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Proclaiming the Gospel from Old Testament War Narratives

A Dissertation Submitted to

the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

By

Eli H. Dowell

Saint Louis, Missouri

2018

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Dr. W. Brian Aucker, Faculty Advisor _____

Dr. C. John Collins, Second Reader _____

Dr. Philip D. Douglass, Director of DMin Program _____

ABSTRACT

Preaching the Gospel from Old Testament war narratives presents unique challenges, which few resources address. The body of literature in the area of Gospel-centered preaching from the Old Testament has grown significantly in recent years. Insights are plentiful for preaching Christ from narrative and prophetic genres. Resources for applying these principles to the narrow category of Old Testament war narratives remain in want. The purpose of this study was to examine how preachers proclaim the Gospel from Old Testament war narratives.

Four research questions guided this study: (1) What challenges do OT war narratives present for preachers? (2) How do preachers address the current cultural barriers presented by OT war narratives? (3) How do preachers address the theological barriers presented by OT war narratives? And, (4) What methods do preachers use to proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives? The study utilized a basic qualitative design using semi-structured interviews with six participants, who are seasoned preachers committed to Gospel-centered preaching. The data was analyzed using the constant comparative method.

The findings of the study show that Old Testament war narratives are essential components of the meta-narrative of Scripture, culminating in the person and work of Jesus Christ. By exegeting a war narrative in its biblical context Gospel themes will emerge. The study concluded with several examples of Gospel-centered interpretations of select passages from the book of Joshua. These interpretations drew from the collected insights of the literature review and qualitative research.

To my father, Reverend Kenneth Dowell. You have modeled faithful preaching of God's Word since before I was born. I serve God because you showed me how and why. I pray the legacy will continue.

To Chaplain, Lieutenant Colonel James Richey. You told us that regardless a chaplain's rank, status, or position, the most important work we will ever do is what we do with an open Bible in our hands. You didn't just say it; you live it. You live it well.

To my wife, Rebekah. I always roll my eyes when I read this part of someone else's work because it seams obligatory and sappy. But this is my paper, so I get to be sappy. Just because this part is expected does not mean it is not true. I could not have done it without you. I don't just mean this project. I mean life. I mean military service, deployments, preaching, living overseas, raising our kids, and walking with Christ. God saw that it wasn't good for me to be alone and he gave me you. I thank him for it every day. I love you more with each new adventure!

To my sons, Joel, Ethan, Seth, Lucas, and Corban. Wow. You guys made completing this project so hard, in the best possible way. I love being distracted by your projects, questions, and games. My prayer for you is that wherever you go, however you earn your paycheck, whatever passions you pursue, you do it all for the glory of God.

CONTENTS

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANE Ancient Near East

JWT Just War Tradition

NT New Testament

OT Old Testament

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"Thus says the LORD of hosts… Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant…"[1] "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."[2] Is there a contradiction between these texts? Is it possible for the God in whom no darkness dwells to be the same God who orders the destruction of an entire people? Is it conceivable for a citizen of the 21st century western world to worship the Old Testament God? More to the point of this study, is it possible for preachers to convincingly point to the God of light while telling the stories of the LORD of hosts? Can they proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives?

The Apostle John proclaims Jesus came into the world to reveal God to humanity – this God of light who was otherwise unknowable.[3] Through Jesus, mankind can experience the fullness of God[4] incarnate. Further, he demonstrates that the purpose of Jesus' incarnation is to be found in his substitutionary death.[5] John Calvin argues that to seek any other reason for the incarnation would be presumptuous.[6]

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[1] 1 Samuel 15:2-3.

[2] 1 John 1:5.

[3] John 1:9-14.

[4] Colossians 2:9.

[5] John 3:16-18.

[6] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 467.

Calvin's position finds ample scriptural support. The Apostle Paul states "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;"[7] John spoke of Jesus as "the propitiation for our sins;"[8] and Jesus himself spoke often of the salvation he came to bring.[9] His Emmaus Road proclamation that all the scriptures testify of him is foundational to this study.[10] After Jesus' death the apostles Peter and Paul went on to demonstrate this Gospel focused proclamation of scripture in Acts 2:14-41 and 17:2-4 respectively.

There has been a recent increase in resources to aid preachers in Gospel-centered preaching from all of scripture.[11] These resources help preachers display the incarnate God of light prefigured in the OT. In his book, *Him We Proclaim*, Dennis Johnson handles "the unity of the Old Testament and the New in the person and redemptive work of Jesus Christ" as one major theme.[12] Similarly, the late theologian and pastor, Edmund Clowney, saw in the Bible "one great story, the story of Jesus."[13]

When preachers encounter texts punctuated with phrases like, "kill both man and woman, child and infant," however, Gospel-centered resources are in want. Will

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[7] 1 Timothy 1:15.

[8] 1 John 4:10.

[9] Matthew 20:28, Luke 19:10, John 6:52, John 10:10.

[10] Luke 24:27.

[11] Edmund P. Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2013); Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007); Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999); Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003).

[12] Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 9.

[13] Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery*, 11.

preachers avoid these texts, as liberal theologian C.S. Cowles assumes,[14] or will they answer pastor Zack Eswine's charge to "handle the war passages in an age of terror?"[15]

Statement of the Problem

Preachers who set out to proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives face a multifaceted problem. Commenting on the utter destruction of Jericho in Joshua 6:21, pastor and professor David Jackman refers to the slaughter as "a strange concept to modern ears."[16] While many commentators offer little more than a technical discussion of the battle,[17] Jackman provides the reader more than two pages on this strange concept. He calls the faithful preacher to consider certain cultural and theological problems. Answering his call will raise a third problem – the problem of preaching the Gospel from these texts.

Cultural Problems

Jackman recognizes that in today's culture many find the extremes of OT warfare objectionable.[18] In his preaching text, *The Word Became Fresh*, Dale Ralph Davis identified a genre of scripture he calls the "Nasties."[19] He includes war texts in this

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[14] C. S. Cowles, "A Response to Eugene H. Merrill," in *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 99.

[15] Zack Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World: Crafting Biblical Sermons That Connect with Our Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 193.

[16] David Jackman, *Joshua: People of God's Purpose*, Preaching the Word Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 71.

[17] Dale Ralph Davis, *Joshua: No Falling Words*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Fearn, UK: Christian Focus, 2006), 55; Richard S. Hess, *Joshua*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 145–46.

[18] Jackman, *Joshua*, 71.

[19] Dale Ralph Davis, *The Word Became Fresh: How to Preach from Old Testament Narrative Texts*, 2nd ed. (Fearn, UK: Mentor, 2006), 61.

category. Stanley Gundry's, *Four Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*,[20] contrasts various attempts of Christian scholarship to resolve cultural objections to the text. In this work, Professor Tremper Longman III describes similarities between the brutality common in OT warfare and the horrors of modern terrorism waged by the likes of Osama Bin Laden.[21] While two of the contributing authors disagree with him on technicalities,[22] C. S. Cowles finds the parallels "striking and sobering."[23] He concludes that such a god is "more demonic than Satan."[24] Whether speaking to a secular or religious audience, western culture's assumptions of what constitutes an ethical war[25] make these passages a hard sell for the Christ-centered preacher.

Two recent studies from the field of political science reveal a cultural rift between conservative Christians and secularists over the current war against terror. Sociologist Emanuel Boussios and political scientist Stephen Cole's article, "Americans' Attitudes toward War,"[26]seeks to analyze the factors that influence individuals' support or

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[20] Stanley N. Gundry, ed., *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003).

[21] Tremper Longman III, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," in *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 161.

[22] Eugene H. Merrill, "A Response to Tremper Longman III," in *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 196–97; Daniel L. Gard, "A Response to Tremper Longman III," in *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 200.

[23] C. S. Cowles, "A Response to Tremper Longman III," in *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 191.

[24] Ibid., 193.

[25] David Fisher, *Morality and War: Can War Be Just in the Twenty-First Century?* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012); Charles Amjad-Ali, "Jihad and Just War Theory: Dissonance and Truth," *Dialog* 48, no. 3 (September 2009): 239–47; Darrell Cole, *When God Says War Is Right: The Christian's Perspective on When and How to Fight* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook, 2002).

[26] Emanuel Boussios and Stephen Cole, "Americans' Attitudes toward War: Trend Analysis of Public

opposition toward America's current war in the Middle East. They conclude that conservative political affiliation is the primary factor leading to support of the war.[27]

International relations expert, Oindrila Roy, came to a similar conclusion in her article "Religious Roots of War Attitudes in the United States."[28] She analyzed the religious influences impacting American attitudes toward the war and discovered a very close connection between belief in biblical authority and conservative political affiliation, ultimately leading to support of the war.[29] These studies suggest Bible-believing Christians are likely predisposed toward a more permissive view of war than secular or liberal individuals. Consequently, the preacher may have liberal individuals in the audience assuming a cultural rift before the text is even preached.

Just War Tradition (JWT) furthers the cultural problem facing preachers. Simeon O. Ilesanmi's article, "Just War Theory in Comparative Perspective" assesses JWT in light of today's conflicts. He demonstrates that while JWT must evolve in order to answer the questions raised by modern warfare, it remains the ethical benchmark by which war is to be evaluated.[30] Merrill hones in on the preachers' problem. While most

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Opinion for the Iraq War" *Journal of Applied Security Research*, 5:2 (March 2010): 208–26.

[27] Ibid., 223–24.

[28] Oindrila Roy, "Religious Roots of War Attitudes in the United States: Insights from Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Persian Gulf" *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 12 (2016): 258–74.

[29] Ibid., 270.

[30] Simeon Olusegun Ilesanmi, "Just War Theory in Comparative Perspective: A Review Essay" *Journal of Religious Ethics* 28, no. 1 (2000): 139–55.

Americans are comfortable with Just War, God's warfare in the OT does not follow the tenets of JWT.[31]

If these studies are accurate, many preachers will have un-churched guests in their audience who assume a significant cultural disagreement over the topic of war. What kind of reaction should preachers then expect from secularist audience members when preaching from objectionable texts? How do they preach about a just God who does not (perceivably) wage Just War?

Theological Problems

While the war between Israel and Jericho ended over 3,000 years ago, the war passages of the OT continue to be the site of theological battles today. Jackman's interpretation of OT war leans heavily on God's sovereignty[32] and the justice of his wrath.[33] These explanations are not satisfactory to all scholars.

The contributors to *Four Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*[34] represent a wide range of theological perspectives on the issues. The differing perspectives center around the integrity of the text,[35] the character of God,[36] and the continuity of the Old and

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[31] Eugene H. Merrill, "The Case for Moderate Discontinuity," in *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 92.

[32] Jackman, *Joshua*, 72.

[33] Ibid., 73.

[34] Gundry, *Show Them No Mercy*.

[35] C. S. Cowles, "The Case for Radical Discontinuity," in *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 23, 43.

[36] Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," 185.

New Testaments.[37] Preachers must not only articulate the text but also navigate the theological backdrop that is rife with tension. "Who is sufficient for these things?"[38]

Gospel Proclamation Problems

Jackman writes for a preachers' commentary, yet his two pages on Joshua 6 provide preachers with no further guidance than an apologetic on why Jericho was destroyed.[39] In his DMin dissertation, Mark Livingston confesses feelings of inadequacy in drawing Christ-centered applications from OT narratives in general.[40] How much greater the challenge when preaching the war passages? Notwithstanding, Davis encourages preachers to not shy away from these texts, "for it's in the nasty stuff you'll find the God of scary holiness and incredible grace waiting to reveal himself."[41] But how? Like Davis, Eswine is unafraid to wade into the nasties. He reminds preachers that God's purpose in OT war was Messianic[42] and offers helpful suggestions pointing the sermon toward eschatological hope.[43] Yet, many gaps remain.

Statement of the Purpose

While there is a growing body of literature aiding preachers in the proclamation of the Gospel from OT Narratives, there remains a gap when dealing with the severity of

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[37] Daniel L. Gard, "A Response to Eugene H. Merrill," in *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 104–05.

[38] 2 Corinthians 2:16.

[39] Jackman, *Joshua*, 72–74.

[40] Mark Livingston, "Preaching Christ From Old Testament Narratives" (D.Min. diss., Covenant Theological Seminary, 2010), 99.

[41] Davis, *The Word Became Fresh*, 74.

[42] Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World*, 197.

[43] Ibid., 199–204.

war texts. The purpose of this study is to examine how preachers proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives.

Primary Research Questions

To examine how preachers proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives, the following research questions will serve as the focus for this study:

1. What challenges do OT war narratives present for preachers?
2. How do preachers address the current cultural barriers presented by OT war narratives?
3. How do preachers address the theological barriers presented by OT war narratives?
4. What methods do preachers use to proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives?

Significance of the Study

Davis' belief that "the God of scary holiness and incredible grace"[44] is found in texts such as these indicates that a unique revelation of God belongs exclusively to these passages. Neglecting them is to neglect facets of God's very nature. In *God is a Warrior*, scholars Tremper Longman III and Daniel Reid demonstrate that the divine warrior is "one of the most pervasive of all biblical themes."[45] However, the literature lacks a method to faithfully preach this theme. Therefore, this study is significant for preachers, churches, and the culture at large because the fullness of God's self-revelation requires preaching all of God's Word - even the war texts.

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[44] Davis, *The Word Became Fresh*, 74.

[45] Tremper Longman III and Daniel G. Reid, *God Is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 13.

Significance to Preachers

Paul modeled a charge to preach "the whole counsel of God,"[46] incarnating his doctrine of inspiration and sufficiency of scripture.[47] Jesus taught that all scripture points to himself. By examining the methods of several preachers who proclaim the Gospel from war narratives, this study will seek to fill the void in the literature.

Significance to the Church

Pastor Mark Dever, author of *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, outlines essential traits of a productive congregation. The first three intersect with this study. Expositional preaching follows the conviction that "all of the bible is relevant to us all of the time."[48] Second is Biblical Theology, which he describes as a pursuit of "what God is really like."[49] Such a pursuit will inevitably encounter the divine warrior theme. The third mark is the Gospel. In this chapter Dever not only deals with themes of sin, wrath, judgment, and death, but also holiness, forgiveness, and love.[50]

Each of these marks of a healthy church: expositional preaching, Biblical Theology, and the Gospel, are a part of this study. The aim is to strengthen the Church's Biblical Theology by helping preachers access an often-neglected portion of scripture.

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[46] Acts 20:27.

[47] 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

[48] Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 42.

[49] Ibid., 57.

[50] Ibid., 75–95.

Significance to Culture

In *The Mission of God's People*, missiologist and biblical theologian Christopher Wright presents a Biblical Theology of mission that calls the Church to model the character of God to her surrounding culture. The second chapter, "People Who Know the Story They are Part of,"[51] speaks directly to this study. Following the patterns of Jesus and Paul, Wright says the Church needs to "see our mission in the light of" the whole Bible.

In his preaching text, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching,* John Piper says, "People are starving for the grandeur of God. And the vast majority do not know it." [52] If scary holiness and incredible grace are found in nasty texts, and if preachers avoid these texts, much of God's grandeur is not being preached. Piper asks, "If God is not supreme in our preaching, where in this world will people hear about the supremacy of God?"[53]

Definition of Terms

In the context of this study, the terms are defined as follows:

Biblical Theology: Theologian John Frame defines Biblical Theology as expounding "scripture as a history of God's dealings with us."[54] Clowney emphasizes the culmination of this history in redemption through Jesus Christ.[55] This study will use J.I. Packer's

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[51] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 35–47.

[52] John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2015), 147.

[53] Ibid., 148.

[54] John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2013), 8.

[55] Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery*, 11.

definition, which sees Biblical Theology as an "umbrella-name" for the many disciplines that "explore the unity of the Bible, delving into the contents of the books, showing the links between them, and pointing up the ongoing flow of the revelatory and redemptive process that reached its climax in Jesus Christ."[56]

Christ-Centered Preaching: Pastor, and author of *Christ Centered Preaching*, Bryan Chapell, says this approach sees "all of God's Word as a unified message of human need and divine provision."[57] Thus, any sermon that does not point to Christ as provision for that need preaches a "Sub-Christian" message.[58] Following Keller, in this study Gospel proclamation and Christ-centered preaching are synonymous.[59]

Cultural Barrier: These are differences between contemporary culture and biblical culture significant enough to present a difficulty for the preacher who seeks to explain the historical and theological meaning of the text to an audience.

Expository Preaching: This study does not espouse a particular format or approach to expository preaching. Rather, Keller's definition from *Preaching* provides the standard: "Expository preaching grounds the message in the text so that all the sermon's points are points in the text, and it majors in the text's major ideas."[60] In this study all preaching mentioned is expository preaching.

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[56] J.I. Packer, "Foreword," in Edmund P. Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament,* 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2013), 9.

[57] Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 12.

[58] Ibid., 267.

[59] Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 48.

[60] Ibid., 32.

Gospel: Frame and Keller stress that the Gospel is a message.[61] There is a wide range of perspectives regarding the necessary content of that message. Tim Challies provides a narrow definition articulating the Gospel message as, "God sent his Son Jesus into the world in order to live a perfect life, die a substitutionary death, and rise victorious from the grave."[62] C. John Collins provides a much broader definition, beginning with the OT's anticipation of the Messiah and the inclusion of Gentiles into the covenant community. Looking at Romans 1:1-6 he defines the Gospel as, "the report that this great era has begun through the death and resurrection of Jesus," and the Gentiles' invitation to be grafted into the people of God as full citizens.[63] This study will generally assume a broad definition of Gospel. More narrow references, pertaining to personal salvation, will be notated in the text.

***Ḥerem* Warfare:** *Ḥerem* is a Hebrew word meaning "banned" or "devoted things." In the context of war the verb refers to the "consecration of a city and its inhabitants to destruction and the carrying out of this destruction. The vb. denotes also the total annihilation of a population in war."[64]

Salvation History: In the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* Leland Ryken, *et al.,* describe salvation as the "unifying plot" of the Bible. Salvation History is the unfolding of this

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[61] Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 95. Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 31.

[62] Tim Challies and Josh Byers, *Visual Theology: Seeing and Understanding the Truth About God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 19.

[63] C. John Collins, "The Old Testament As Christian Scripture" (unpublished essay, Covenant Theological Seminary, 2007), 3.

[64] Jackie A. Naudé, "חרם I" in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 2012), 2:276.

plot from the Garden of Eden, through Israel's history, culminating in "Christ's life, poured out on the cross…"[65]

Secular: In *How (not) to be Secular*, philosophy professor, James Smith, provides a helpful guide to Charles Taylor's work, *A Secular Age*.[66] He gives three separate meanings to the word secular. For this study, secular is a mixture of Smith's Secular2 and Secular3. It refers to people and ideas that are areligious – a part of the public square. These are the ideas and feelings that come from a culture where it is "possible to imagine not believing in God."[67]

Theological Barrier: For Dever, Biblical Theology proclaims a God who is creative, holy, faithful, loving, and sovereign.[68] It describes "what God is really like."[69] Not every parishioner in the Sunday morning pew has a biblical understanding of what God is really like. When a sermon text contradicts a parishioner's understanding of God's nature the result is an obstacle the preacher must anticipate and overcome.

