking back at Persian history, we don't know much about what happened to Zerubbabel. Maybe he lived out the rest of his days as the Persian appointed governor of Yehud. Maybe the Persians caught wind of Haggai's prophecy, and they had him killed for treason. Maybe they were going to have him executed, and he went into hiding. We don't know. What we do know is that he never became the king of Israel, and he never overthrew any nations. Does that mean that Haggai was wrong? Did God break his promise? Is there a mistake in the Bible?

Of course not! Because Haggai's message wasn't ultimately about Zerubbabel, it was about Jesus! A few hundred years after Haggai preached this sermon, there was a baby born in Bethlehem. This child would be a descendant of Zerubbabel, and David, and his name is Jesus (Matt 1:1, 6, 12, 16). Jesus is the true king that God promised. He is the Son of David who would sit on his throne forever. Through Haggai, God promised his people that they would have a king; God would not renege on his promise. Jesus is the creator and ruler of the world. After his ascension, Jesus sat down at the right hand of the Father and now rules from David's throne over all the cosmos. Zerubbabel was not a disappointment but he was pointing God's people forward to the great eschatological ruler of God's people in God's place.

Church, this is why we have hope. Jesus is the king of the world, and he keeps his promises. In two weeks, we will celebrate Easter, or Resurrection Sunday as it has been called. Jesus' resurrection is the guarantee that he is the promised Messiah of Israel – he is the Christ. Jesus is the true Davidic king. He is the blessing of Abraham, and he is the seed of Eve who crushed Satan's head. One day Jesus will return to raise the dead, judge the world, and make all things new. In his Second Advent, he will set all things to rights, and make everything sad untrue.

### **Application**

How do we know this is true right now? Jesus rules the world with truth and grace, but he does not do so through military might. Jesus' doesn't have an army or a navy that will muscle converts through the power of the sword. No, Jesus' kingdom exists here – in his church. Jesus administers justice not through government programs, or military force, but through the Word and the Sacraments. These are the signs of the kingdom that exist for God's people and the world. The gospel is active through preaching, baptism, and the Eucharist. These signs point the world to Christ. They need Jesus. They need to repent and believe. They need a just king, who will rule the world with righteousness, and keep his promises.

These signs also give hope to God's people, but the sign is only meaningful because of its greater reality. Imagine that you got a phone call that you were going to get to meet the President. Regardless of your political position, that would be an exciting day. Now imagine that they fly you to the White House, bring you into the Muriel Room and a secret service agent is there holding the Presidential seal on a piece of paper. That would be incredibly disappointing. The sign only has meaning because it points to the greater reality.

Jesus has left us these signs to ensure us that he is coming again and he will win. Even when it seems like the enemy is winning, even when it seems like the world is

overcoming the church, even when it seems like your flesh is reigning in your members, remember, Jesus is the king! Baptism reminds us that we have died with Christ, and now we live with him. Communion reminds us that Jesus' body was broken for us, and his blood was shed for us. The gospel is true. Just like you can feel the wetness of the water, and just like you can taste the bread and the wine, the gospel is that real. It is tangible. These signs are pointing us to the greatest of all realities. God has not abandoned his kingdom. He has provided the greatest king in history, and that king is coming again!

### **Sermon Conclusion**

There's a point in *The Hobbit* where Bilbo and the Dwarves have almost made it to the Lonely Mountain. They are in a small port, just under the shadow of the mountain, called Lake-town. The citizens of Lake-town have felt the wrath of the dragon ever since he has dethroned the king. Not only has their economy nearly been destroyed, but they also lost many loved ones when Smaug staged his insurrection. When Thorin and company arrive at the shores of Lake-town and state their business, the people rejoice. They had wondered if the prophecy would ever come true and now the grandson of the king says he's come to slay the dragon. Listen to how Tolkien describes the joy of the people: "Some began to sing snatches of old songs concerning the return of the King under the Mountain; that it was Thrór's grandson not Thrór himself that had come back did not bother them at all."<sup>11</sup>

It being Zerubbabel's grandson and not Zerubbabel ought not bother us at all (Matt 1:12-13). Jesus is the king that Haggai spoke of many years ago. Jesus is the one who's come to crush the serpent's head and make everything sad untrue. You can have hope this morning in the resurrection and the New Creation because King Jesus has already resurrected; he is the New Creation. Haggai's prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus

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<sup>11</sup>Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 214.

came, and will be completed when he comes again. Take heart this morning, church, the stories are true!

### **Conclusion**

These five sermons have provided one example of how a preacher can preach Christ from the book of Haggai. These sermons do not exhaust all possibilities, for if anyone declares a monopoly on homiletical style, he must be ignored. While there is no one-method to preach Christ, there is one Christ who must always be preached. The book of Haggai cannot properly be understood canonically without understanding how it is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. How a preacher decides to organically proclaim Christological fulfillment is his prerogative, but if a preacher wants to preach the book of Haggai without Christ, it is better that he not preach it at all.



## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

In his revision of Spurgeon’s “Puritan Catechism,” Wes Pastor asks the question “What do the Scriptures principally teach?” His answer is “The Scriptures principally teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, who came to save sinners through His death, burial, and resurrection. (Luke 24:13-49; 1 Cor 15:3-4; I Tim 1:15).”<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ is the hero of the Bible’s story. He is the cornerstone of the Scriptures. Every text points to the *telos* – Jesus Christ. Jesus is the center of the city to which every pericopal road leads. This thesis has proved that a Christ-centered hermeneutic is the best way to understand the Bible, and specifically, the book of Haggai. The thesis will now conclude by reviewing the summary of arguments, offering recommendations for further research, and presenting a statement on the future of Christ-centered preaching.

#### Summary of Arguments

This thesis has proven that in order to best understand, communicate, and appreciate the book of Haggai, preachers must employ a Christocentric hermeneutic. Faithfully preaching the book of Haggai – or any book for that matter – requires preaching Christ. The introduction found a void in a canonical understanding of the book of Haggai among relevant literature. Many biblical theologies rightly understand the canonical framework of the Scripture but do not handle the book of Haggai at length.

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<sup>1</sup>Wes Pastor, “A New Covenant Catechism,” *Christ Memorial Church*, 2005, accessed August 31, 2017, [http://www.cmcvermont.org/files/website\\_documents/new\\_covenant\\_catechism.pdf](http://www.cmcvermont.org/files/website_documents/new_covenant_catechism.pdf). The New Covenant Catechism is based on Spurgeon’s “Puritan Catechism,” which was compiled from the Westminster Assembly’s and Baptist Catechism. Wes Pastor rewrote and significantly modified the catechism in 2004-2005 to create a catechism from a New Covenant perspective.

Commentaries on the book of Haggai fail to interact with the covenantal and canonical horizons of the text. This thesis fills a void by placing the book of Haggai within a Christocentric, canonical framework and then offering sermons to demonstrate how the hermeneutic becomes a homiletic.

Chapter 2 of this thesis verified that preachers have sought to preach Christ from the book of Haggai throughout church history. Using Greidanus' six ways to preach Christ from the Old Testament, this chapter revealed that five different preachers from five different eras of church history preached Jesus Christ from Haggai 2.<sup>2</sup> In the Patristic era, Augustine preached Christ from Haggai 2:8-9. In the Medieval era, Thomas Aquinas preached a Christ-centered sermon from Haggai 2:7. During the time of the Reformation, Martin Luther gave a lecture on the second chapter of Haggai that was centered in Jesus Christ. During the Puritan era, John Flavel gave a Christocentric homily from Haggai 2:7. Finally, in the modern era, Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached Christ from Haggai 2:7-9. This chapter gave historical context to the thesis because the Christocentric focus is not new. Homileticians have sought to be Christocentric in their preaching for the last two millennia.

The third chapter of the thesis was a definition and defense of Christ-centered preaching. The chapter proved the Christ-centered hermeneutic both biblically and theologically. After defending Christocentric hermeneutics, the chapter answered objections from some opponents. Finally, the chapter laid the foundation for the Christ-centered methodology using Payne's four horizons of Christ-centered preaching.<sup>3</sup>

The center of the thesis is found in chapter 4 – Christ-centered exposition of the book of Haggai. In this chapter, each natural pericope of the book of Haggai was

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<sup>2</sup>Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 227-79.

<sup>3</sup>Ryan Fullerton, Jim Orrick, and Brian Payne, *Encountering God through Expository Preaching: Connecting God's People to God's Presence through God's Word* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017), 35-60.

filtered through the four horizons of Christ-centered preaching: (1) contextual; (2) covenantal; (3) canonical; and (4) contemporary. This exercise demonstrated how Christians must appropriately understand the book of Haggai in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not hermeneutically sufficient to understand the contextual horizon of the pericope (grammatical-historical context). An interpreter must also place the text within the covenantal and canonical context prior to proceeding to the contemporary application for the church.

Chapter 5 of the thesis outlined how theory became practice; hermeneutics became homiletics. Five Christ-centered sermons were birthed from the labor of chapter 4. Each of the five natural pericopes, once filtered through the lens of the Christocentric horizons, become five Christ-centered sermons. These sermons exhibit one way in which a homiletician can preach Christ from the book of Haggai. The chapter does not claim a monopoly on homiletical style, but simply offers an example of one way in which a preacher can bear homiletical fruit from their hermeneutical sowing.