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[65] Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), s.v. "Salvation," Accordance Bible Software.

[66] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2007).

[67] James K. A. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 142.

[68] Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 74.

[69] Ibid., 57.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to examine how preachers proclaim the Gospel from OT (OT) war narratives. War is a common theme in the biblical text. Within this common theme, God often acts as the initiator. In *God is a Warrior,* Tremper Longman III and Daniel Reid demonstrate God's warrior activity as one of the most pervasive themes in the Bible.[70] Researchers have called this a "Christian problem."[71] Conversely, pastor and author Edmund Clowney demonstrates that the Bible "tells one great story, the story of Jesus."[72] Ryken, et. al., identify salvation as the "unifying plot" of all scripture.[73] Preaching professor Zack Eswine affirms both of these biblical themes, and encourages pastors to proclaim the Gospel from the war passages.[74]

However, this chapter will demonstrate a gap in the current literature connecting the methods of Christ-centered preaching with the problem of the war passages. The first three sections of this chapter demonstrate why such methodologies are needed. The first section analyzes the pertinent biblical texts. The second section surveys American

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[70] Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 13.

[71] Geth Allison and Reid Powell, "Orientation Amidst the Diversity: An Introduction to the Volume," in *Holy War in the Bible: Christian Morality and an Old Testament Problem* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), 10.

[72] Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery,* 11.

[73] Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, "Salvation."

[74] Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World,* 193.

attitudes toward religious war, highlighting a dissonance between cultural sensibilities and biblical events. The third section looks at war texts within the scope of biblical theology. The final section reviews the limited resources currently available aiding preachers to proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives.

Ḥerem Warfare in the Biblical Literature

In *God is a Warrior*, Scholars Tremper Longman III and Daniel Reid present God's warrior activity as one of the most pervasive themes in the Bible.[75] However, not all war narratives are alike. The story of David and Goliath can hardly be compared to God's command to annihilate the women and children of Amalek just two chapters earlier (1 Samuel 15:3). The kind of warfare waged against Amalek is commonly identified as *ḥerem* warfare,[76] and presents the preacher with perhaps the most ethically challenging material in the entire Bible.[77] In pursuit of the most broadly applicable Gospel proclamation principles for war texts, this study will focus on the darkest of these texts, *ḥerem* warfare. The two parts of this section investigate the laws governing *ḥerem* warfare, and select scenes of *ḥerem* warfare in practice. The purpose of this section is twofold: to demonstrate difficulties preachers will face when proclaiming the Gospel from OT war narratives, and to highlight some of the issues involving the historical reliability of the text.

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[75] Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 13.

[76] Ibid., Daniel L. Gard, "The Case for Eschatological Continuity," in *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 113–41; Douglas S. Earl, "Holy War and חֵרֶם: A Biblical Theology of חֵרֶם," in *Holy War in the Bible: Christian Morality and an Old Testament Problem* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), 63–94.

[77] For a short summary of cultural reactions to the Canaanite conquest (*ḥerem* warfare) see: Christopher J. H. Wright, *The God I Don't Understand: Reflections on Tough Questions of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 73–74.

Ḥerem *Laws*

The concept of *ḥerem* makes its biblical debut in the Mosaic Law. Before Joshua's Canaanite conquest the Israelites understood what *ḥerem* required of them. The sections below will investigate key passages from the Pentateuch that govern *ḥerem* warfare.

Exodus 22:20 and Leviticus 27:28-29

These two passages do not discuss warfare, but provide early instruction concerning the concept of *ḥerem* in the national life of Israel. They are important for this study because they govern the application of *ḥerem* within Israel. This is a prominent theme in Joshua 7. Exodus 22:20[78] contains the first verbal use of *ḥerem* in the Bible. It is applied to one who worships any other god but Yahweh. The command is part of a collection of laws that include prohibitions against sorcery, bestiality, and worship of false deities. Three of these laws warn of punishment by death (vv. 18-20), but only worship of a false deity is designated as *ḥerem*. Propp suggests these laws may "appear in order of mounting severity,"[79] explaining why only false worship receives the *ḥerem* designation.

Leviticus 27:28-29 is part of a list of things being sanctified as *ḥerem*. Items on the list may be classified into four categories: time, space, persons, and objects.[80]

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[78] Verse 19 in the Hebrew Bible.

[79] William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentary (New York: Yale University Press, 2006), 258.

[80] Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible (New York: 2001), 2412–13.

Dedicated objects may only be used in the sanctuary.[81] This is an irrevocable consecration.[82] Verse 29 speaks to the devotion of a person as *ḥerem*. This devotion is likewise irrevocable. The context provides no justification for devoting a person as *ḥerem*. However, Jacob Milgrom observes Scripture provides only three reasons *ḥerem* is declared against people: against other nations by vow, against other nations by God's command, or "against [Israel's] own rebels."[83] Further, people are devoted to the *ḥerem* only "by an authorized body after due process of law."[84] This theme will appear again in Deuteronomy 20:10-20.

Deuteronomy 7:1-5

God commands Israel to carry out the *ḥerem* (v. 2b) against the land's inhabitants when they reach Canaan. The command is repeated in verse 26, marking its importance to the theme of the chapter.[85] McConville points to the grammatical and thematic parallels with Exodus 23:30-33[86] where God promises to drive the Canaanites from the land. Deuteronomy 7:1-5 commands Israel to fulfill God's promise of the earlier passage.

Some commentators attempt to explain God's reasoning for the *ḥerem* designation. Rushdoony appeals to the *ḥerem*'s moral purpose of protecting Israel from

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[81] John Hartley, *Leviticus*, rev. ed., Word Biblical Commentary (Zondervan, 2015), 484.

[82] Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, 2nd ed., The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 115.

[83] Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus*, Continental Commentaries, vol. 3B (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004), 330–31, Logos Bible Software.

[84] Ibid., 331.

[85] J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002), 151–52.

[86] Ibid., 150–51; Jack R. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 328; Edward J. Woods, *Deuteronomy* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 142.

the sins of the nations.[87] McConville points to the danger of the Canaanite's false religions.[88] Lundbom seems comfortable leaving God's purposes unknown to the reader.[89] Where these writers agree is that it is God's initiative that drives the command.

Comparing this passage with Exodus 23:30-33 raises the question of extent. Deuteronomy 7:2 uses the *ḥerem* designation. However, the Exodus passage says twice that God will "drive them out" and does not employ the absolute language of complete destruction. Further, immediately following the *ḥerem* command of Deuteronomy 7:2 is a command for Israel to not intermarry with the Canaanites. McConville calls the conversational flow "strictly illogical."[90] Duane Christensen says these texts were written for cultic reenactment[91] and should be read as poetry rather than history,[92] removing the significance of the text depicting an actual event. While this student does not find Christensen's designation of the text as poetry to be convincing, comparing these passages does seem to indicate at least some level of hyperbole in the passage. This study will revisit the presence of hyperbole in OT war narratives throughout.

Deuteronomy 20:10-20

This passage consists of three units. Verses 10-15 govern warfare against nations outside of Canaan, verses 16-18 govern warfare inside Canaan, and verses 19-20 provide

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[87] Rousas Rushdoony, *Deuteronomy: Commentaries on the Pentateuch*, vol. 5 (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2008), 126.

[88] McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 150.

[89] Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 333.

[90] McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 153.

[91] Duane Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-21*, 2nd ed, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), cxi.

[92] Ibid., 157.

general rules for warfare. Israel is commanded to offer peace to nations outside Canaan. McConville and Woods see this in accordance with the customary peace treaty. [93] When warring against nations inside Canaan, God commands Israel to utterly destroy them. Rushdoony believes the distinction is due to the land itself. God was "dispossessing [the Canaanites] as tenants of His earth." Outside Canaan, war was "defensive" against a foreign aggressor.[94] Whether Rushdoony's reasoning stands or not, the distinctiveness of the two sets of laws is clear. Each will be examined in turn.

Laws governing warfare outside of Canaan

Israel is to offer peace to nations outside the Promised Land. Christensen notes the price – "accepting the terms of peace meant submitting to servitude."[95] Nations who refused the peace terms suffered the slaughter of all adult males. Limiting the destruction to only males distinguishes it from the *ḥerem*. Some suggest it was an emasculation to ensure no further threat.[96] Cruel as this may sound to modern ears, Lindbom contrasts it with the violent slaughter of women and children, and other forms of torture common among the neighboring nations. He concludes, "It is generally agreed that Israelite warfare disallowed torture."[97]

The permissible plunder included women and children. McConville reads the passage alongside 21:10-14, which governs the capture of women by instructing the

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[93] Ibid., 320., Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 231.

[94] Rushdoony, *Deuteronomy*, 299–300.

[95] Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-21*, 444.

[96] McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 320. Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 231.

[97] Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 587.

Israelites to make them wives.[98] Christensen points out, "whether or not these besieged towns submit to conquest on the part of the Israelites, the majority of the people are destined to become part of the population of Israel."[99]

The Gibeonite deception of Joshua 9 indicates neighboring nations were aware of Israel's warfare laws. The Gibeonites, a nation within Canaan, approached Israel claiming to be from a distant land and surrendered to the terms of peace. Joshua 9 stands as an example of the Deuteronomy 20 laws in action.[100] Lundbom points out the enslavement of Gibeon as "hewers of wood and drawers of water" was far more dignified than the typical Ancient Near East (ANE) practice of removing an eye from each slave.[101]

Laws governing warfare inside of Canaan

McConville observes this passage places the entire conquest under the *ḥerem*.[102] God had given each of these city-states to Israel as an inheritance.[103] Christensen notes that since "they are subject to the 'ban'… [they] must be utterly destroyed."[104] Joshua 21:43-45 says God gave all of Israel's enemies into their hands and all of God's promises to them were fulfilled. However, McConville draws attention to Judges 1:28-35,

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[98] McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 320.

[99] Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-21*, 444.

[100] McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 320; Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-21*, 446; Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 231.

[101] Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 586.

[102] McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 321.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-21*, 445.

demonstrating Israel failed to fully obey the *ḥerem*.[105] This is another example that indicates a level of hyperbole in the Conquest accounts.

Many scholars seek to explain the harshness of God's command. Christensen spiritualizes the conquest account. For him it is enough to say "the people of Israel used the imagery of war to speak of God himself as the Divine Warrior."[106] He points the modern day reader to spiritual warfare as the truest meaning of conquest laws and narratives.[107]

Other interpreters look for theological explanations. McConville provides three justifications for *ḥerem* warfare.[108] He points to the inevitability of war, the usefulness of these texts for modern warfare, and, like Christensen, parallels with spiritual warfare. Other scholars see a connection between v. 18 and Leviticus 27:28-29. They see the destructiveness of the Canaanite religion and lifestyle as the primary reason for their destruction.[109]

General laws of warfare

McConville remains open to the idea that the siege warfare depicted here belonged to a later date than the traditional date of Deuteronomy.[110] Lundbom rejects the notion, demonstrating the widespread use of the technique in the era. "Israel could

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[105] McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 322.

[106] Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-21*, 449.

[107] Ibid., 448-50.

[108] McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 322–23.

[109] Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 232; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 590; L. Daniel Hawk, *Joshua,* Berit Olam, Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 2000), 101.

[110] McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 321.

certainly have envisioned siege warfare against Canaanite cities."[111] The commentators spend more time discussing the trees of verses 19-20. They say that God cared to protect the eco-system[112] and agriculture for Israel's benefit.[113] Only fruit-trees were to be protected, while others were available for building siege-works against the enemy.

Ḥerem Practice

Having seen the laws governing *ḥerem* warfare, the study will now turn to the display of *ḥerem* warfare on the field of battle. Joshua's conquest of Canaan provides the richest depiction of *ḥerem* warfare. This section seeks to display the realities of *ḥerem* warfare, highlighting difficulties the preacher must address when seeking to proclaim the Gospel from these passages.

Before examining the text, it is necessary to say a brief word about the reliability of the text itself. Pekka Pitkänen, OT professor at the University of Gloucestershire, raises the issue to a matter of faith.[114] For him, the question is "whether Yahweh really was a true god, as the Israelite documents claim" or not.[115] To reject the reliability of the text is to move towards "losing the possibility of a relationship with a living god."[116] This study follows Pitkänen's lead and accepts the text of the Bible as a faithful witness of Yahweh as the true and living God.

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[111] Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 586.

[112] McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 322. Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 232.

[113] Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 588–89.

[114] Pekka Pitkänen, *Joshua*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary, vol. 6 (Nottingham, UK: IVP Academic, 2010), 28–9, 101-07.

[115] Ibid., 161.

[116] Ibid.

Joshua 6, *Ḥerem* against Jericho

The narrator tells of Jericho's destruction with greater detail than any other battle of the Canaanite conquest. David Howard notes the attention given to this battle "emphasizes the importance of the city and its destruction."[117] The importance of this battle may make the content that much more troubling. As Pitkänen says, "The narrative is rather genocidal in character, and it is therefore a bit difficult for modern tastes."[118] Regardless of modern tastes, two key thoughts emerge from the literature; Yahweh is the most violent character of the story, and the Israelites followed *ḥerem* laws with precision.

Yahweh is the most violent character of the story

Scholars from a broad range of eras and backgrounds agree that the Jericho narrative centers on God's supremacy and warrior activity. For Calvin, the entire episode is a display of "divine omnipotence."[119] Keil begins the Jericho narrative in 5:13 where the Angel of the Lord meets with Joshua to confirm "the Lord had given Jericho and its king into his power…"[120] Lennox sees Jericho's closed gates as a sign of the city's refusal to "peacefully acknowledge the supremacy of Israel's God."[121] Hess says Jericho "refused to hear the message of Israel," that God was giving Canaan into their hands.[122]

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[117] David M. Howard, *Joshua: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, The New American Commentary, vol. 5 (Nashville: Holman Reference, 1998), 167.

[118] Pitkänen, *Joshua*, 161.

[119] Calvin, *Joshua/Psalms 1 - 35*, trans. Henry Beveridge, Calvin's Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 93.

[120] C. F. Keil, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I & II Samuel*, trans. James Martin, Keil and Delitzsch Commentary (1861; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 61.

[121] Stephen J. Lennox, *Joshua: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*, New Beacon Bible Commentary (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2015), 120.

[122] Richard Hess, *Joshua*, 140-41.

Howard points the reader back to the Jordan crossing of chapter 3 and says, "both show a great potential obstacle that is then overcome effortlessly by a mighty act of God."[123] The precise instructions for a "ceremonial circling of the city" put the Ark of the Covenant front and center.[124] According to Pitkänen this signals, "Yahweh himself is circling the town,"[125] and Lennox agrees – Israel will merely be participants in "an attack that would largely be undertaken by Yahweh."[126]

Hess says the ceremonial procession is utterly unique in the ANE, and highlights four elements in the procession that point to God's presence and leadership in the battle.[127] First, it appears the highest priority of the armed soldiers is protection of the Ark. Their assault on Jericho after the collapse of the walls is secondary. Next, the ram's horns and loud shouts announce a victory proclamation throughout the OT. Hess cites Numbers 10:2-6 and 2 Samuel 6:15-16 as examples. Third, the march around the city is mirrored in Psalm 48:12 and 2 Kings 6:14. In these texts such a march implies a ceremonial inspection of the enemy's defenses and a warning of "hostile intentions." Finally, the seven days correspond with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, recalling the first Passover and God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Hess concludes, "Even though the people participate, it is God's divine work that will bring down the defenses of the enemy

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[123] Howard, *Joshua*, 168–69. See also Calvin, *Joshua/Psalms 1 - 35*, 92. "We, at the same time, perceive the stupidity of the inhabitants, who place their walls and gates as obstacles to the divine omnipotence; as if it were more difficult to break up or dissolve a few bars and beams than to dry up the Jordan."

[124] Howard, *Joshua*, 167.

[125] Pitkänen, *Joshua*, 158.

[126] Lennox, *Joshua*, 122.

[127] Hess, *Joshua*, 142–43.

and allow no obstacle to withstand the onward movement of God's people into their divine inheritance."[128]

The notion of God as the primary actor is strengthened by a consensus that when Israel did act, they acted in worshipful obedience. Howard points to "ritual preparations for the battle."[129] These ritual preparations cause Lennox to see the entire event as an act of worship.[130] Strengthening this position, many scholars see links to other elements of worship in the OT. Pitkänen recognizes the unusual fact that the march included a Sabbath,[131] which Lennox takes as an emphasis on the holiness of the battle.[132] Further, he sees a parallel in the seven days of creation and rest, in that "Jericho's defeat would mark the beginning of Israel's true rest."[133] Pitkänen ties the trumpets to the Levitical festivals and holy days.[134] Daniel Hawk follows Keil's lead,[135] connecting these elements with the Year of Jubilee in Leviticus 25. Hawk sees in both texts a concern with "possession of land and transference of property."[136] All of this points to God as the initiator and orchestrator of the battle, and Israel's careful obedience.

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[128] Ibid., 143.

[129] Howard, *Joshua*, 174–75.

[130] Lennox, *Joshua*, 119.

[131] Pitkänen, *Joshua*, 158.

[132] Lennox, *Joshua*, 121.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Pitkänen, *Joshua*, 158.

[135] Keil, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I & II Samuel,* 64, 70-1. He connects the trumpets not only with Jubilee but also with the eschaton, sounding very much like Daniel Gard's eschatological continuity. See, Gard, "The Case for Eschatological Continuity."

[136] Hawk, *Joshua*, 94–95.

The Israelites followed *ḥerem* laws with precision

Howard says Deuteronomy 20:16-18 is an "important backdrop" to the Jericho narrative.[137] This passage demands the total destruction of the cities and their inhabitants in Canaan. Hawk calls the ban a "contagious otherness"[138] and highlights "the irrevocable nature of the *ḥerem*"[139] as seen in Leviticus 27:28-29. Although a later section will examine the ethics of *ḥerem* warfare, Calvin's perspective is worth noting here. He describes the battle as an "indiscriminate and promiscuous slaughter" of men, women, and children. He says God, "in whose hands are life and death, had justly doomed those nations to destruction;" and he concludes, "this puts an end to all discussion."[140]

While some readers may find Calvin's submission to the text exemplary, Richard Hess's article "The Jericho and Ai of the Book of Joshua" provides a careful reading of the text that sheds light on the extent of the slaughter. Hess concludes Jericho was a small military fort, potentially boasting fewer than 100 soldiers.[141] Further, he demonstrates that the text does not require the presence of any civilians other than Rahab and her family. The phrase, "men and women," in Josh. 6:21 "appears to be stereotypical for describing all the inhabitants of a town or region… synonymous with 'all, everyone.'"[142]

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[137] Howard, *Joshua*, 166.

[138] Hawk, *Joshua*, 100.

[139] Ibid.

[140] Calvin, *Joshua/Psalms 1 - 35*, 97.

[141] Richard S. Hess, "The Jericho and AI of Joshua," in *Critical Issues in Early Israelite History*, eds. Richard S. Hess, Gerald A. Klingbeil, and Paul J. Ray Jr. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 42.

[142] Ibid., 39.

As innkeepers, Rahab's family may have been the only noncombatants in the camp.[143] Thus, Calvin's "indiscriminate and promiscuous slaughter" may actually be an overstatement of the events.

Some question Israel's obedience in the safekeeping of Rahab. Howard says it "stands in tension with Yahweh's instruction for dealing with" the Canaanites.[144] Hawk points to the emphasis of Rahab's former occupation (v. 25) as evidence that "Israel will always deal with the otherness of Canaan within its own borders."[145] Such a conclusion is not necessary. Hess cites several passages to argue that mercy and forgiveness is always possible with God.[146] Woudstra argues Rahab's salvation was because of her faith, demonstrated in her protection of Israel's agents.[147] Calvin says she had "voluntarily gone over to the Church" and was rescued by "the special grace of God."[148] Likewise, Pitkänen owes Rahab's life to "allying herself with the Israelites and with Yahweh," and in that way the *ḥerem* was obeyed completely.[149] In the same vein, Hess demonstrates that Rahab's family had "ceased to be Canaanites" by devoting "themselves to the God of Israel"[150] and are now Israelites.[151] In this way they escaped "the terrible destruction of the ban," while the *ḥerem* remained absolute.[152]

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[143] Ibid.

[144] Howard, *Joshua*, 173.

[145] Hawk, *Joshua*, 104.

[146] Hess, *Joshua*, 146.

[147] Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, 113.

[148] Calvin, *Joshua/Psalms 1 - 35*, 99.

[149] Pitkänen, *Joshua*, 161.

[150] Hess, *Joshua*, 146.

Joshua's curse in v. 26 is a further demonstration of obedience to the ban. Jericho will remain in a *ḥerem* state indefinitely. The curse is referenced in 1 Kings 16:34 to explain the demise of one who rebuilt the city. Hawk says, "Joshua's curse takes on the character of a prophetic utterance, the fulfillment of which will be duly noted by the biblical narrator."[153] Howard sees the episode as testimony to God's faithfulness to words "legitimately spoken on his behalf."[154] Lennox and Hess both agree. Jericho will remain a "monument to the firstfruits of God's victory" in Canaan,[155] a "symbol of the power of Israel's God to all who would see it,"[156] and a warning against any who would attempt to act "in opposition to the command of God."[157]

Joshua 7, *Ḥerem* in the Camp

Not everyone obeyed the ban on the plunder of Jericho. Achan took of devoted things and brought punishment upon Israel. Several authors point to 6:18 as a hint of what was to come in chapter 7.[158] In short, if they act like the Canaanites, they will be treated like the Canaanites. Even with fair warning, the devastating result of *ḥerem* in the

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[151] Ibid., 147.

[152] Ibid., 146.

[153] Hawk, *Joshua*, 104.

[154] Howard, *Joshua*, 176.

[155] Lennox, *Joshua*, 126.

[156] Hess, *Joshua*, 148.

[157] Calvin, *Joshua/Psalms 1 - 35*, 101.

[158] Robert G. Boling, *Joshua*, Anchor Bible Commentary, vol. 6 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1982), 220; Hawk, *Joshua*, 102; Howard, *Joshua*, 173; Keil, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I & II Samuel*, 74; Pitkänen, *Joshua*, 159.

camp presents God "as harsh as anywhere in the Bible."[159] Questions emerge such as, why did God allow thirty-six Israelites to die because of Achan's sin? And why was the punishment so severe?

Why did God allow 36 Israelites to die because of Achan's sin?

The literature highlights an overconfidence in human strength and reason displayed in v. 2-4. Prior to the battle for Jericho (chapter 6) and the battle against the five kings (chapter 10) Joshua demonstrates a prayerful seeking of God's will. In the Gibeonite deception narrative (chapter 9) the text provides a chastising comment in v. 14 that Israel "did not ask counsel from the Lord." Chapter 7 provides no evidence that Joshua sought God's counsel in his strategy against Ai. Hess points out the absence of any acknowledgement of God's promises, "but only an evaluation of the likelihood of military success on the basis of the perceived strength of the enemy."[160] He further states that without "explicit divine directions" Israel was inviting defeat.[161] Hawk compares their fleshly confidence with "the peoples of the land, relying on its own might and ingenuity."[162]

Additionally, Calvin acknowledges a biblical precedent for private sin to be "transferred to the whole people" but admits that this seems extreme.[163] Butler sees a "divine anger" dominating the narrative and directed toward Israel, who disregarded "her

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[159] Lennox, *Joshua*, 137.

[160] Hess, *Joshua*, 160.

[161] Ibid., 161.

[162] Hawk, *Joshua*, 113.

[163] Calvin, *Joshua/Psalms 1 - 35*, 103.

obligation to [God]."[164] But how did Israel sin in this way? David Firth sees the lengthy genealogy of v. 1 serving to effectively tie Achan to the larger Israelite community.[165] Following a similar thread, Calvin suggests God is inducing Israel "to give more diligent heed to the prevention of crimes."[166] Lennox points out that when Israel asked for an explanation for their defeat at Ai, God gave one (v. 11-12).[167] His explanation focuses exclusively on the violation of the *ḥerem*,[168] making all Israel "liable to destruction as Jericho had been."[169] As Pitkänen summarizes, "Yahweh must be followed completely, and there is no room for coveting what belongs to him."[170]

Why was the punishment so severe?

Whereas Rahab had become an Israelite by her actions,[171] according to Hawk, Achan had made himself a "Canaanite within."[172] Pitkänen employs an analogy of a balloon. If the *ḥerem* of Jericho is a balloon, the pinprick of a single violation "deflates the whole balloon."[173] Howard states, "Achan's sin had infected the entire nation of

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[164] Trent C. Butler, *Joshua*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 7 (Waco, TX: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 83.

[165] David G. Firth, *The Message of Joshua*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 87.

[166] Calvin, *Joshua/Psalms 1 - 35*, 104.

[167] Lennox, *Joshua*, 137.

[168] Ibid., 132.

[169] Ibid., 129.

[170] Pitkänen, *Joshua*, 183.

[171] Hess, *Joshua*, 146.

[172] Hawk, *Joshua*, 108.

[173] Pitkänen, *Joshua*, 176–77.

Israel…"[174] Moving beyond the contamination of the *ḥerem*, Hamlin sees a connection between the use of the term "shameful thing" (v. 15) and its use "elsewhere in the OT only to describe violations of sexual ethics."[175] He believes the narrator is suggesting Achan's sin would lead to "participation in the fertility rites and the destruction of family life" in Israel.[176] Calvin makes the results plain: "a rotten member is cut off from the body, and the camp is purified from pollution."[177]

But why did Achan's family have to die with him? Calvin admits the natural reaction: "It seems harsh, nay, barbarous and inhuman, that young children, without fault, should be hurried off to cruel execution, to be stoned and burned."[178] Yet, he hurries to warn the reader of "presumption and extravagant pride" by remembering "how much more deeply divine knowledge penetrates than human intellect" is able.[179] Howard says, "ridding Israel of the stain of this sin required the annihilation of everything with which he had had intimate contact…"[180] Hess sees the inclusion of Achan's children as heightening the punishment by removing his very name, and therefore "future generations" from the earth.[181] Deuteronomy 24:16 prohibits the execution of children for

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[174] Howard, *Joshua*, 198.

[175] E. John Hamlin, *Inheriting the Land: A Commentary on the Book of Joshua*, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 61.

[176] Ibid., 62.

[177] Calvin, *Joshua/Psalms 1 - 35*, 116.

[178] Ibid., 117.

[179] Ibid.

[180] Howard, *Joshua*, 198.

[181] Hess, *Joshua*, 170.

their father's sin. It seems indefensible to assume Achan's family was unaware of his transgression, thereby making themselves willing participants.

Summary

Chapter one identified three problems preachers will face when proclaiming the Gospel from OT war narratives. They are: cultural problems, theological problems, and Gospel proclamation problems.

This section discovered many cultural problems facing the Christian preacher. Images of genocide, terrorism, and holocaust may come to mind for many modern day readers of *ḥerem* texts. The literature did not provide interpretive principles to guide the preacher through these difficulties. The following section explores this problem further.

Theological problems also emerged. The preacher committed to the historical reliability of the text must answer difficult questions surrounding the nature of God. While some writers approached these issues, further study is required. A later section will investigate *ḥerem* warfare through the lens of biblical theology.

The problems most central to this study are Gospel proclamation problems. Graeme Goldsworthy says, "The purpose of God's Word is to proclaim Christ to a lost world."[182] According to Keller this understanding of Scripture has direct preaching implications. "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."[183]

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[182] Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 122.

[183] Keller, *Preaching*, 48.

How does one accomplish this task from texts like the Canaanite conquest? The final section of this chapter seeks to mine these principles, specifically for OT war narratives.

American Attitudes Toward War Violence

Preaching Professor Zack Eswine says he prays for the advent of preachers who will engage culture with biblical exposition.[184] This study is concerned with proclaiming the Gospel from OT war narratives. What worldviews should preachers anticipate from those in their audience? What attitudes might these audience members have towards war violence? This section will seek to briefly summarize the positions of secularism, pacifism, Islam, and Just War Tradition.

Secularism

George Weigel is a political activist who believes he is viewed as "a threat to the public order," not for any sort of insurrection, "but precisely because I am an orthodox Christian."[185] Tim Keller has encountered many secularists who believe Christians view them exactly the same way. He says in today's American culture, "both skeptics and believers feel their existence is threatened because both secular skepticism and religious faith are on the rise in significant, powerful ways."[186] The following discussion seeks to answer two questions. How should preachers understand this rising secularism? And, what challenges will preachers face when preaching war texts to secularists in their audience?

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[184] Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World*, 11–12.

[185] George Weigel, "The Christian Citizen and Democracy," in *Reinventing the American People: Unity and Diversity Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 173.

[186] Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), xiv-xv.

American Secularism

In *A Secular Age,* Charles Taylor contrasts the cultural values of transcendence and immanence.[187] Transcendence is characterized by a shared belief in God's authority, which governs societal domains like morality, law, and human relationships. Keller describes an older age that believed "there was a transcendent moral order outside the self, built into the fabric of the universe."[188]

Immanence directly opposes transcendence as a governing authority. According to Keller, modernity reversed the order. "Instead of trying to shape our desire to fit reality, we now seek to control and shape reality to fit our desires."[189] Human flourishing has now become the highest cultural value, what Taylor calls, the "maximal demand."[190] Os Guinness agrees. "The Jewish-Christian picture of a lawgiving God ordering the world has been ousted from its role as one of the generally accepted organizing assumptions of intellectual life."[191] Taylor adds, "Of no previous society was this true."[192]

Bernard Häring makes the case that the resulting secularism is not necessarily atheistic.[193] James Smith agrees. Commenting on Taylor's work, he demonstrates it is not

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[187] Taylor, *A Secular Age*.

[188] Keller, *The Reason for God*, 71.

[189] Ibid.

[190] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 639.

[191] Os Guinness, *The American Hour: A Time of Reckoning and the Once and Future Role of Faith* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 66.

[192] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 18.

[193] Bernard Häring, *Faith and Morality in the Secular Age* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973), 30.

belief in the supernatural that offends modern secularism. Rather, "it's that pursuing a way of life that values something beyond human flourishing becomes unimaginable."[194] According to a surprised Smith, Taylor seems to accept the legitimacy of the maximal demand.[195]

Smith explains that in secularized Christianity "the telos of God's providential concern is circumscribed within immanence."[196] Häring sees this "immanentism" as a peril to the faith.[197] He says, if "all God really cares about is our flourishing, then aspects of Christianity begin to look untenable."[198] What happens then, as Christians and non-Christians alike encounter OT war narratives from this secular context? Are they able to show their audiences that God's agenda is greater than human flourishing?

Secularism's Challenges to Preachers

Häring describes the modern man as devoted to overthrowing "myths" such as holy war, sacred kingdoms, powers, and dynasties.[199] The previous section touched on many of these themes from the biblical literature. When the secularist encounters these themes, according to Matthew Flannagan, the obvious and repulsive conclusion is that God does not condemn genocide.[200] Further, the cultural rift is not just between the

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[194] James K. A. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 83.

[195] Ibid., 113.

[196] Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 49.

[197] Häring, *Faith and Morality in the Secular Age*, 31.

[198] Ibid., 115.

[199] Ibid., 24.

[200] Matthew Flannagan, "Did God Command the Genocide of the Canaanites?," in *Come Let Us Reason: New Essays in Christian Apologetics,* eds. Paul Copan and William Lane Craig (Nashville: B&H

secularist and God, but between the secularist and God's people. Christopher Wright says that for many the "problem lies in understanding people who claim to believe in such a God."[201]

What then is the preacher to do? Smith describes a culturally shared "unease and restlessness"[202] tied to Taylor's discussion of the realities of time and death.[203] According to Zack Eswine, these are the kinds of things the war narratives address.[204] Smith advocates for an apologetic that tells "an alternative story that offers a more robust, complex understanding of the Christian faith."[205] Eswine's admonition to preach the war texts requires such an approach. "Wrestling with [the horror of war] exposes our longing for the peace God redeems for us in Christ."[206] Later sections of this study will seek to uncover effective methodologies to that end.

Pacifism

"The abolition of war has long been an aspiration of mankind."[207] David Fisher, former NATO Defense Counselor, goes on to reference Isaiah 11:6 envisioning a future day of peace for which humanity longs.[208] In the days of Constantine, Christian

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Academic, 2012), 233.

[201] Wright, *The God I Don't Understand,* 73.

[202] Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 129.

[203] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 714–27.

[204] Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World*, 193–204.

[205] Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 77.

[206] Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World*, 204.

[207] Fisher, *Morality and War,* 244.

[208] Ibid.

theologians moved towards the development of a Just War Tradition.[209] Isaiah's day of peace was anticipated in the *eschaton*, while war in the here-and-now was an accepted reality.[210]

Pacifism, however, "renounces all war"[211] and demands that for the Christian the spirit of Isaiah 11:6 must be realized now. Jesuit scholar and former Congressman, Robert Drinan, demonstrates that there are varying degrees of pacifism. Pacifism can range from a broad condemnation of all war, to a more moderate conviction that only modern war is unjustifiable.[212] The following sections will provide a broad definition of pacifism, the biblical theologies that drive pacifistic thought, and the concept of biblical peacemaking as an alternative position on war and faith.

Towards a Definition of Pacifism

John Dever provides a summary definition of a pacifist as one who "renounces all war, specifically wars fought with modern weapons."[213] This study is concerned with ancient, rather than modern warfare. However, understanding the apprehensions a pacifist brings to the text will benefit preachers when looking at war narratives.

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[209] John Dever, "Pacifism," in *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), Accordance Bible Software.

[210] Ibid.

[211] Ibid.

[212] Robert Drinan, "Is Pacifism the Only Option Left for Christians?," in *War and Christian Ethics: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 321.

[213] Dever, "Pacifism."

Ethicist Robert Clark, argues that for the first few centuries Christians were forbidden from any act of violence.[214] However, Professor of Religion and Ethics, Daryl Charles, demonstrates that perspectives of war and violence in the early church were far too varied for historians to define a single "ancient church" position.[215] The discussion must therefore turn from history to theology.

Drawing from the Anabaptist tradition, thinkers like John Howard Yoder[216] and Stanley Hauerwas[217] call true Christians to not serve in any public office,[218] but separate from society and "form communities that by their very existence are a light to the world."[219] Mennonite scholars Willard Swartley and Alan Kreider draw a more permissive line, allowing Christians limited public service provided one's actions do not "take the life of the enemy or evil one."[220] The implications become very specific. Clark concludes that a Christian must not serve as a judge,[221] and Swartley and Kreider argue a Christian police officer must be unarmed.[222] An even more permissive pacifist position

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[214] Robert Clark, "The Case for All-Out Pacifism," in *Pacifism and War* ed. Oliver R. Barclay (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), 108–11.

[215] J. Daryl Charles, *Between Pacifism and Jihad: Just War and Christian Tradition* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 34–37.

[216] John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994).

[217] Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer In Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991).

[218] Charles, *Between Pacifism and Jihad*, 91.

[219] Ibid., 89.

[220] Willard Swartley and Alan Dreider, "Pacifist Christianity: The Kingdom Way," in *Pacifism and War* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), 56.

[221] Clark, "The Case for All-Out Pacifism," 90.

[222] Swartley and Dreider, "Pacifist Christianity," 57.

holds that only modern war is unjustifiable. This belief may be based in reaction to the catastrophic destruction of modern weaponry,[223] or because post-crucifixion, the Christian can trust in the reality of God's sovereign reign.[224] Thus, there is no single definition of pacifism.

Theological Ideologies Behind Pacifism

Just as pacifism defies a single definition,[225] so also it stems from a diversity of theological ideologies. Some pacifist theologians come to the text with a low view of Scripture. Others see a strong discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments. Still others are motivated by a positive theology of the exclusivity of the Kingdom of God.

Low View of Scripture

Liberal theologian C. S. Cowles distinguishes between the God of the Bible and the God revealed in Jesus.[226] Religion Professor John Wood sees a similar inconsistency in the biblical text, though he does not go so far as Cowles. The title of his book, *Perspectives on War in the Bible*, can serve as a summary statement of his position that there is no normative view of war in Scripture.[227] To Cowles the God of the Bible is genocidal,[228] full of fury,[229] and irreconcilable with the God of love and grace revealed in

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[223] Drinan, "Is Pacifism the Only Option Left for Christians?," 321–22, Clark, "The Case for All-Out Pacifism," 94–5.

[224] Duane Friesen, "The Convergence of Pacifism and Just War," in *War and Christian Ethics: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 370; Vernard Eller, *War and Peace from Genesis to Revelation: King Jesus' Manual of Arms for the Armless* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1981).

[225] Dever, "Pacifism."

[226] Cowles, "The Case for Radical Discontinuity," 23.

[227] John Wood, *Perspectives on War in the Bible* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 4–5.

[228] Ibid., 26.

Jesus.[230] To Wood, the God of the Bible is open to interpretation. He believes that the authors of Scripture wrote according to their understanding at that time, which represented a diversity of opinions over the course of biblical history.[231] Thus, the interpreter can find elements of pacifism throughout the biblical corpus.[232]

Pacifists writing from this low view of Scripture are free to approach the text from the Anabaptist focal point of the Sermon on the Mount.[233] There is no need to justify OT War Texts with New Testament calls to love one's enemy, because the interpreter can dismiss the old wineskins of these problem texts in favor of the new wine of Jesus.[234] This position stands in contrast to writers like Swartley, Kreider, and Clark who believe in the inerrancy of the whole Bible. Rather than rejecting or deconstructing the OT message, they build their pacifism from a theology of discontinuity between the Testaments.

Discontinuity of the Old and New Testaments

Clark affirms the authority of the OT but believes that Israel's wars were fought only because of the hardness of man's hearts.[235] God hates human wars.[236] Swartley and Kreider would agree that "military violence of the nations never was, is, or shall be the

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[229] Cowles, "The Case for Radical Discontinuity," 28.

[230] Ibid., 14.

[231] Wood, *Perspectives on War in the Bible*, 5.

[232] Ibid., 104–116.

[233] Dever, "Pacifism."

[234] Cowles, "The Case for Radical Discontinuity," 19–31.

[235] Clark, "The Case for All-Out Pacifism," 105.