One burden of this thesis has been to prove the timeless relevance of Christ-centered preaching. Chapter 2 revealed that preachers have carried this burden far back to the Patristic era. Chapter 3 takes a step back into the NT to demonstrate that Jesus and the apostles taught this hermeneutic. Then, the narrative progressed to the present time when a number of theologians and homileticians contend for a Christocentric approach to interpretation and preaching. Finally, the fourth and fifth chapters reveal the hermeneutic and homiletic of the author. This discourse represents one voice of many. It stands in line with some of the most notable voices in the history of Christianity. Most importantly, it stands in line with Jesus himself who said, in rebuke to those who did not interpret the OT in a Christ-centered way, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me” (John 5:39).

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

While there has been much research done in recent years about Christ-centered preaching, there is more work to be done. This thesis enlisted works from men such as Goldsworthy, Johnson, Chapell, and Keller, among others, who have waved the banner of Christocentric preaching for years. While the goal is always the same – preach Christ – the methodologies have certainly not been uniform. This paper was narrow in scope and the methodology used to develop Christ-centered sermons from the book of Haggai can be utilized throughout the rest of the Scriptures. The four horizons of Christ-centered preaching are straightforward so that any preacher can apply them to any text. Also, this methodology is rich enough that its fruit can never be exhausted. It will be helpful to begin with a wide-lens example and then narrow the scope.

First, the four-fold hermeneutic can be applied to any book of the Bible. It can be used with any pericope in the Scriptures. There have been countless commentaries written on every book of the Bible. This is a gift from God. Men and women from every era of church history have mined the gold of God’s Word. Ancient insights, along with fresh perspectives, have always been available to preachers. This hermeneutical method adds another dimension to the treasure of commentary that exists on the Bible. Whether one is a scholar writing a commentary, a student writing a dissertation, or a pastor leading his church through a book of the Bible in corporate worship, the four horizons of Christ-centered preaching can be applied to every text in the canon. Understanding how every passage, and OT pericopes in particular, are organically connected to and fulfilled in the gospel of Jesus Christ is lacking in Christian homiletical scholarship. The church would benefit greatly by continuing scholarship in this area.

Second, the four horizons of Christ-centered preaching can be specifically applied to the Book of the Twelve. The book of Haggai finds its canonical place within the Book of the Twelve and shares the same covenantal horizon. In Christ-centered scholarship and preaching, the Minor Prophets are sometimes neglected. When these

dozen prophets are considered, they are often times grouped together and many important details are omitted. Scholarly work should apply the methodology used on the book of Haggai to the whole Book of the Twelve. It would be helpful to see where these prophets have similar roads to Christ and where these differ.

To narrow the scope, more research can be done on applying the four horizons of Christ-centered preaching to the Restoration Prophets. The book of Haggai finds its place in the Restoration Prophets within the Book of the Twelve. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi are the three postexilic prophets, which means that there is Christocentric treasure for mining in these three books that would not apply to any of the other Minor Prophets. While all of the prophets find themselves in a similar covenantal horizon, the Restoration Prophets alone carry the Word of God between the Exile and the Incarnation. How did they anticipate the Messiah differently than those before them? How did they understand the Davidic and New Covenants post-exile? The work done with the book of Haggai can be furthered to include the books of Zechariah and Malachi. More study could also incorporate Ezra-Nehemiah into the question. What further understanding of the Restoration Prophets is gained with these writings? What unique Christological contributions can be made from this period of redemptive history, and how would a preacher expound on these books in a Christocentric manner?

A fourth suggestion, and the most narrowed scope canonically, is applying the four horizons of Christ-centered preaching to Zechariah 1-8. Two commentaries used in this thesis grouped the book of Haggai specifically with Zechariah 1-8.<sup>4</sup> Both Biblical books feature prophets calling Israel to return to YHWH. Both emphasize the reconstruction of the Temple and both books have unique eschatological pericopes. Since

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<sup>4</sup>See Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doublday & Company, 1987); David L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984). Also see Mark J. Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004). Boda includes the entire book of Zechariah, not the first eight chapters exclusively, but the commentary also supports the idea that the two books are closely connected.

Zechariah 1-8 is the closest book contextually to the book of Haggai, Christian scholarship would benefit from further research done in applying the four horizons of Christ-centered preaching to Zechariah 1-8.

A fifth area of further research is for a proponent of Christ-centered hermeneutics to engage more critically with Abraham Kuruvilla and his Christiconic hermeneutic.<sup>5</sup> Kuruvilla argues against Christ-centered preaching and offers the Christiconic method in its place.<sup>6</sup> Kuruvilla contends that Jesus is the only human ever to fulfill the divine demand, which is the theme that ties all of the Scripture together. The Scriptures paint a picture of the totality of his obedience. The goal of the Bible is to change people into the image of Christ. This is accomplished by ascertaining the theology of any given pericope. The question that governs interpretation is “what is the author doing with what he is saying?” Every pericope is a different aspect of Christlikeness that when preached week by week will transform believers into the image of Christ.<sup>7</sup> Kuruvilla argues that not every text points to Jesus, but God’s people should learn that every text brings with it an aspect of Christlikeness.