[236] Ibid., 104.

way to achieve God's justice and *shalom* upon the earth."[237] Wood, here assuming some accuracy of the OT text, illustrates the discontinuity by showing that Jesus preached peace while standing on the exact physical location of Joshua's first battles in Canaan.[238]

For Clark the stark contrast comes from the distinction between law and grace. He argues that the Israelite soldier, under the law, did not see himself as a sinner. Therefore it seemed right for him to kill the enemy of God. However, the Christian living under grace is aware of indwelling sin and must therefore extend the same grace.[239] Charles counters Clark's position, saying it "wrongly presumes ethical discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments.[240] Frame demonstrates that while the requirements of ceremonial and judicial law have changed, God's moral law transcends both Testaments.[241]

Swartley and Kreider avoid the "ethical discontinuity" accusation by connecting Christ to the Divine Warrior theme of the OT by spiritualizing the battle against evil. They see Jesus, standing in the holy war tradition, combating evil "solely through the power of his prophetic word and action, thus doing the work of God (John 5:17)."[242] So, Jesus' life and death in spiritual war against evil become the Christian's model.[243] The

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[237] Swartley and Dreider, "Pacifist Christianity," 48.

[238] Wood, *Perspectives on War in the Bible*, 123.

[239] Clark, "The Case for All-Out Pacifism," 103–04.

[240] Charles, *Between Pacifism and Jihad*, 91.

[241] John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2008), 200-217.

[242] Swartley and Dreider, "Pacifist Christianity," 46.

[243] Ibid., 47.

New Testament move from physical battle to spiritual battle satisfies biblical inerrancy while finding a place for pacifism.

Exclusivity of the Kingdom of God

Christ's spiritual war against evil becomes the backdrop to perhaps the most widely held perspective of Christian pacifism. This view overlaps with the previous two but operates from a unique theological position. Brethren Minister Vernard Eller articulates the view exceptionally well in his work, *War and Peace from Genesis to Revelation.* The title of the third chapter quickly summarizes his position: "It's His War. Let Him Fight It!"[244] Eller's argument is that in God's war against evil, he enlisted Israel for physical battle and has enlisted the church for spiritual battle. This spiritual battle is to be the Church's only concern. Thus, his ecclesiology removes the church from all social action, not merely war.

Christian pacifists holding this view take Eller's argument to its final conclusion, removing Christians from all social action. Clark, for example, recognizes the pragmatic need for violence, yet distinguishes between two classes of God's servants. Ministers of the state conduct the secular business of government, including war,[245] while Christians are called upon to "serve our generation in ways other than war violence."[246] As seen earlier, this is what leads Clark to call Christians to a complete abstinence from any public service.

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[244] Eller, *War and Peace from Genesis to Revelation*, 63.

[245] Clark, "The Case for All-Out Pacifism," 88.

[246] Ibid., 97.

Friesen highlights the present reality of the Kingdom of God as a necessity for pacifist theology.[247] Swartley and Kreider argue that the very nature of the church demands exclusive allegiance to God's Kingdom,[248] and they emphasize evangelism and peace as Kingdom ethics. They make the argument plain: "Killing the enemy deprives him of the opportunity to repent,"[249] and any other position does not take seriously "the possibility of converting the enemy."[250] They rebuke those pursuing a Just War ethic, saying, "We have more important, and more specifically Christian, things to do."[251] Friesen, a non-pacifist, agrees that Christians have a higher calling, and he brings another option into the discussion.

Biblical Peacemaking

Duane Friesen attempts to draw Just War and pacifist perspectives together under the banner of biblical peacemaking.[252] Instead of the concern of how to justifiably wage war, Friesen focuses on "how one prevents conflict from breaking out and how peace can be made between parties in conflict with each other."[253] He argues that both Just War and pacifism have a negative preoccupation with violence when the Christian should focus on the "positive moral obligation" to make and preserve peace.[254]

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[247] Friesen, "The Convergence of Pacifism and Just War," 368.

[248] Swartley and Dreider, "Pacifist Christianity," 52.

[249] Ibid., 53.

[250] Ibid., 55–6.

[251] Ibid., 59.

[252] Friesen, "The Convergence of Pacifism and Just War," 355.

[253] Ibid.

[254] Ibid., 358.

A variety of viewpoints seem to favor Friesen's call to peacemaking. Wood values the rejection of power paradigms in favor of peace paradigms.[255] Swartley and Kreider see future peace coming only through the "reconciliation of all things in Christ."[256] Clark calls Christians to serve others.[257] Even Fisher, the non-pacifist Defense Counselor, acknowledges an age-old desire to abolish war. [258]

Though peacemaking may approach reconciliation between pacifists and non-pacifists, it does not resolve all the obstacles for preachers. The peace described in OT war narratives is not one of reconciliation, but one that follows completed judgment. Preachers who wish to proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives will need to look further to overcome these obstacles.

Islam

On September 17, 2001, President George W. Bush spoke at the Islamic Center of Washington D.C. His remarks sparked controversy when he said, "The face of terror is not the true faith of Islam. That's not what Islam is all about. Islam is peace."[259] Georgetown Professor of International Affairs and Islamic Studies, John Esposito, infers that most Americans erroneously link all Muslims "to headline terrorist events."[260] He

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[255] Wood, *Perspectives on War in the Bible*, 118–19.

[256] Swartley and Dreider, "Pacifist Christianity," 60.

[257] Clark, "The Case for All-Out Pacifism," 97.

[258] Fisher, *Morality and War*, 244.

[259] George W. Bush, "Remarks at the Islamic Center of Washington," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* 37, no. 38 (September 24, 2001): 1327-1328, accessed March 28, 2018, https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/WCPD-2001-09-24/WCPD-2001-09-24-Pg1327/summary.

[260] John L. Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.

believes this is problematic because "Muslims are and increasingly will be our neighbors, colleagues at work, and fellow citizens."[261] Cowles and Longman demonstrate that when preachers open to an OT war narrative many a mind's eye will unwittingly see scenes of Islamic terrorism.[262] Though Merrill draws the reader's attention to the incongruity between *ḥerem* warfare and Islamic terrorism,[263] for many the equation stands: "The people in the OT … justify terrorism in the name of God."[264]

The preacher is thus confronted with two erroneous cultural barriers. First, *ḥerem* warfare is not terrorism. Second, the parishioner may falsely assume his Muslim neighbor or colleague is a terrorist.[265] Since this study is concerned with Gospel proclamation from these texts of warfare, the preacher will be aided with having an understanding of Muslim attitudes toward war violence. It is beyond the scope of this study to evaluate the Quranic texts addressing warfare or the history of Muslim warfare. Rather, the focus is on current Muslim attitudes toward war violence.

Pakistani Christian and Professor of Social Justice, Charles Amjad-Ali, suggests that *jihad* is "the most recognizable Muslim word to most in the West,"[266] and argues that it is greatly misunderstood. Professor of Religious Ethics, James Johnson, agrees[267] and

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[261] Ibid.

[262] Cowles, "The Case for Radical Discontinuity," 14; Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," 161–63.

[263] Merrill, "The Case for Moderate Discontinuity," 92.

[264] Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World*, 196.

[265] It will be seen later that the vast majority of Muslims are opposed to acts of terrorism.

[266] Charles Amjad-Ali, "Jihad and Just War Theory," 243.

[267] James Turner Johnson, *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Univ Pr, 1997), 30.

acknowledges a Western assumption that in *jihad* all non-Muslims are the enemy, and there are no limits to what can be done to them.[268] However, citing a Gallup World Poll conducted in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, Esposito demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of Muslims do not share this view of *jihad*. The Poll surveyed Muslims in 35 Islamic nations. While 60% of those surveyed had an unfavorable view of American policies, 93% agreed with the statement, "the 9/11 attacks could not be justified."[269]

While it is true that Osama bin Ladin's "Letter to the American People" uses the Quran to justify his actions,[270] Indonesian Muslim scholar, Zakiyuddin Baidhawy, shows that the global Muslim community remains unconvinced by such appeals. He argues that although *jihad* has caused much trouble in the world, calls to global *jihad* have "never spread to mobilize the masses worldwide" and therefore have "found very little support in the Muslim communities in the world."[271] The literature indicates three factors limiting the spread of global militant *jihad*: theological diversity within Islam, Just War Tradition (JWT) in Muslim teaching, and the nature(s) of *jihad*.

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[268] Ibid., 101.

[269] Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*, 150.

[270] Osama bin Ladin, "Letter to the American People," in *The Islam/West Debate: Documents from a Global Debate on Terrorism, U.S. Policy, and the Middle East* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 117.

[271] Zakiyuddin Baidhawy, "Jihad and Mujahid of Peace," in *The Clash of Ijtihad: Fundamentalist Versus Liberal Muslims,* ed. Hisanori Kato (Delhi: ISPCK, 2011), 52.

Theological Diversity within Islam

Professor of Policy Studies, Hisanori Kato, has compiled a series of essays highlighting the debate between fundamentalist and liberal Muslims.[272] The resulting work demonstrates a rich diversity within Islam that goes far beyond the commonly known Sunni/Shi'ite divide. As Esposito summarizes, "there are many Muslim interpretations of Islam."[273] This study will limit the discussion to Muslim interpretations of war.

Christian Missionary Phil Parshall cites many examples of sanctioned violence in the *Hadith*, which he believes "undeniably affirm religious violence."[274] However, the authoritative quality of the *Hadith* is debated. Muslim scholar, Scott Lucas, describes the *Hadith* as a "collection of writings from 12 Imams" considered sacred by Shi'ite Muslims.[275] Their authority is secondary to the Quran,[276] according to Professor of Arabic and Ethics Roger Allen, and subject to "textual analysis and criticism."[277] Ultimately it is the Quran that serves as the "basic source" and "primary authority" that establishes Islamic teachings.[278] What then does the Quran teach about war and war violence?

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[272] Hisanori Kato, ed., *The Clash of Ijtihad: Fundamentalist Versus Liberal Muslims* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2011).

[273] Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*, 4.

[274] Phil Parshall, *Understanding Muslim Teachings and Traditions: A Guide for Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 111.

[275] Scott C. Lucas, "Hadith and Sunna," in *Islam: A Short Guide to the Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 39.

[276] Roger Allen, "Qur'an," in *Islam: A Short Guide to the Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 26.

[277] Ibid., 27.

[278] Ibid., 26.

Just War Tradition and Islam

Johnson notes that while western and Muslim understandings of JWT vary on specifics, there are overlapping concepts. In both traditions a distinction is made between combatants and non-combatants, and limitations are set in regard to their treatment.[279] Muslim JWT prohibits soldiers from killing noncombatants and forbids torture.[280] Further, it requires proportionality, and does not permit "wanton slaughter."[281] Contrary to the tactics of many Islamic terrorists today, Parshall notes the Quran limits warfare to men that are at least 15 years old,[282] and Esposito shows that it forbids Muslims from suicide.[283]

Baidhawy highlights that war should never bring "forcible conversion,"[284] and that nominal conversion is not true conversion.[285] This is in direct contradiction to bin Ladin's "Letter to the American People," where he explains his actions, saying, "The first thing that we are calling you to is Islam."[286] A letter signed by 153 of bin Ladin's fellow Saudi Arabian intellectuals cites the Quran to justify their statement, "It is forbidden to

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[279] Johnson, *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions*, 102.

[280] Ibid., 115–16.

[281] Ibid., 102.

[282] Parshall, *Understanding Muslim Teachings and Traditions*, 102.

[283] Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*, 142.

[284] Baidhawy, "Jihad and Mujahid of Peace," 43.

[285] Ibid., 45.

[286] bin Ladin, "Letter to the American People," 120.

impose a religious faith upon a person."[287] While Johnson states, "the fundamental objective of *jihad* is to universalize the Islamic faith,"[288] Amjad-Ali says, "The Qur'an nowhere demands that the Muslims should remain permanently at war with the non-believers."[289] Though the reality of Islamic terrorism demonstrates not all Muslims agree, for many it would appear that a distinction is drawn between *jihad* and physical warfare.

Nature(s) of *Jihad*

Baidhawy argues from linguistics that *jihad* is not the best Arabic word for war. If *jihad* in the Quran was simply speaking of physical war other words would have been more useful.[290] Of course, *jihad* sometimes does refer to war. "*Jihad* can mean either an internal struggle aiming to bring about personal growth or an external struggle with the goal of achieving justice."[291] Though external *jihad* has a high global profile, Islam considers it the lesser *jihad*.[292] Even still, the external struggle is not always one involving physical battle. Muslim apologist Mirza Tahir Ahmad speaks of, "A holy war against evil, not with the help of the sword… but more so by constant admonition, advice and wise counsel."[293] Amjad-Ali agrees, "*Jihad* also includes the striving and establishing of justice… and freedom for all…"[294]

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[287] Ibrahim b. Muhammad al-Shahwan, et. al., "How We Can Coexist," in *The Islam/West Debate: Documents from a Global Debate on Terrorism, U.S. Policy, and the Middle East* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 66.

[288] Johnson, *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions*, 115.

[289] Amjad-Ali, "Jihad and Just War Theory," 246.

[290] Baidhawy, "Jihad and Mujahid of Peace," 42.

[291] Ibid., 46.

[292] Parshall, *Understanding Muslim Teachings and Traditions*, 98.

[293] Mirza Tahir Ahmad, *Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues* (Tilford, UK: ISlam International

Many scholars attest to Baidhawy's *jihad* of internal struggle for personal growth. They distinguish between the "greater *jihad*," which is the internal struggle, and the "lesser *jihad*," which often involves warfare.[295] Johnson is quick to remind the reader of the "greater *jihad*" which he defines as "that of the heart (moral reformation), that of the tongue (proclaiming God's word abroad), and that of the hand (works in accord with the will of God)."[296] Parshall says, "Greater *jihad* is an internal battle for righteousness that should take place in the life of every Muslim."[297]

Currently, many Muslims preach *jihad* as the socio-political struggle for peace,[298] and Johnson demonstrates that many reject terrorism in the name *jihad* itself.[299] Yale Professor of Arabic Literature, Shawkat Toorawa, writes, "*Jihad* has been widely used and abused, both as a term and as a course of action, by Muslims and non-Muslims alike."[300] It seems that many may agree with Parshall's call on Muslim scholars to develop a deeper understanding of the greater *jihad*.[301]

Publicatio, 2007), 115.

[294] Amjad-Ali, "Jihad and Just War Theory," 245.

[295] Ibid., 244.

[296] Johnson, *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions*, 19.

[297] Parshall, *Understanding Muslim Teachings and Traditions*, 98.

[298] Baidhawy, "Jihad and Mujahid of Peace," 50–1.

[299] Johnson, *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions*, 170.

[300] Shawkat M. Toorawa, "Islam," in *Islam: A Short Guide to the Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 7.

[301] Ibid., 112.

Conclusion

If Esposito is correct that Muslims will continue to have an increasing presence on the American landscape, preachers must be prepared to handle OT war texts in a way that demonstrates an accurate understanding of Muslim attitudes towards war violence. Parshall encourages Christians to present the New Testament in contrast to Muslim teachings on war and *jihad*.[302] Presenting the Gospel through OT war texts will require further study.

Just War Tradition

Whether examining its evolution in Western thought[303] or comparing it against the diverse war ethics across the globe,[304] many experts agree, Just War Tradition (JWT) is a "shifting tradition…"[305] Space does not permit a thorough treatment of JWT. Rather than digging deep into this shifting tradition, the following two sections will explore the basic tenets of JWT then note problems preachers face when preaching OT war narratives in a culture that assumes the values of JWT.[306]

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[302] Ibid.

[303] James Turner Johnson, *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War: A Moral and Historical Inquiry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 121–280.

[304] Ilesanmi, "Just War Theory in Comparative Perspective," 139–55.

[305] Fisher, *Morality and War,* 64.

[306] John Howard Yoder, *When War Is Unjust: Being Honest in Just-War Thinking* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 17.

Basic Tenets of Just War Tradition

Though the seeds of JWT predate Christianity,[307] Just War theorists find the core of the tradition's development in the writings of Christian thinkers.[308] From these sources, the Latin phrases, *Jus ad bellum* (just cause) and *Jus in bello* (just means) form the concepts undergirding all other JWT tenets.[309] Arthur Holmes, explains JWT in seven rules.[310] David Fisher provides a similar list,[311] and Richard Regan summarizes JWT with only four tenets.[312] Due to the succinctness of his rules, Holmes' thoughts will guide the discussion here. Each of the seven rules will be considered in turn.

Holmes' first rule is "just cause." He explains, "All aggression is condemned; only defensive war is legitimate."[313] This does not necessarily preclude intervention on another's behalf. Arne Johan Vetlessen argues that JWT requires the bystander to intervene in cases of genocide.[314] The second rule is "just intention." This means, "The

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[307] For a concise summary of the history of JWT see Bernard Adeney, *Just War, Political Realism, and Faith* (Philadelphia: Scarecrow Press, 1988), 23–48; Fisher, *Morality and War*, 64–80.

[308] For example, part one of Henrik Syse and Gregory Reichberg's anthology of Just War essays, "The Medieval Roots of Just War," deals almost exclusively with Christian sources. Henrik Syse and Gregory M. Reichberg, eds., *Ethics, Nationalism, and Just War: Medieval and Contemporary Perspectives* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007).

[309] Richard J. Regan, *Just War: Principles and Cases* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 18.

[310] Arthur F. Holmes, "The Just War," in *War: Four Christian Views* ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL, 1981), 120–21.

[311] Fisher, *Morality and War*, 67–80.

[312] Regan, *Just War*, 63–98.

[313] Holmes, "The Just War," 120.

[314] Arne Johan Vetlesen, "Genocide: A Case for the Responsibility of the Bystander," in *Ethics, Nationalism, and Just War: Medieval and Contemporary Perspectives,* eds. Henrik Syse and Gregory M. Reichberg (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 352–71.

only legitimate intention is to secure a just peace for all involved."[315] Conquest and economic gain are illegitimate reasons for war.[316] Recognizing intention is not always clearly determined, Fisher allows for the complexity of human motive. "What counts is the dominant intention…" which must seek to right the wrong addressed by the just cause. "Right intentions, thus narrowly construed, still lead to peace."[317]

Third on Holmes' list is "last resort." Pacifist John Howard Yoder argues that JWT offers no clarity on what constitutes a last resort.[318] Fisher seems to concede this point, but states the rule "recognizes the immense suffering that war may cause." War is chosen only when all "other options are deemed unlikely to succeed.[319] "Formal declaration" is fourth. Holmes summarily says, "… [A] state of war must be officially declared by the highest authorities."[320] The fifth rule is "limited objectives." This puts restraints on the extent of damage one nation can inflict on another. If the purpose is peace ("just intention") unconditional surrender or destruction of a nation's institutions "is an unwarranted objective."[321]

Sixth is "proportionate means." For Holmes, this means "The weaponry and force used should be limited to what is needed to … secure a just peace."[322] However, Regan

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[315] Holmes, "The Just War," 120.

[316] Ibid.

[317] Fisher, *Morality and War*, 72.

[318] Yoder, *When War Is Unjust*, 75.

[319] Fisher, *Morality and War*, 71.

[320] Holmes, "The Just War," 121.

[321] Ibid.

[322] Ibid.

believes the tenet of proportionate means teaches the good of the war's outcome must be proportionate to the "anticipated human and material costs of the war."[323] He recognizes the subjectivity and speculation involved in making such a calculation, but demands "statesmen need to make these judgments if they are to ascertain that they have a proportionate just cause to wage war.[324] Holmes' final rule is "noncombatant immunity." Paul Ramsey argues this tenet of JWT does not necessarily preclude indirect killing. "[O]ne effect can justify another effect because of the greater good or 'lesser evil' in one than in the other."[325] According to Holmes, this tenet speaks to the protection of individuals not actively participating in combat, to include prisoners of war.[326]

Problems for Preachers

Given the historical development of JWT there is no reason preachers should expect Israel's wars to follow the tenets of JWT. However, preachers should expect that many in their audience have some understanding of the ethical demands of JWT and will find the biblical content to contradict their assumptions about ethical war. According to Yoder, JWT has been the dominant view of Christians since the Middle Ages[327] and Holmes posits that any true ethic is from God and therefore universally binding. "The Christian does not have a double standard … God's moral law applies to all people

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[323] Regan, *Just War*, 63.

[324] Ibid., 64.

[325] Paul Ramsey, *The Just War: Force and Political Responsibility* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), 155.

[326] Holmes, "The Just War," 121.

[327] Yoder, *When War Is Unjust*, 17.

everywhere, and all are held accountable."[328] Preachers need to anticipate the audience concerns arising from their listener's expectations of JWT ethics. The following paragraphs will contrast Holmes' tenets of JWT with what the biblical literature has already shown in the previous section. Namely, when preaching war narratives the preacher is presenting divine activity that contradicts what most Christians assume to be a universally binding war ethic.

"Just cause." Just cause is limited to self-defense[329] and defense of others.[330] The Canaanite Conquest meets neither criterion. In Deuteronomy 7:1-2 God proclaims that he will drive out seven nations and give the land to Israel. Though divinely sanctioned, in JWT terms this was a war of aggression. "Just intention." Holmes requires the intention of "peace for all involved," and he specifically rejects conquest as a just intention for war.[331] Deuteronomy 20:10-18 contains commandments governing Israel's war activity during the Conquest. They were to offer peace to nations outside of Canaan, but those inside Canaan they were to devote to destruction. Leviticus 27:28-29 makes this devotion irrevocable. There can be no peace for the objects of *ḥerem* warfare.

"Last resort." According to Fisher, war is considered just when all "other options are deemed unlikely to succeed."[332] For those who accept God's decree of the conquest, this, and the next tenet, are the two JWT criteria the Conquest meets. For any in the

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[328] Holmes, "The Just War," 119.

[329] Ibid., 120.

[330] Vetlesen, "Genocide," 352–71.

[331] Holmes, "The Just War," 120.

[332] Fisher, *Morality and War*, 71.

preacher's audience who do not accept God's decree, the Conquest falls short of the last resort requirement. "Formal declaration." Holmes requires a formal declaration by the highest authority.[333] Regan, referencing Deuteronomy 20:17 and Joshua 6, says if God sanctions war it is just.[334] However, he quickly asks, "But does he?" and accepts at face value that killing is always wrong, and therefore "contrary to God's will."[335] He puts the burden of proof on the one who asserts God's will in any war.[336] Such thinking presents a challenge for the preacher who accepts God's authorship of the conquest when some in the congregation may not.

"Limited objectives." Holmes, again, requires peace for all involved as the only just objective. Unconditional surrender or destruction of a nation's infrastructure is unjust.[337] Yet, this is precisely what God commanded (Deuteronomy 20:17). Though Israel failed to carry out God's command with completion, the story of the conquest contains many examples of annihilation and utter destruction (Joshua 6-12).

"Proportionate means." The twofold criteria of limited force and calculated cost are both apparently violated during the battles for Ai. In the first battle Israel lost about 36 men. They had unknowingly forfeited divine favor due to one man's violation of God's commands (Joshua 7:1-9). After correcting the offense Joshua prepared Israel for the second battle for Ai (Joshua 7:10-26). This time they sent 30,000 warriors (Joshua

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[333] Holmes, "The Just War," 121.

[334] Regan, *Just War*, 9.

[335] Ibid.

[336] Ibid.

[337] Holmes, "The Just War," 121.

8:3) against a city small enough they originally thought they could defeat with an army one-tenth that size. Though a deeper analysis of the text may offer alternative (and slightly less austere) interpretations of the size of Joshua's force, the audience will respond first to this surface level reading. The preacher should be aware that audience members concerned with such things may find the appearance of a disproportionate offense to be troubling.

"Noncombatant immunity." In both the commands of Deuteronomy 20:10-18, and the narratives of Joshua 6-8ff, there is no noncombatant immunity. With the exception of Rahab who allied herself with Israel, God makes no distinction between combatants and noncombatants for the cities of Canaan. Soldiers, civilians, women, and children – all are to be killed.

Summary

The purpose of this study is to examine how preachers proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives. While JWT has its foundations in Christian thinking, it contributes to the preacher's difficulty by revealing a conflict between Christian ethics and OT war ethics. The previous sections also revealed conflicts that may arise from the ideologies of secularism, Islam, and pacifism. This study will now turn to biblical theology in search of resolutions to these conflicts.

Ḥerem Warfare in Biblical Theology

The purpose of this study is to examine how preachers proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives. The first section considered scholarly literature on select biblical war passages. Cultural, theological, and Gospel proclamation problems emerged. This section focuses on the theological problems of *ḥerem* warfare under three headings: *Ḥerem*

Warfare in Salvation History, *Ḥerem* Warfare and Biblical Ethics, and Paths to the Gospel from *Ḥerem* Warfare Texts.

Ḥerem *Warfare in Salvation History*

Stephen Dempster reflects on a century of writing in the field of Biblical Theology and concludes, "there are almost as many theologies as there are theologians."[338] Analyzing the milieu of Biblical Theology is outside the scope of this study. Rather, it assumes J. I. Packer's declaration, "The Bible is a unity."[339] Two questions flow out of this assumption. First, what is the central story of the Bible? And second, where does *ḥerem* warfare fit within the story?

Salvation History as the Center of Biblical Theology

In *God is a Warrior*, Tremper Longman III and Daniel Reid argue against a single center of Biblical Theology. They believe attempts to identify a single center are either too narrow to capture the Bible's diversity or "so broad as to be useless."[340] James Hamilton's work, *God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: a Biblical Theology*, attempts to demonstrate just the opposite. Pulling together the themes of God's glory, salvation, and judgment, Hamilton sees God's activity in salvation history as the unifying metanarrative of Biblical Theology. "This story of salvation history is a story of God's glory in salvation through judgment."[341] Salvation is itself a broad topic. For this study it

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[338] Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Leicester, UK: IVP Academic, 2003), 15.

[339] J. I. Packer, "Foreward," in *The Unfolding Mystery*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2013), 9.

[340] Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, 14.

[341] James Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 50.

refers to a person or people being adopted into God's family and the forgiveness of sin necessary to accomplish it.[342]

Other authors similarly place salvation history at the center of biblical theology. C. John Collins emphasizes God's forming of a redeemed people and his protecting, shaping, and purifying of this people for the purpose of reaching the rest of mankind. Each of the biblical epochs are in line with this story.[343] According to Brian Rosner, "Virtually every theme in biblical theology… leads to Christ as the final and definitive installment."[344] The Ryken et al., say, "The Bible is essentially the story of the one creature to bear God's image (human being), with sin as the basic complication, Christ as the central character … and salvation as the unifying plot."[345] How then, does *ḥerem* warfare fit into this grand storyline?

Ḥerem Warfare and the Metanarrative of Scripture

Salvation history is a common theme in the field of biblical theology.[346] Of the many volumes available, two recent works have given special attention to Joshua's place in the metanarrative. They are James Hamilton's, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment,* and Stephen Dempster's, *Dominion and Dynasty*. Because of their ample material pertinent to this study the following paragraphs will consider each work in turn.

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[342] Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, "Salvation."

[343] Collins, "The Old Testament as Christian Scripture," 2-4.

[344] Brian Rosner, "Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology,* eds. Brian S. Rosner and T. Desmond Alexander (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), 10. Accordance Bible Software.

[345] Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, "Salvation."

[346] For examples, see, Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery*; Meredith G. Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 1997); Alec Motyer, *Look to the Rock: An Old Testament Background to Our Understanding of Christ* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996).

Both authors discuss the Conquest in general more than *ḥerem* warfare in particular. For the purpose of this study the specifics of *ḥerem* warfare should be assumed within the Conquest discussion.

God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment

Hamilton sees the theme of God's glory in salvation through judgment taking shape through the major epochs of biblical history. The conquest of Canaan fits into salvation history as a picture of the final judgment of God's enemies, and eternal blessing of God's people, both of which are yet to come.[347] The severity of *ḥerem* declares the great worth of God. Rejecting the infinite majesty and holiness of Yahweh "defiles unto death."[348]

He sees all the warrior activity of Israel pointing to "a greater Deliverer and Savior to come."[349] Ultimately, Hamilton says, Jesus is "a conquering new Joshua" in the final judgment of Revelation 19-20.[350] He summarizes, "Salvation has come through judgment for God's glory."[351] Thus, the Conquest of Canaan points forward to the hope of a final new conquest led by Christ himself.[352]

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[347] Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 49.

[348] Ibid., 141.

[349] Ibid.

[350] Ibid., 548–49.

[351] Ibid., 549.

[352] Ibid., 548.

Dominion and Dynasty

Dempster tells the story through the "twin themes of dynasty and dominion."[353] The dynastic theme follows the advent of Israel's kingdom from Adam to David, and ultimately to Jesus as the King "to all of humanity."[354] He sees "a movement from the universal to the particular and back to the universal."[355] The theme of dominion runs parallel, focusing on the possession of land from Eden to Canaan, and then beyond. Dempster's summary is so succinct it is best to quote him at length:

> Similarly, the dominion of Adam begins over all creation, and then the land of Canaan becomes the focus, and next the city of Jerusalem and the temple. And from this particular place, the rule of God extends outwards to Israel and the nations, even to the ends of the earth.[356]

Just as Davidic kingship is at the center of Dempster's dynasty theme, so the land of Canaan is central to his dominion theme. Consequently, the Conquest becomes a key event in salvation history. He highlights this through the echoes of cursings and blessings within the book of Joshua.

In Joshua 10 Israel captures five Amorite kings. Joshua commands his chiefs to "Come near; put your feet on the necks of these kings."[357] Dempster makes an apparently arbitrary link to the Genesis 3:15 promise of "the seed of the woman's crushing the serpent's head…"[358] His further development of the text does not require the Genesis

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[353] Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 231.

[354] Ibid.

[355] Ibid.

[356] Ibid.

[357] Joshua 10:24

[358] Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 127.

reference. In the Joshua narrative the five are executed, and their bodies hung on five trees until evening.[359] Citing Genesis 9:25 and Joshua 9:23-24, Dempster points back to the curse on Ham "working itself out on his son, Canaan."[360] Further, he notes Paul's Christological interpretation of Deuteronomy 21:18-23 in Galatians 3:10-14. Joshua's observation of the process in Deuteronomy 21:18-23 lead Dempster to a Christological connection. "Jesus is the obedient Son who is sentenced to hang on a tree for the disobedient."[361]

Further, Dempster sees the presence of the Nephilim as signaling a parallel between the Conquest and the flood. "There is to be total destruction as the Israelites sweep over the land, as agents of God's judgment on the sin of the Amorites."[362] Unlike Hamilton, Dempster makes no connection to final judgment.

Dempster uses a similar process to expound the blessings proclaimed in the Conquest. He notes the link between the crossing of the Jordan with the Red Sea (Joshua 2:10-11, 3:7, 5:1), "recalling the purpose of the exodus…" namely, Israel becoming God's inheritance.[363] He also sees Canaan as a new Eden. While the angelic warrior was posted to "bar the way to Eden," the angelic warrior of Joshua 5:13-15 "will assist the Israelites in taking Canaan."[364] However, the blessing of the new Eden is not without the

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[359] Joshua 10:26

[360] Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 127.

[361] Ibid., 234.

[362] Ibid., 127.

[363] Ibid., 128.

[364] Ibid.

warning of the old Eden. Disobedience will mean expulsion, "just as it was in the garden of Eden at the beginning."[365] The new Eden of Canaan is a type of the final Eden to come. [366]

Alec Motyer classifies Canaan as an "interim fulfillment," bearing witness to the triumph over the world God intends for His people.[367] Led by Hamilton's "New Joshua,"[368] Dempster's "New Israel, comprising all nations and peoples, emerges and continues the final conquest of the serpent (Gal. 3:28-29; Rom. 16:20)."[369]

Ḥerem *Warfare and Biblical Ethics*

Having seen where *ḥerem* warfare fits in the biblical storyline, the conversation now turns to biblical ethics. To set the tone, Matthew Flannagan asks, "How could a good and loving God command the extermination of the Canaanites?"[370] A perhaps more fundamental question surrounds the sixth commandment. How could God command the Israelites to kill anyone when at Sinai he commanded them not to kill? Some build the case that God did not in fact make such a command.[371] Christopher Wright finds this argument unsatisfying.[372] As an alternative, he offers three "frameworks" through which

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[365] Ibid., 129.

[366] Ibid., 234.

[367] Motyer, *Look to the Rock*, 157.

[368] Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 548–49.

[369] Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 234.

[370] Flannagan, "Did God Command the Genocide of the Canaanites?," 225.

[371] Thomas Römer, *Dark God: Cruelty, Sex, and Violence in the Old Testament* (New York: Paulist Press, 2013), 76-92; Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Reading Joshua," in *Divine Evil? The Moral Character of The God of Abraham* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 236–56.

[372] Wright, *The God I Don't Understand,* 76-86.

to read the story of the Canaanites. He does not claim to provide a solution; rather he desires "to put it in the wider framework of our whole Bible," thereby connecting it with "what we know about God and his ways."[373] The following headings will consider the Sixth Commandment and Wright's three frameworks in turn.

The Sixth Commandment

In the King James Version the Sixth Commandment reads, "Thou shalt not kill."[374] In the Hebrew it is a mere two words, *lō' tirṣāḥ*. The ESV, NASB, and NIV translate *rāṣaḥ* as "murder" as opposed to "kill." VanGemeren says the in the context of the OT the word has a narrow meaning of "the taking of a life outside the parameters (as in the case of war or capital punishment, laid down by God."[375] Because of this narrow definition Walton, *et al*., conclude *rāṣaḥ* should not be brought into discussions of pacifism or capital punishment.[376] Having established that the Sixth Commandment does not necessarily preclude God's activity in the Canaanite conquest, Frame takes the discussion in two directions germane to this study. The first deals with the character of God, and the second with human responsibility.[377]

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[373] Ibid., 87.

[374] Exodus 20:13

[375] Willem A. VanGemeren, "רצח" in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis,* ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 2012), 4:1189.

[376] John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000), 96.

[377] Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 686–87.

God's Character and the Sixth Commandment

Frame sees a God who "delights in life" and throughout the Bible "continues to offer life."[378] But simultaneously, "Unfaithfulness to God separates us from life and brings death, and death pervades human history after the fall."[379] So Frame understands the message of the Sixth Commandment to be that "life and death are God's business."[380] The discussion around Wright's second framework will develop this theme more fully.

Human Responsibility and the Sixth Commandment

If life and death are God's business, what does that require of humanity? Frame goes beyond the negative command, "do not murder," to a positive admonition to "respect life as an aspect of our reverence for God."[381] In this vein, Ryken points to the "Pro-Life Samaritan" in Luke 10:25-37 as an illustration of obeying the positive aspect of the Sixth Commandment.[382] Frame unfolds the positive command to encompass cheerfulness, actively protect life, and demonstrate love.[383] Living out the positive themes of the Sixth Commandment is in step with Wright's third framework below. To these frameworks the study now turns.

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[378] Ibid., 685.

[379] Ibid.

[380] Ibid.

[381] Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 685.

[382] Philip Graham Ryken, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 621–22.

[383] Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 685–90.

The Framework of the OT Story

Wright believes it necessary to read the story in its ANE and OT context. This requires the reader to acknowledge a level of intentional hyperbole in the battle accounts.[384] Warfare in the ANE was regularly recorded with a "conventional rhetoric" that "often exceeded reality on the ground."[385] For example, comparing the list of destroyed nations in Joshua 10-11 with the existence of these same nations in Judges indicates that the biblical writers were aware of nonliteral language in the Joshua account.[386]

How far is one to take the hyperbole? Flannagan, leaning heavily on Wolterstorf,[387] concludes God's command to destroy whole nations does not mean exterminating them.[388] Rather, "the accounts of killing everyone that breathed," means merely to "drive them out…"[389] Wright does not allow hyperbole that much interpretive control. He calls the reality of the conquest "horrible at any level"[390] and states that regardless of the actual level of Israel's obedience, God commanded the annihilation of the Canaanite nations.[391]

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[384] Wright, *The God I Don't Understand*, 87–88.

[385] Ibid., 88.

[386] Ibid. For a more detailed comparison see Flannagan, "Did God Command the Genocide of the Canaanites?," 227–31.

[387] Wolterstorff, "Reading Joshua."

[388] Flannagan, "Did God Command the Genocide of the Canaanites?," 245.

[389] Ibid., 246.

[390] Wright, *The God I Don't Understand*, 88.

[391] Ibid., 92.

Next, Wright moves the focus to the limited timeframe and geography of *ḥerem* warfare, and points to God's activity in it. Though much time elapsed from promise to fulfillment, the actual event of Canaanite conquest was a "single episode within a single generation…" rather than a normal pattern of warfare or national identity.[392] Referencing Psalm 44:2-3 he shows how the conquest "stood as a monument [for Israel] to God's faithfulness and mighty power."[393] Longman highlights that giving God praise for victory in battle was a central tenet of Israel's warfare.[394] Wright emphasizes that their own military brilliance[395] is never the focus of the text.

The Framework of God's Sovereign Justice

Wright's second framework views the Canaanite conquest in context of "God's international justice and punishment."[396] He first declares what the conquest was not – namely, it was not ethnic cleansing. The conquest "is never justified on ethnic grounds in the Bible," and the same acts of justice will be used against other nations in the OT, "including against Israel itself."[397]

Rather than ethnic cleansing, the conquest of Canaan belongs to the category of "divine punishment operating through human agency."[398] Viewing the conquest within the framework of divine judgment "makes a categorical difference to the nature of the

[392] Ibid., 90.

[393] Ibid., 91.

[394] Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," 170–72.

[395] Wright, *The God I Don't Understand*, 91.

[396] Ibid., 92.

[397] Ibid.

[398] Ibid.

violence inflicted."[399] Wright begins the Canaanite story in Genesis 15:16,[400] which foretells the Canaanites becoming "so 'fully' wicked that God's judgment would deservedly fall."[401] Many scholars reference Leviticus 18:1-24 for a description of Canaanite iniquity,[402] which includes varieties of incest and child sacrifice.