Is the Christiconic hermeneutic more faithful than the Christocentric? Is Kuruvilla simply creating a false dichotomy? Is the Christiconic methodology merely part of what it means to be Christ-centered? Furthering the discussion between these methodologies would benefit homiletical scholarship. Kuruvilla raises many fair questions. Some of these questions were briefly answered in chapter 3 of this thesis. A full-length interaction would be fruitful.

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<sup>5</sup>Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text! A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2013), 238-68.

<sup>6</sup>See pp. 61-63 of this thesis.

<sup>7</sup>Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text!*, 238-68.

A seventh and final subject of further research is in the area of homiletical application. York is right when he declares, “a sermon without application is dead.”<sup>8</sup> The four horizons of Christ-centered preaching address this issue through the contemporary horizon. The ancient truth must be applied to the modern situation. Further research can be done on how to specifically apply The Book of the Twelve (and the Restoration Prophets in particular) to the church in light of the gospel of Jesus. The fourth and fifth chapters of this thesis have done so with the book of Haggai, but the sermons were preached to a particular church. Every culture will apply timeless truth differently. Every pastor in each church will have to work to apply the God-breathed words of the OT to their context in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **The Future of Christ-Centered Preaching**

The future of Christ-centered preaching is bright. The burden of this thesis has been to prove that Christ-centered hermeneutics and homiletics are the best way to understand the Bible. The book of Haggai was the vehicle used to apply the theory. This paper has not sought to be novel; there is a sense in which nothing new has been written (Ecc 1:9). Greidanus has traced the history of preaching Christ in the OT from the apostolic fathers through the modern era.<sup>9</sup> A great cloud of witnesses preceded this discourse and contributes to that cause. Men of God have preached Christ since the resurrection and will do so until Christ’s return.

The future of Christ-centered preaching is promising because of homiletical works like Fullerton, Orrick, and Payne’s *Encountering God through Expository Preaching*, Chapell’s *Christ-Centered Preaching*, Goldsworthy’s *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, and Keller’s *Preaching*. Scholarship like Hamilton’s *God’s*

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<sup>8</sup>Bert Decker and Hershael W. York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: B&H Books, 2003), 13.

<sup>9</sup>Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 69-176.

*Glory is Salvation through Judgment*, Schreiner's *The King in His Beauty*, Goldsworthy's *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, and the *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* give hope that there is a resurgence in canonical hermeneutics. Laymen's resources like *The ESV Study Bible* and the *Gospel Transformation Bible* are an accessible resource for churches to develop a Christocentric framework. Resources such as the *Gospel Project* are doing the same good work with students and children.

The future of Christ-centered preaching is lively because of schools like Southern Seminary and professors like Brian Payne. This paper is but a small contribution in what Southern Seminary has produced in both scholarship and graduates. There is a fresh generation of Christ-centered preachers graduating from schools like Boyce College and Southern Seminary, and likewise, at other schools, such as Westminster Theological Seminary, Reformed Theological Seminary, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Above all the future of Christ-centered preaching is eternal because the Word of God will never pass away (Matt 24:35) and the Word is Christ Jesus. "Christ died for our sins *in accordance with the Scriptures* . . . he was raised on third day *in accordance with the Scriptures*" (1 Cor 15:3-4, emphasis added). The old, old story that has been passed down for more than two thousand years, the story that dates far back to the garden, is the story of God's love for and redemption of his people. Jesus is the hero of that story. Every story in the Bible is a part of that great story. Every person in a pew on Sunday morning is a part of that story. Preaching is simply the retelling of that story every week. For as long as God is saving people, Christ will be preached. As long as the church sojourns on this road to the eternal city, Jesus will be preached. For it is "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ (Col 1:28).



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## ABSTRACT

### GREATER THAN THE FORMER: A CHRISTOCENTRIC APPROACH TO HAGGAI IN LIGHT OF RECENT CHRISTOCENTRIC HOMILETICS

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018  
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This D.Min. thesis argues for the importance of using a Christocentric hermeneutic for the interpretation and preaching of the book of Haggai. Chapter 1 is an introduction that surveys works on hermeneutics and homiletics, biblical theology, and commentaries on the book of Haggai and then presents the need for the paper followed by the thesis statement. Chapter 2 is a survey of how the book of Haggai has been interpreted and preached throughout church history. Chapter 3 defines and defends Christocentric preaching over against other hermeneutics. Chapter 4 is a Christ-centered exegesis of the book of Haggai. Chapter 5 contains five sermon manuscripts from the book of Haggai that are a result of the exegesis of chapter 4. Chapter 6 reviews the thesis and argument. The work ends with suggestions for further research.

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