Motyer hints the Canaanite rebellion begins a chapter earlier in Genesis 14. Equating the meanings of the names "Melchi-zedek" and "Adoni-zedek" (Joshua 10), he makes an "assumption that a line of priest-kings reigned in Salem/Jerusalem."[403] Mal Couch sees here "strong implications that there were godly men, scattered probably throughout the Middle East, who knew the true God and had a personal relationship with Him."[404] Genesis 15:16 makes it clear that these nations were rejecting whatever revelation of God they had. Longman says, "Indeed, from the perspective of the Bible, God had practiced great patience with the people who lived in Palestine."[405]

Within the framework of God's sovereign justice, Dempster reaches back even further to Noah's curse on Ham in Genesis 9:25. "The curse upon Ham … is working

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[399] Ibid., 93.

[400] Genesis 15:16 references the Amorites, but as David Tsumura states, "The Canaanites and the Amorites often are mentioned side by side," and the term "Canaanites" often refers to any of the seven nations in pre-Israelite Canaan. David Tsumura, "Canaan, Canaanites," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Historical Books* (Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005). Accordance Bible Software.

[401] Wright, *The God I Don't Understand*, 92.

[402] Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 109; Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery,* 137; Wright, *The God I Don't Understand*, 93.

[403] Motyer, *Look to the Rock*, 36.

[404] Mal Couch, "Progressive Dispensationalism: Is Christ Now on the Throne of David?—Part III," *Conservative Theological Journal* 2:6 (1998): 278.

[405] Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," 174.

itself out on his son, Canaan."[406] Eugene Merrill traces the curse through Genesis 12 and 13, Numbers 13, and finally into the book of Joshua. He says, "The ominous significance of this threat runs as a thread through Israel's early history."[407] Its completion in the conquest "suggests that it was beyond remedy and could therefore be dealt with only by destruction."[408] He points to later texts (2 Kings 21:1; Ezra 9:1) that hold the sins of the Amorites as "the standard by which to measure godlessness."[409] Wright concludes the Bible "insists repeatedly that the violence of the conquest was inflicted as an act of punishment on a whole society…"[410]

Longman follows the motif of sovereign justice to the Bible's final conclusion of eternal punishment. In fact, he says those who object to the conquest on moral grounds "should have even more serious difficulties with the final judgment."[411] During final judgment "all those who do not follow Christ – men, women, and children – will be thrown into the lake of fire."[412] Longman points to Meredith Kline's "intrusion ethics"[413] to further build the connection with the conquest. Wright gently suggests God did not

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[406] Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 127.

[407] Merrill, "The Case for Moderate Discontinuity," 83.

[408] Ibid.

[409] Ibid., 84.

[410] Wright, *The God I Don't Understand*, 94.

[411] Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," 185.

[412] Ibid.

[413] Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, 154–64.

desire the horror of *ḥerem* warfare, but rather allowed it as a concession to the cultural norms of primitive battle.[414] Kline goes in quite a different direction.

For Kline, this present age of common grace exists due to the delay in Adam's judgment. During this delay the eschaton is in a state of "gestation," awaiting the consummation when the glorified paradise as well as the lake of fire will be realized.[415] At points in history the ethics of the consummation intrude "into the period of delay."[416] The most notable example of intrusion is "the consummation-child himself," Jesus Christ.[417] If Advent is an intrusion of the eschatological paradise, judgment is an intrusion of the eschatological lake of fire. As Clowney says, "The Lord did not bring Israel into the land as invading conquerors, but as avenging angels, the executors of His judgment… an anticipation in history of God's final judgment."[418]

However, Kline makes a distinction between the "ethics of the consummation" and the "ethics of common grace."[419] The conquest of Canaan was an intrusion of consummation ethics. Wright recognizes the inadequacy of evaluating the conquest "by the standards of the Geneva Convention,"[420] but looks to the ANE rather than the eschaton for comparative principles. Kline places *ḥerem* warfare between the covenant breach of Eden and the final judgment and sees "the hosts of the Almighty visiting upon

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[414] Wright, *The God I Don't Understand*, 88–89.

[415] Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, 154–56.

[416] Ibid., 156.

[417] Ibid.

[418] Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery,* 137.

[419] Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, 162.

[420] Wright, *The God I Don't Understand*, 87.

the rebels against his righteous throne their just desserts…"[421] He concludes this was not a step back into "arrested evolution … but rather of anticipated eschatology."[422] Reflecting on Kline, Longman says, "In this light, we should not be amazed that God ordered the death of the Canaanites, but rather we should stand in amazement that he lets anyone live."[423] Longman's development of the biblical theme of judgment would stand without including Kline. Genesis 2:16 establishes the consequence of sin and God's authority to enforce it. This study included Kline because of his influence on Longman, and the importance of Longman's contribution to the discussion of judgment in biblical theology.

Though Israel is the instrument of God's judgment on wicked Canaan, Wright is careful to keep the reader grounded in biblical humility. "The conquest did not mean that the Israelites were righteous."[424] Longman says it cannot be proven that the Canaanites were any more evil than Israel.[425] In fact, God threatened Israel with the same kind of judgment he poured out against Canaan if they fell into Canaanite patterns of sin.[426] As Dempster says, "Residence in the land will depend upon obedience, and disobedience will mean expulsion from the land, just as it was in the garden of Eden at the

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[421] Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, 163.

[422] Ibid., 164.

[423] Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," 185.

[424] Wright, *The God I Don't Understand*, 94.

[425] Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," 185–86.

[426] Lev. 18:28; Deut. 28:25-68

beginning."[427] When they did, God followed through on his promise. Tracing Israel's history, Wright concludes that far more generations of Israel felt God's judgment "than the single generation of Canaanites" during the conquest.[428]

The Framework of God's Whole Plan of Salvation

Wright's final framework considers the conquest against the backdrop of God's plan of salvation for humanity. During the conquest God poured out judgment on human sin. On the cross "God bore on himself the judgment of God on human wickedness, through the person of his own sinless Son – who deserved it not one bit."[429] Following this theme of salvation through Israel's history, Wright focuses on Israel as place of peace and a source of blessing to the nations.

He sees the voice of peace as a "counterweight" to the voice of violence in the OT.[430] This voice of peace is what Kline calls the "ethics of common grace."[431] Dempster sees peace as the normative ethic of Israel in the land. Comparing the dominion command given to Adam and Eve with 1 Kings 4:24 he says "[dominion] describes Solomon's *šālôm*-producing rule."[432] Wright points to the Davidic line culminating in the Messiah, when ultimately, war "will play no part in the new creation."[433]

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[427] Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 129.

[428] Wright, *The God I Don't Understand*, 96.

[429] Ibid., 107.

[430] Ibid., 98.

[431] Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, 162.

[432] Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 59.

[433] Wright, *The God I Don't Understand*, 99.

This nation of peace is intended to be a blessing to the nations. "That was [God's] promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3."[434] Wright sees concrete examples of this in the inclusion of foreigners within Israel such as Rahab, Ruth, Naaman, the widow of Zarephath, and eventually the nation of the Jebusites (see Isa. 2:1-4 and Zech. 9:7).[435] Further, he highlights numerous commands from the law summarized as "love the foreigner."[436]

Finally, Wright draws attention to Psalm 47:3 where the nations are invited to praise God because they were militarily subdued by Israel. He says there will come a day that "the historical defeat of the Canaanites by Israel will ultimately be seen to be part of an overall history of salvation for which the nations themselves will praise God."[437]

Paths to the Gospel from Ḥerem *Warfare Texts*

The purpose of this study is to examine how preachers proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives. Earlier sections demonstrated that this study accepts the claim that the Bible is a unified story culminating in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. From textual to contextual, it has addressed many problems and explored solutions. The current section has examined how *ḥerem* warfare fits into the biblical story line and biblical ethics. The following section turns to the preaching literature in search of applicable Gospel proclamation methodologies.

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[434] Ibid., 100.

[435] Ibid., 101–2.

[436] Ibid., 103.

[437] Ibid., 106.

What remains to be seen is how the texts and contexts of *ḥerem* warfare point to Christ. This portion of the study serves as a bridge between the problems war texts bring to the preacher and the methodologies the research will offer him. It asks the question, what is the available theological content for Gospel sermons from *ḥerem* warfare texts? It examines the Biblical Theology literature for specific paths from *ḥerem* warfare to the Gospel. What follows is not intended to be exhaustive, but four examples of many potential paths. They are Warfare, Land, Kingdom, and Judgment.

Warfare

Longman discovers five "phases" of God's warrior activity in the Bible:

1. God fights the flesh-and-blood enemies of Israel.
2. God fights Israel.
3. God will come as a future warrior.
4. Jesus Christ fights the spiritual powers.
5. Jesus fights the final battle.

He sees the conquest of Canaan in the first two phases, mentioning Jericho in phase one and Ai in phase two. Longman proposes these phases as a way to help connect the OT with the New. As seen earlier in the testimonies of Hamilton and Rosner, the task of Biblical Theology is to point to Christ. Seeing *ḥerem* warfare as a single point on this path of God's warrior activity brings the reader to Jesus at phase four.

The climax of violence in phase four is the cross. "Jesus defeated the powers and authorities, not by killing but by dying!"[438] With Christ's return in phase 5 comes a

[438] Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," 180–81.

reappearance of physical violence. Kline would say this is an intrusion of eschatology.[439] Longman sees "Jesus, the warrior," completing "the victory assured by his death on the cross."[440] Clowney holds that any OT narrative is a single chapter in the great story of Jesus.[441] Preachers can proclaim the Gospel from *ḥerem* warfare texts by preaching them as a single chapter in the great story of Jesus the warrior.

Land

The physical land of Canaan is essential to Dempster's dominion theme. He follows the dominion mandate of Genesis 1:26-31 from Adam's charge to subdue the whole earth, to Joshua's charge to subdue Canaan. Finally, Jerusalem will serve as the center of dominion activity as God's Kingdom subdues the earth from David's throne. "From this particular place, the rule of God extends outwards to Israel and the nations, even to the ends of the earth."[442] Motyer sees in the Conquest "evidence of the triumph that the Lord intends for his people over the forces of the world and of strengthened confidence that the larger promise would yet come."[443]

Yet Dempster reminds the reader, "Residence in the land will depend upon obedience, and disobedience will mean expulsion from the land, just as it was in the garden of Eden at the beginning." Or, as Hamilton says, "they are like a new Adam in a new Eden. Their task is to rule over the earth and subdue it, but they fare no better than

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[439] Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, 155.

[440] Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," 182–83.

[441] Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery,* 11.

[442] Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 231.

[443] Motyer, *Look to the Rock*, 157.

Adam did."[444] The author of Hebrews references Joshua by name then says, "Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience" (Hebrews 4:11). The text reminds Christians that like Israel, their own flourishing is dependent on their faithfulness to the work of God's grace in their lives.

Kingdom

Dempster similarly traces the theme of kingship (dynasty) from Adam to David to Jesus.[445] Clowney follows this theme under the heading of "The Lord's Anointed"[446] and sees Joshua's military role as preparatory for Israel's future judges and kings. All these judges and kings "foreshadow a greater Deliverer and Savior to come."[447]

Motyer's development focuses on the location of the throne (Jerusalem) over the dynastic lineage. He begins with Melchizedek, pointing out that the priest/king of Salem is mentioned only twice in the Bible (Genesis 14 and Hebrews 7). Demonstrating the etymological similarity between Adoni-zedek and Melchizedek, Motyer concludes that "a line of priest-kings reigned in Jerusalem/Salem." Thus when David became king in Jerusalem he "became Melchizedek, the Priest-King…"[448] For Motyer, this explains the mention of Melchizedek in the Messianic Psalm 110 and paves the way for the Christological connection in Hebrews 7:11-14. So, for the preacher, Adoni-zedek provides a path to the Gospel from an otherwise dark text.

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[444] Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 267.

[445] Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 231–34.

[446] Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery,* 135–70.

[447] Ibid., 141.

[448] Motyer, *Look to the Rock*, 35–36.

Judgment

The theme of judgment running through the conquest is two-pronged. It is revealed in both God's judgment against Canaan and also in God's judgment against Israel. Hamilton demonstrates that within judgment, God always provides salvation. "The Lord's word is his standard of judgment, and reliance upon that word leads to salvation."[449] When Canaan and Israel alike submit to God's standard or reject God's standard, what follows is either salvation or judgment.

Canaan's wickedness was seen earlier in this study, so it is not necessary to repeat that same material here. Rather, the focus is on God's judgment against Israel. This is the theme of Longman's phase two of God's Warrior Activity, "God Fights Israel." He says, "It would be wrong to say that 'God was on Israel's side' pure and simple"[450] (the whole point of Joshua 5:13-15), and he points to their defeat at Ai in Joshua 7 as proof. Israel had broken the covenant with Yahweh and brought its curses upon themselves.[451] Hamilton reminds the reader that Yahweh's worth is so great that rejecting him calls for infinite justice.[452] He says, "Yahweh is shown to be just and merciful, and the awful demands of holiness thunder transcendent greatness."[453]

Hamilton sets the story in its biblical context. After the close of Joshua, a generation arose who did not know Joshua or Yahweh. Because of Israel's rebellion,

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[449] Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 139.

[450] Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," 175.

[451] Ibid., 175–76.

[452] Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 141.

[453] Ibid., 151.

"Yahweh uses other nations to judge Israel's sin"[454] just as he used Israel to judge Canaan's sin. Longman gives several examples of this judgment against Israel, culminating in the Babylonian Captivity.[455] Hamilton says, "Yahweh's patience and mercy are displayed throughout the nation's slow march toward the purging punishment of the exile."[456]

How is this a path to the Gospel? Hamilton continues the trajectory to the coming Kingdom and Christ's final return to Zion. "From the rising of the sun to the place of its setting he will be worshiped." God's glory will be the "centerpiece of praise" after the final judgment is complete.[457]

Preaching the Gospel from OT War Narratives

This section addresses the question head-on: how do preachers proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives? The first two sections analyzed some of the unique challenges war narratives present to preachers. The third section sought theological and apologetic solutions through biblical theology. This section looks to the preaching literature to address the issue practically. A growing cohort of preaching experts agree a preacher's work is not complete until he has preached the Gospel.[458] This statement raises

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[454] Ibid., 141.

[455] Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," 176–77.

[456] Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 141.

[457] Ibid., 267.

[458] Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture,* 122; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,* 11; Johnson, *Him We Proclaim,* 50-51; Keller, *Preaching*, 48; Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 31.

two questions. What does it mean to proclaim the Gospel, and how does one proclaim the Gospel from a war narrative? The following sections will address these matters in turn.

What Does it Mean to Preach the Gospel from Every Text?

Preaching the Gospel from every text does not mean preaching the Gospel to the exclusion of preaching the whole counsel of God. This study is focused on the Christological application that should be part of, but not the entirety of a sermon. The preacher must faithfully exegete the text in its historical context, explain its cultural peculiarities to the modern audience, and apply its theological and moral teachings consistent with biblical doctrine. As Greidanus says, "Only after we have heard a passage the way Israel heard it can we move on to understand this message in the broad contexts of the whole canon and the whole of redemptive history."[459] The remainder of this study attempts to demonstrate that until the Gospel is proclaimed, all this earlier work is not complete. So, what does it mean to preach the Gospel from every text? This question encompasses both theoretical and practical considerations. To say that another way, the question touches on both the conviction of preaching the Gospel from every text, and the practice of preaching the Gospel from every text.

The Conviction of Preaching the Gospel from Every Text

Preaching the Gospel from every text requires textual, practical, and hermeneutical considerations.

Textual Considerations

Preaching the Gospel from every text is a biblical concept. Jesus commanded in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 that his followers make disciples of Jesus

[459] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 228.

and teach them "all that I have commanded you." Jesus's teachings were grounded in the OT yet culminated in his own ministry. This teaching pattern follows through the book of Acts. When Stephen preached at his trial in Acts 7 he summarizes the history of the Jewish people and completes their (his Jewish audience's) story in the rejection and murder of the "Righteous One" as a rejection of the law delivered to them (v. 52). Paul delivers a similar sermon in Acts 13 where he recounts the Exodus, the Conquest, and the establishment of the Davidic throne. He then identifies Jesus as David's descendent (v. 23) who, though unjustly crucified and buried has risen again (vv. 28-29). Paul concludes by proclaiming the forgiveness of sins and freedom in Christ, which the law could not provide (vv. 38-39).

The story of Apollos in Acts 18:24-28 bears testimony to the necessity of a Christological understanding of the OT. The text describes Apollos as "competent in the Scriptures" and eloquent preacher of Jesus, though his knowledge of Christ's ministry only extended until the baptism of John (vv. 24-25). Two members of the Church "explained to him the way of God more accurately" (v. 26), after which he became a great help for the Church and evangelist to the Jews "showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus" (v. 27-28).

The Epistles provide further examples. In Galatians Paul demonstrates how Hagar and Sarah represent law and Gospel (Galatians 4:21-31). The author of Hebrews proclaims Christ as greater than angels (1:4-2:18), greater than Moses and Joshua (3:1-4:13), and greater than OT priests (4:14-5:10). All of these examples from Acts and the Epistles demonstrate that though the OT is Christian Scripture, the NT writers did not

consider the message complete until Christ was named. To borrow from the Apollos story, the finished work of Christ is the way of God more fully.

Practical Considerations

Some OT passages are less obviously messianic. For some examples, see the Levitical dietary laws in Leviticus 11, the allotment of Judah's land in Joshua 15, or the apparently miscellaneous wisdom collection of Proverbs 6. Texts such as these offer no obvious messianic promises. Some pastors minister in a long-term context where it may make sense to withhold an explicit Gospel appeal until a later passage, or to briefly refer to an earlier Christ-centered teaching from a previous sermon. The grand messianic images can come at a later time. In the weeks to come the preacher can proclaim Jesus fulfilling all the law on sinners' behalf, the promised rest of Hebrews 3 linking the Conquest to Christ, and the eternal wisdom of Christ for the believer.

Many preachers do not minister in such a context. This student serves as military chaplain with a highly itinerate flock. In twelve years of ministry the longest he has ministered to a single person has been less than four years. Most are significantly less. Other preachers regularly have guests in their congregation. For preachers in such contexts proclaiming the Gospel from every text becomes a necessary conviction. What hermeneutical considerations should they take into account?

Hermeneutical Considerations

Preaching the Gospel from every text requires a hermeneutic and homiletic approach Dennis Johnson calls "redemptive-historical preaching."[460] This kind of preaching presupposes the work of Christ in redemption as the climax of the biblical

[460] Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 48–49.

story-line. Redemptive-historical preaching then is the practice of exegeting a text in such a way as to reveal its place within the meta-narrative of Scripture, thereby creating natural pathways to Christ. The approaches of Clowney and Motyer[461] are examples of redemptive-historical hermeneutics. However, redemptive-historical cannot be considered a single approach but rather an umbrella term for many approaches to hermeneutics.

Collins has posited seven redemptive-historical approaches to reading the OT.[462] The first two fall outside the flow of Christ-centered preaching and need not enter the conversation. The remaining five range from purely doctrinal development concerns to a typological "looking for Christ" in the details of OT stories.[463] He advocates for what he calls a "worldview oriented redemptive history." Referencing Genesis 12:1-3 and Exodus 19:4-6 he says his approach "lays explicit stress on the corporate notion of the people of God, and sees the Big Story of redemptive history as the record of God's mighty deeds on behalf of this people, for the sake of their mission."[464] For Collins, the OT story is the backstory of Christians today, and consequently Christian Scripture in its original context even without reading NT theology back into the text.[465]

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[461] Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery*; Motyer, *Look to the Rock*.

[462] C. John Collins, "Taxonomy of Redemptive-Historical Approaches" (unpublished essay, Covenant Theological Seminary 2008), 1-2.

[463] Collins' approaches are doctrinalist-oriented redemptive history, development of doctrine redemptive history, read every text as a "pointer to Christ," read-it-twice redemptive history, and worldview oriented redemptive history.

[464] Collins, "Taxonomy of Redemptive-Historical Approaches," 2.

[465] Collins, "The Old Testament as Christian Scripture."

Three Perspectives on Preaching the Gospel from All of Scripture

It is beyond the scope of this study to delineate the nuanced differences between each of the redemptive-historical approaches. What is helpful is how Collins raises the issue of how explicitly Christ-centered a sermon must be in order to consider it Gospel proclamation. Three perspectives emerge from the literature: the text is fundamentally Christian, the preacher should point to some aspect of Christ, and the preacher must articulate the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith.

The Text is Fundamentally Christian

Preachers with a conviction to proclaim the Gospel every time are left with a question: if the text is already a Christian text must the sermon explicitly reference Christ? Dale Davis says no. "I am convinced that I do not honor Christ by forcing him into texts where he is not."[466] But is this a necessary conclusion? Do texts exist that do not in some way speak to Christ? Collins says, "we are not finished with our grammatical historical exegesis until we ask where our particular text fits into the story, how it shapes the worldview of God's people in relation to their mission, and what it says about membership in that people."[467] He will say this is a Christian message without having to "do anything to the text."[468] On the other hand, Goldsworthy demonstrates that without the cross there is no mission or membership in the people of God – the Gospel must be presented.[469] He acknowledges the concern for recognizing the OT as Christian Scripture

[466] Davis, *The Word Became Fresh,* 138.

[467] Collins "Taxonomy of Redemptive-Historical Approaches," 3.

[468] Collins, "The Old Testament as Christian Scripture," 2.

[469] Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture,* 116.

and asks if it is possible to preach a Christian sermon without mentioning Jesus. He answers with a rhetorical question, "Why would you even want to try to preach a Christian sermon without mentioning Jesus?"[470]

Johnson says, "The Christian preacher must never preach an OT text (narrative or other genre) in such a way that his sermon could have been acceptable in a synagogue whose members do not recognize that Jesus is the Messiah."[471] At the same time Johnson demonstrates sensitivity to Collins's pushback against "doing something to the text." He says the preacher's hermeneutic must "include appropriate checks on the preacher's hyperactive imagination…"[472] Similarly, Keller warns against preaching the Gospel without really preaching the message of the text.[473] What each of the redemptive-historical approaches share is their understanding that what makes the OT Christian Scripture is that each text fits into the meta-narrative, climaxing with Christ. The preacher who makes that connection for the audience is not doing something to the text, but rather revealing the text's fundamental Christian nature. The following two perspectives do not contradict this one, but advocate for varying degrees of how explicitly to frame the text's Christ-connection.

The Preacher Should Point to Some Aspect of Christ

For Sidney Greidanus, "To preach Christ is to proclaim some facet of the person, work, or teaching of Jesus of Nazareth so that people may believe him, trust him, and

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[470] Ibid., 115.

[471] Johnson, *Him We Proclaim,* 50-1.

[472] Ibid., 16.

[473] Keller, *Preaching*, 66-9.

obey him."[474] He explains preaching the person of Christ by dividing the concept into the categories of Son of God, Messiah, Prophet, Priest, and King. When discussing the work of Christ, he moves beyond salvation to talk about his miracles, resurrection, ascension, and second coming. For the teaching of Christ Greidanus points out that Jesus's Bible was the OT. When Jesus told the disciples to teach "everything I have commanded you" he was referencing the OT Scriptures.

According to Greidanus, a sermon from the OT should connect to one of these themes, leading the audience to Christ as the ultimate example of whatever that text is teaching. Thus, preaching Christ does not require arbitrary linkages to NT theology. Rather, preaching Christ is "preaching sermons which authentically integrate the message of the text with the climax of God's revelation in the person, work, and/or teaching of Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament."[475]

The Preacher Must Articulate the Gospel of Salvation by Grace through Faith

Keller argues for a narrower definition of Christ-centered preaching. He says, "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."[476] Goldsworthy seems to agree and anchors his position on what he considers to be the Bible's purpose. He says, "The purpose of God's Word is to proclaim Christ to a lost world."[477] While Piper describes the goal of preaching slightly differently the importance of gospel proclamation

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[474] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,* 8.

[475] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,* 9-10.

[476] Keller, *Preaching*, 48

[477] Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture,* 122.

emerges the same. He says, "The goal of preaching is the glory of God in the glad submission of his creation."[478] But, the basis for pursuing this goal is the cross. "Without the cross, preaching that aims to glorify a righteous God in the gladness of sinful man has no validity."[479]

Summary of the Three Perspectives

It would be outside its scope of this study to advocate for a single redemptive-historical approach. Collins recognizes them as tendencies as opposed to tidy categories.[480] Rather, it seeks to uncover methods by which preachers utilize the redemptive-historical method in order to proclaim the Gospel (to one degree or another) from OT War Narratives. It will be up to the reader to determine which of these methods are in keeping with his or her interpretive convictions.

The Practice of Preaching the Gospel from Every OT Text

Chapter one used Collins' definition of Gospel. Looking at Romans 1:1-6 he defines the Gospel as, "the report that this great era has begun through the death and resurrection of Jesus," and the Gentiles' invitation to be grafted into the people of God as full citizens.[481] For this study, Gospel refers to the proclamation of this message in its entirety, or any portion of it. Following Keller it uses Gospel proclamation and Christ-centered preaching synonymously.[482] Having clear definitions and hermeneutical

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[478] Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching,* 35.

[479] Ibid., 38.

[480] Collins, "Taxonomy of Redemptive-Historical Approaches," 1.

[481] Collins, "The Old Testament As Christian Scripture," 3.

[482] Keller, *Preaching,* 48.

principles, what methods do preachers use to proclaim the Gospel from the OT? Greidanus offers seven ways to preach Christ from the OT. He does not claim that they are all applicable to all texts. Rather, the interpreter must determine through exegetical study which way(s) is inline with a redemptive-historical biblical theology. Due to the breadth of methodologies Greidanus' seven ways will guide the remainder of the discussion. They are:

1) The Way of Redemptive-Historical Progression

2) The Way of Promise-Fulfillment

3) The Way of Typology

4) The Way of Analogy

5) The Way of Longitudinal Themes

6) The Way of New Testament References

7) The Way of Contrast

The Way of Redemptive-Historical Progression

Greidanus describes Redemptive-Historical Progression as "the meta-narrative that underlies Scripture."[483] This meta-narrative has four pivot points: creation, redemption in the OT, redemption through Christ, and the new creation. The stream of Scripture flows along this singular story, culminating in Christ.[484] If redemptive history is the metanarrative of Scripture, "sound interpretation requires that every part of this history be interpreted in the context of its beginning and end or goal."[485]

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[483] Ibid., 235.

[484] Ibid.

[485] Ibid., 236.

The Way of Promise-Fulfillment

The Way of Promise-Fulfillment looks for Christ as the fulfillment of OT promises. Greidanus provides two rules for interpreting OT promises. First, promises are fulfilled progressively. The OT may refer to a promise that is being fulfilled, yet incompletely. Second, in interpretation the preacher should "move from the promise of the OT to the fulfillment in Christ and back again to the OT Text."[486] As a defining example he points to Christ's fulfillment of Genesis 3:15, both through his earthly ministry and his Second Coming.[487]

The Way of Typology

Greidanus finds the roots of typological interpretation in the OT.[488] "Isaiah frequently uses pictures of the exodus from Egypt to promise Israel in Babylonian exile a new exodus" (Isaiah 11:15-16; 43:2, 16, 19; 48:20-21; 51:9-11; 52:11-12). In the NT he sees Jesus and Paul using the same kind of hermeneutic to apply OT images to messianic fulfillments. For example, Jesus employs Jonah's three days in the fish's belly to speak of his three days in the grave (Matthew 12:40). In John 3:14-15 Jesus compares himself to Moses' bronze serpent from Numbers 21:9. According to Greidanus the most explicit example of typology is found in Romans 5:12-19. "In this passage Paul exposes the analogy between Christ and Adam: each is head of a new creation; each represents 'all' (v 18)."[489]

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[486] Ibid., 242.

[487] Ibid., 248.

[488] Ibid., 90.

[489] Ibid., 215-17.

The term "type" comes from the Greek *typos* used in Romans 5:14. Several scholars agree that though the word has a broad semantic range in Scripture the field of hermeneutics has assigned it a technical meaning when using it in reference to biblical interpretation.[490] The word has a basic meaning of "pattern" or "figure." Regarding its technical meaning G.E. Duffield says, "a 'type' is … an event, person, or object which by its very nature and significance prefigures or foreshadows some later event, person, or object."[491] Interpreters often refer to the thing foreshadowed as the antitype. Stanley Gundry surveys the history of typological interpretation and calls it "a species of predictive prophecy."[492] For this study typology is defined as "an event, person, or object that prophetically prefigures the person or work of Jesus Christ."

Greidanus recognizes a common avoidance of typological interpretation and suspects the cause may be a legitimate fear of reading meaning into the text that is not there. He bases this on the prominence of the early theologians to lapse into allegory. [493] Several authors recognize the same potential abuse of typology and have sought criteria by which an interpreter may discern whether or not God has established a particular event, person, or object as prophecy. While none of the resources consulted for this study offer identical means, three criteria appear to be widely accepted. These criteria are the requirement of a strong theological correspondence between type and antitype, a

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[490] Johnson, *Him We Proclaim,* 200; Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture,* 111; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,* 213-14.

[491] G.E. Duffield, "Typology, Biblical" in *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church,* eds. D.F. Payne, et. al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), Accordance Bible Software.

[492] Stanley N. Gundry, "Typology as a Means of Interpretation: Past and Present." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 12, no. 4 (Fall 1969): 233-240, Accordance Bible Software.

[493] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,* 252.

heightening or intensification from type to antitype, and the theocentricity of both type and antitype.[494]

Goldsworthy says, "both type and antitype must be actual historical events, persons, or institutions" with "historical and theological correspondence."[495] For example, both Moses' serpent (Numbers 21:9) and Jesus' sacrifice (John 3:14-15) are historical events representing salvation. Not only must these events have real correspondence, but the antitype must be an intensification of the type. Johnson says this intensification is for the purpose resolving "tensions and unfulfilled longings that could only be satisfied when the Messiah himself arrived in 'the last days.'"[496] This intensification is seen in John 3:14-15. Moses' serpent provided physical salvation from snake venom. Jesus' sacrifice provided spiritual salvation from eternal judgment.

The final criterion is theocentricity. Goldsworthy says there must be some evidence "that the type is ordained by God to foreshadow the antitype…"[497] Greidanus sees this theocentricity satisfied when typology highlights a "meaningful connection with God's acts in redemptive history."[498] John 3:14-15 illustrates once again, as Jesus is the climax of redemptive history. A later portion of this study will use these criteria to determine whether or not typology is a useful tool for Gospel proclamation from OT war narratives.

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[494] Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture;* 111, Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,* 216, 19; Johnson, *Him We Proclaim,* 201-02.

[495] Johnson, *Him We Proclaim,* 111.

[496] Ibid., 202.

[497] Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture,* 111.

[498] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,* 219.

The Way of Analogy

Greidanus describes analogy as a method of applying the OT text to the Church today.[499] It is looking for similarities between what God has done for Israel and what God is doing for the Church through Christ. The emphasis can be on both redemption and the required response.[500] Analogy is not a method of interpretation but a method of application. One must avoid a simplistic this-reminds-me-of-that arbitrariness, but rather seek theological themes that provide substantive applications consistent with the text. For example, when preaching on Achan's sin in Joshua 7 one may find applications in church discipline or other NT teachings on congregational life.

The Way of Longitudinal Themes

The Way of Longitudinal Themes traces biblical themes from the OT into the New. Greidanus provides several examples of longitudinal themes: judgment, redemption, kingdom of God, and divine warrior. [501] Longman's earlier referenced work provides an example of this method of Christological interpretation.

The Way of New Testament Reference

Greidanus says New Testament references to OT texts may also fit into other categories, such as promise-fulfillment, typology, or longitudinal themes.[502] New

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[499] Ibid., 261–62.

[500] Ibid., 263.

[501] Ibid., 267.

[502] Ibid., 269.

Testament references "may at times provide an unexpected link to Christ in the New Testament."[503]

The Way of Contrast

The Way of Contrast centers on what changes Christ initiated between how things were in the OT versus how things are now in the Church. Greidanus puts the focus of the contrast on the work of Jesus. "The way of contrast clearly centers in Christ, for he is primarily responsible for any change between the messages of the OT and those of the New."[504]

Having seen what it means to preach the Gospel from every text, the study now seeks to understand how preachers use these methods from OT war narratives.

How do Preachers Proclaim the Gospel from OT War Narratives?

Many authors address Gospel proclamation from the whole Bible.[505] For example, in *Preaching*, Tim Keller admonishes preaching Christ from every genre, every theme, every major figure, every major image, every deliverance storyline, and even through instinct.[506] He provides a macroscopic view of Christ in all of Scripture. But, the most attention he gives to war narratives is a passing statement that Jesus is "commander of the Lord's host (Joshua 5)."[507]

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[503] Ibid.

[504] Ibid., 272.

[505] See, Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*; Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*; Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*.

[506] Keller, *Preaching,* 71–88.

[507] Ibid., 71.

Keller's purpose in *Preaching* covers more ground than merely Christ-centered homiletics. However, volumes dedicated solely to this task provide little more when it comes to war narratives. In *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, the closest Graeme Goldsworthy gets to a war narrative is the flood of Genesis 6-9. Dennis Johnson's *Him We Proclaim* provides sample sermons in an appendix. The first sermon is from Joshua chapter four and was preached on December 29, 2001.[508] The sermon faithfully illustrates the principles prescribed in the book, but it makes only a passing reference to America's war in the introduction and no mention of Joshua's war in the entire sermon.

Consequently, the literature leaves unanswered questions: How do preachers address the cultural barriers presented by OT war narratives? How much sermon time should be given to addressing these problems? And, what methods do preachers use to proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives? The following section explores the available data for answers.

How Do Preachers Address the Cultural Barriers Presented by OT War Narratives?

Of the literature reviewed, Zack Eswine's *Preaching to Post-Everything World* gives the most thorough treatment to war texts. An entire chapter is dedicated to the subject, entitled, "Handle the War Passages in an Age of Terror."[509] He says that preachers must "account for the accents of terror that people must overcome in order to

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[508] Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 410–22.

[509] Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World,* 193–204.

understand portions of the Bible."[510] He notes that since September 11, culture is becoming increasingly concerned with religious violence.[511] Preachers should take notice because "God is not silent toward the reality of war."[512] Keller advocates for a missiological approach to preaching that seeks to answer culture's questions, while not allowing these questions to set the parameters of the Gospel message.[513]

Perhaps OT war narratives are the appropriate medium to address these cultural questions. In *The Word Became Fresh*, Dale Davis encourages preachers not to fear these texts, "for it's in the nasty stuff you'll find the God of scary holiness and incredible grace waiting to reveal himself."[514] But how are they to be preached? Eswine provides some direction. For the rest of the chapter he distills four principles for preaching war texts. They are (1) identify the resonance[515] found in the passage, (2) identify the dissonance found in the passage, (3) resist bending the application to life management issues, and (4) place the war passages into the context of the echoes of creation and fall, redemption and heaven.[516]

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[510] Ibid., 194.

[511] Ibid., 195.

[512] Ibid., 204.

[513] Keller, *Preaching*, 98–99.

[514] Davis, *The Word Became Fresh,* 74.

[515] Eswine's concepts of resonance and dissonance refer to the reader's gut-level reaction to the text. Resonance occurs when the text speaks of something easily relatable to the reader. He speaks of the complexity and pain of war. "In that, the Bible resonates with the untidy reality that is there in our world." Dissonance occurs when the text surprises the reader's expectations, challenges the reader's assumptions about the world, or challenges the nature of right and wrong.

[516] Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World*, 196–204.

Yet, the preacher is still left with questions. Eswine asks but does not answer, "How could God be good and merciful if he sanctions the killing of men, women and children?"[517] The previous section looked to Biblical Theology to resolve some of these theoretically, but how are they to be worked into the sermon practically? Tim Keller's A and B doctrines may be a useful tool.[518] Keller describes A doctrines like heavy stones that need to cross a river into the understanding of a preacher's audience. They are solid and true, but will not float because they are contradictory to the secular man's understanding. The B doctrines are like logs. They will float because their truth is shared by both Christians and secular culture. The task is to strap enough B doctrines together to build a raft capable of transporting the A doctrines.

How Much Sermon Time Should Be Used to Deal with Problems?

Davis spends a couple paragraphs dealing with the ethics of Rahab's deceit in hiding the Israelite spies in Jericho. He concludes, "we must not let Rahab's lie eclipse Rahab's truth."[519] He cautions the preacher to not spend too much time on "lesser things" in narrative texts, but rather, "we need to go for the gold rather than piddle with the difficulties when preaching." Yet ignoring these details, according to Eswine, makes preachers look "naive, cruel, not having answers, or tritely dismissive regarding the war

[517] Ibid., 200.

[518] Keller, *Center Church,* 124.

[519] Davis, *The Word Became Fresh*, 132.

passages of the Bible."[520] The preacher's task is to "close the distance between the questions people have and the answers we sometimes try to avoid."[521]

It seems that Davis follows through with his conviction. In his preaching commentary on Joshua he spends far less time on contextualization than exposition. For example, in his six pages on the battle of Jericho[522] he spends one paragraph on the sins of the Canaanites.[523] His eight pages on Joshua 7 are similar. After commenting on the execution of Achan and his family Davis says, "Naturally, we can complain. But we do better to fear… Our problem is that we prefer the tolerance of men to the praise of God."[524] According to John Piper, "The grand design of the Christian preacher is to restore the throne and dominion of God in the souls of men."[525] Perhaps Davis' approach is best. Or is it? The answer is hard to find.

What Methods do Preachers Use to Proclaim the Gospel from OT War Narratives?

As seen earlier, Keller advocates for a thoroughly Christ-centered hermeneutic.[526] Piper points out the potential difficulty of this task. Because of humanity's fallen state there are some conceptual categories many minds cannot conceive. Thus, the task of preaching "is not just contextualization, but also concept creation."[527] Some of these

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[520] Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World*, 195.

[521] Ibid., 196.

[522] Davis, *Joshua*, 51–56.

[523] Ibid., 52.

[524] Ibid., 62–63.

[525] Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 29.

[526] Keller, *Preaching*, 71–85.

[527] Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 129.

concepts are at the heart of Gospel proclamation from OT war narratives. For example, "The acts that God decrees will come to pass are not always the same as what he commands that we do, and may indeed be the opposite."[528] Piper contrasts the sixth commandment with God's decree to kill his own Son. The preacher must not only accept that both statements are true but also create a category in which his audience can grasp the concept.

Directly to the point at hand, another of Piper's conceptual categories is, "God is perfectly just and orders the complete destruction of the inhabitants of Canaan."[529] So the preacher's burden is to find methodologies to proclaim the Gospel from categories that fallen man does not readily comprehend. Bryan Chapell's "Fallen Condition Focus" is helpful here. He defines it as, "the mutual human condition that contemporary believers share with those to or for whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage."[530] Whatever conceptual category is needed to connect the audience with Canaan (etc.), according to Chapell, is in the text. Further, this is what sets the sermon on the path towards the Gospel. "Clear identification of a fallen condition automatically locks the preacher into a redemptive approach to the exposition of any biblical passage."[531]

An earlier portion described Sidney Greidanus's seven ways to Christ. For the study at hand he helpfully applies each of these "ways" to the story of Rahab from Joshua

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[528] Ibid.

[529] Ibid., 130.

[530] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 42.

[531] Ibid., 291.

6.[532] The following paragraphs will summarize his examples. His contribution is unique, so little corresponding material is available.

The way of redemptive-historical progression traces the curse of Canaan through the conquest, but celebrates Rahab's surprising salvation. Greidanus then points to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) and Revelation 21:24 and says, "redemptive history continues throughout the church age until it ends in the New Jerusalem…"[533] He says there are no examples in the text for The Way of Promise-Fulfillment, and his comments on typology are very brief.[534] Chapell cautions against illegitimate typology which he calls, "imaginative leapfrogging to Christ."[535] Greidanus limits his typological interpretation to the person of Joshua, looking to Matthew 12:28-29 and Revelation 20:2-3.[536]

Greidanus summarizes The Way of Analogy this way, "As God through Joshua saved the Gentile Rahab and her family from the judgment, so God through Christ saves us Gentiles from the judgment."[537] He says analogies can also be drawn between the teaching provided to Israel and the teaching from Christ to the Church.[538] The Way of Longitudinal Themes is what Longman and Reid do with the Divine Warrior theme, as

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[532] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 337–44.

[533] Ibid., 340-41.

[534] Ibid.

[535] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 293–94.

[536] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 341.

[537] Ibid.

[538] Ibid., 342.

seen in the previous section.[539] Greidanus recommends the themes of judgment or salvation.[540]

The Way of New Testament References is self-explanatory. The trumpets in Revelation 8:2, or the many references to Rahab are good examples.[541] The final "way" is The Way of Contrast. For just one example, Greidanus says, "No nation, not even an international coalition, can claim biblical support for conducting a 'holy war' and committing genocide."[542] The Way of Contrast may provide some of the best material to satisfy Eswine's cultural concerns.[543]

While the preaching literature has provided some helpful direction, the questions above still need more thorough answers. By digging into the biblical text and Biblical Theology the preacher has many available resources. Organizing them into a faithful proclamation of the Gospel requires further study.

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[539] Longman and Reid, *God Is a Warrior*.

[540] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 341.

[541] Ibid., 342–43.

[542] Ibid., 343.

[543] Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World*, 195–96.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine how preachers proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives. The literature review demonstrated a gap in the available research on this topic. Therefore, this study employed a general qualitative research design and sought out practitioners who have developed methodologies in the absence of applicable literature. Sharan B. Merriam, in her book *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, stated this method of research seeks to understand "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences."[544] This is "based on the belief that knowledge is constructed by people in an ongoing fashion as they engage in and make meaning of an activity…"[545]

The assumption of this study was that preachers who are committed to expository, Gospel-centered preaching have developed meaningful ways of proclaiming the Gospel from OT war narratives. In order to address this purpose, the research identified three main areas of focus that are central to this practice. These areas include both cultural and theological barriers intrinsic to the subject matter and what methods preachers use for Gospel proclamation from these texts. To examine these areas more closely, the following questions served as the intended focus of the qualitative research:

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[544] Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2015), 6.

[545] Ibid., 23.

1. What challenges do OT war narratives present for preachers?
2. How do preachers address the cultural barriers presented by OT war narratives?
3. How do preachers address the theological barriers presented by OT war narratives?
4. What methods do preachers use to proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives?

Design of the Study

According to Merriam, qualitative research has four characteristics, summarized as follows: First, the focus is on process, understanding, and meaning. Second, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. Third, the process is inductive. Fourth, the product is richly descriptive.[546] Employing these characteristics, a qualitative study has the goal of uncovering and interpreting meaning.[547]

In search of this meaning, this study conducted semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data gathering. Merriam describes this structure as using six or more flexible interview questions. "Neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time [allowing] the researcher to respond to the situation at hand…"[548] This qualitative method provided for the discovery of the most comprehensive and descriptive data from the participants.

Participant Sample Selection

This study required participants who are able to communicate in depth about proclaiming the Gospel from OT war narratives. Therefore, the researcher selected a

[546] Ibid., 15.

[547] Ibid., 25.

[548] Ibid., 110–11.

unique sample of six preachers matching specific criteria with the attributes necessary for this study.[549] These criteria were: at least ten years preaching experience, utilization of Gospel-centered[550] and expository preaching methodologies, experience with preaching through OT war narratives, and doctrinal conviction of the inspiration and integrity of Scripture. The rationale for these criteria is discussed below.

First, each pastor had at least ten years of preaching experience because the research was interested in uncovering established methodologies. It may take many years for preachers to develop their philosophy and style of preaching. Second, the research required preachers who use Gospel-centered and expository methodologies. Since the driving question of this study involves Gospel proclamation, a Gospel-centered approach was essential. However, since Gospel-centered preaching moves beyond a historical-grammatical hermeneutic,[551] one participant was selected who is not a Gospel-centered preacher, in order to provide a contrasting methodology. Further, the expository method was critical to ensure sermons took into account the full context, no matter how dark, that surrounded selected passages. The full war narrative was central to this study.

Third, because the qualitative research method seeks to understand meaning and experience, this study required preachers with experience in this subject area. Criteria included experience with war narratives so that the methodologies discovered would be useful in even the most difficult of texts. Last, this study required a doctrinal conviction of inspiration and integrity of scripture so that all interview participants would be

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[549] Ibid., 97.

[550] One participant ascribed to a strict historical-grammatical hermeneutic as opposed to Gospel-centered.

[551] Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 151–52.

addressing the same problems. Preachers who do not believe in the integrity of scripture may dismiss or contradict the very passages of scripture this project seeks to study.

Data Collection

This study utilized semi-structured interviews for primary data gathering. The open-ended nature of interview questions allowed the researcher to reference the war narratives most familiar to the interviewee, and to respond to issues and ideas as they surfaced.[552] Ultimately, these methods enabled this study to look for common themes or findings across the variation of participants, in search of answers to this study's research questions.[553]

A pilot interview was conducted to test the protocol questions for clarity and usefulness.[554] This interview yielded such useful results it was included in the data analysis. Initial interview protocol categories were derived from the literature but evolved during the interview process through constant comparison across the growing pool of data. In order to best utilize the data, coding and analysis began and continued throughout the interview process.[555]

Six pastors were interviewed for approximately ninety minutes each. The researcher recorded each interview on two digital devices to ensure quality recordings, and protect the data against accidental loss. All six interviews were conducted within a seven-month time frame. As soon as possible after each interview the researcher wrote

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[552] Ibid., 111.

[553] Ibid., 203.

[554] Ibid., 117.

[555] Ibid., 197.

field notes annotating details not detectable in the audio recordings such as body language and facial expressions.[556]

Data Analysis

Following each interview the researcher personally transcribed each audio recording. This method enhanced the ongoing analysis of the interview data and the evolution of protocol questions and interview technique. The analysis focused on discovering and identifying common struggles, solutions, and methods across the variation of participants.

The interview protocol contained the following questions:

1. When you read a text like Joshua 6 or 1 Samuel 15:1-9,[557] what first strikes you in the narrative?
2. Before you begin developing the sermon on a text like 1 Samuel 15:1-9, how does God's violence in the narrative affect you personally?
3. When you bring a text like 1 Samuel 15:1-9 to the pulpit, what unspoken questions do you anticipate from the non-Christian in the audience?
4. When you bring a text like 1 Samuel 15:1-9 to the pulpit, what unspoken questions do you anticipate from the Christian in the audience?
5. What truth is in 1 Samuel 15:1-9 that you think your audience needs to hear?
6. When preaching from a text like 1 Samuel 15:1-9, what methodologies do you use for Gospel proclamation?
7. What would you say to the preacher who is intimidated by texts like 1 Samuel 15:1-9?

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[556] Ibid., 151.

[557] During the interviews I substituted 1 Samuel 15:1-9 for a war text most familiar to the interviewee.

Researcher Position

This researcher is a military chaplain endorsed by a conservative, Evangelical denomination. Merriam cautions researchers to be aware of what biases they bring into the study from their own personal beliefs and experiences.[558] This study has been shaped by at least three such positions. First, this study assumed the doctrine of the inspiration and integrity of scripture. Secondly, it is believed that all scripture points to Christ, giving shape to the underlying theme of this work. Lastly, this researcher has a premillennial eschatology, differing from the majority of the interviewees and the authors he cites. However, chapter five demonstrates that he is able to learn from those of differing theological perspectives.

Study Limitations

This study required interview participants with specialized criteria as outlined above. Consequently, time constrictions limited the study to only six preachers who could be identified as meeting these criteria. Geographic constrictions limited interviewees to preachers in North America. Preachers from regions more acquainted with war may have yielded different insights, and provided a different shape to the study.

The study further limited interviews almost exclusively to preachers who practice a Gospel-centered approach to preaching. Preaching professor Dennis Johnson demonstrates that such an approach goes beyond a grammatical-historical hermeneutic.[559] Strict adherents to the grammatical-historical method insist that interpretations be limited to the understanding of the original audience. Though one participant held to a

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[558] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 208.

[559] Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 151–52.

grammatical-historical hermeneutic, the data surprisingly did not yield a rich contrast. Perspectives from more preachers following this method may yield helpful insights as well.

Also, this study was focused exclusively on Gospel proclamation. It is realistic to assume that every text contains more theological and practical content than a comprehensive sermon would need to address. Readers will need to include other resources for a thorough homiletic model. Lastly, some of the study's findings may be generalized into preaching other biblical texts or other styles of preaching. It is the reader's responsibility to determine what they can appropriately apply to their context.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to examine how preachers proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives. The research included interviews with six preachers who identify as conservative and reformed in their theology and are exegetical and Gospel-centered in their preaching. This study identifies them with pseudonyms in order to maintain anonymity. Four of the preachers are Baptist and two are Presbyterian (PCA). The Baptists include Baker who has been at his current and only church for 10 years. Suarez and Baxter are pastors, professors, and published authors. Owen has pastored for over 20 years. The Presbyterians are Albert and Walter. Both are seasoned pastors, professors, and published authors. The six men serve in locations from the Northwest to Midwest. They all have a D.Min. from conservative seminaries with the exception of Baker (M.Div.) and Owen (B.A.).

In order to discover preaching methodologies used by experienced, Christ-centered exegetes, this study is built around four research questions:

1. What unique challenges do OT war narratives present for preachers?
2. How do preachers address the current cultural barriers presented by OT war narratives?
3. How do preachers address the theological barriers presented by OT war narratives?
4. What methods do preachers use to proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives?

The following three sections, derived from the RQs, explain the findings from this study.

1. Preachers must anticipate audience concerns.
2. Preachers must adequately respond to audience concerns.
3. Preachers must faithfully exalt Christ.

Preachers Must Anticipate Audience Concerns

The first RQ was, "What unique challenges do OT war narratives present for preachers?" Several interview questions probed these challenges, revealing two audience concerns specific to the genre. First, the cultural distance between audience and text is significant. Second, the violence of these texts is offensive to many audience members.

Anticipating the Cultural Distance Between Audience and Text

Pastor Baxter asked, "how does the average listener perceive what's happening here?" Pastor Suarez said preachers are obligated to anticipate what questions audience members will be asking and "get out ahead of them and maybe answer them while we are preaching." Each of the pastors recognized this need, and saw questions arising from a gap of understanding between the cultural and theological content of the OT and the modern day American in the church pew. Pastor Albert said preachers "should not assume familiarity with the Bible or with the theological concepts behind it." Looking specifically at Joshua's conquest, Suarez anticipates that that some in his audience will assume the Canaanites were good people, or that God did not offer mercy before judgment. Owen attributes these kinds of inaccurate assumptions to a widespread "wrongly anthropomorphized view of who God is."

While Albert sees a cultural connection in that "we are surrounded by wars right now," Baker recognizes that most Americans have never personally experienced war.

According to him, this naturally puts the text at arm's length. Further, Albert recognizes that those who have experienced trauma may struggle to even read or hear the text. Going beyond these general cultural observations, the interview data revealed two specific subcultures, each with unique obstacles to understanding the text. These subcultures are the Christian culture, and in Albert's words, the "other-than-Christian-person" culture.

Cultural Distance Between the Christian Audience and the Text

Albert anticipates many Christians in the audience will assume either a nationalistic or spiritualized interpretation of the text. Describing the nationalistic interpretation, he tells of a paratrooper he knows who views himself as "the hovering judgment of God coming down" to kill "bad guys." Albert believes it is a mistake to equate ancient Israel's military with America's wars. He said, "I find it really challenging to untangle that for someone." Yet, he believes this "entangling of America and God" is a significant problem.

According to Albert, spiritualizing occurs when Christians think "pastors shouldn't talk about this stuff on Sunday morning." Preachers are tempted to offer a sanitized, self-help lesson rather than deal with the content of the text. Owen said the impulse among many is to ask, "How do we hide this from people?" He has seen many Christians stumble over content like Rahab's lie and the night the spies spent in her house – the house of a prostitute. He said, "they get themselves twisted in all sort of ways over this." Baxter looked at it from a slightly different angle, anticipating questions like, "How is this helpful for my life?"

According to Suarez and Baxter, preachers often answer both concerns by reducing the narrative to simple moralistic steps to follow. After preaching 12 sermons

from Nehemiah, Suarez said, “I realized I missed the whole point of the Bible” by not preaching the text in its redemptive context. As Baxter said, “I don’t want to dare them to be a Joshua and say go and do what Joshua did.” Baker explained why: “Because we don’t have that call. We have a call to be salt and light” in ways that are in keeping with the teachings of Christ.

Cultural Distance Between Other-Than-Christian-People and the Text

Baker said the non-Christian comes to the text “already questioning … the character of God.” Albert assumes the other-than-Christian-person in his audience has never read the Bible. What they know about Christianity they know from Fox News if they are politically conservative, or MSNBC if they are politically liberal. They are “going to read a text like this and be all confused by it.” Baxter said, “They won’t have a clue. They don’t have any sense of what is happening in that text.” The two most prominent obstacles the preachers anticipated from the text are miracles and violence. Albert said some biblical stories will sound like fables or fairy tales to the non-Christian.

Violence was the most prominent theme in the interviews. Albert anticipates an other-than-Christian-person quickly equating Israel’s activity with terrorism. Though it “is significantly different,” it will be hard for the non-Christian to hear the distinction. Walter said, “The genocide issues are … the current skeptic cause select.” He said the primary question would be “was that unfair?” However, “I don’t think the Jew of Joshua’s time or the Jew of Jesus’ time is asking that question.” The preacher must get past the listener’s initial objections before he can get to “the author’s intent.” The following section describes the problem of violence in further detail.

Anticipating the Offense of Violence in the Text

Each interview began exploring the preacher's personal reaction to the violence of OT war narratives. Two of the preachers indicated the violence did not bother them in the slightest.[560] The remaining four described varying degrees of discomfort concerning the violent content. Owen said it "takes us back a little bit. It does me, when I first read it." Baker admitted, "often times it looks wrong when God is acting." He said, "I have a grand design of how the world should work in my own mind, and God's design is completely different." Both Owen and Baker moved quickly towards the theological solutions that calm their personal angst.

Albert's interview uniquely hung on this question for quite some time. Looking at the battle for Jericho in Joshua 6 he asked, "How is that any different than the terrorist coming in and killing innocent children and that kind of thing?" He referenced a character in Dostoyevsky's "The Brothers Karamazov"[561] who laments the horrors adults afflict on children. Albert said, "he is giving language to an atheist person struggling with God. But, I find that compelling." He goes so far as to say these texts are "about the one thing that would keep me from believing about God." The violence against children in OT war narratives, according to Albert, must be handled carefully and seriously.

All six preachers agreed the violence is offensive to many listeners, which presents a two-layer problem. They indicated that the offense is heightened because God

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[560] Walter initially stated he was not bothered by the violence, but later interview questions revealed a personal struggle he attributes to the Holy Spirit within him.

[561] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Constance Garnett, Unabridged ed. (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2005).

instigated the violence. Further, many listeners find divine violence irreconcilable with the Gospel. The discussion below will consider each layer in turn.

The Violence is Offensive Because God Commanded It

Did God really command the killing of every man woman and child? All six interviewees expressed the need to address these questions directly and honestly. Five preachers took the text at face value. For example, Suarez, throughout his interview, contrasted the conquest of Canaan with final judgment and found it as a mere shadow of things to come. Similarly, Baxter nowhere questioned what the text appears to say, but rather asked, "How do I communicate this to an audience?"

Walter was the only interviewee to question the surface level reading of the text. Leaning on "Is God a Moral Monster?"[562] by Paul Copan, Walter suggested that warfare language employs a level of hyperbole. He compares the genre to a high school basketball coach who says, "get out there and kill them!" God's use of warfare language "was not an expression to wipe out every man, woman, and child." But rather, God is saying, "I have a right to rule my land. I have a right for my dominion to be over this place. And I'm using my people to establish my dominion against the sin of the Amalekites." Nevertheless, Walter believes Copan employs hyperbole too quickly and offers it as "the only answer." He said the challenges of these texts require a level of humility within the preacher that will admit what he does not know. Further, offering answers too quickly has "a greater chance of doing damage" than working through the problems slowly.

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[562] Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster?: Making Sense of the Old Testament God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011).

Baker assumes that an other-than-Christian-person comes to church "already questioning… the character of God." Suarez imagines his audience asking, "How could God do this?" Baxter, imagining a listener reflecting on personal hardships, anticipates the question "[Is God going] to just be mean to me too?" Owen asked, "How is this fair? How is God being just?" Baker worded the question, "Why is God so mean?" and imagines listeners relating with Richard Dawkins, who he quotes as saying "God is maniacal." Albert referenced a Ricky Gervais comedy routine on Noah and concluded, "God has an anger management problem."[563] The preachers agreed that such perceptions must be taken seriously. Albert said he has listeners "whose family members have been murdered or beaten up. And just to read [these texts] can be difficult." For people like this he says, from the pulpit, "I have the same concern. Actually, the same revulsion." A later section will explore how he turns this toward an "apologetic moment." What is pertinent here is to see that he connects with the skeptic's concern about God acting violently.

Anticipating the Perceived Incongruity between Text and Gospel

The interviewees agreed that the divinely orchestrated violence in these texts creates a powerful perception of incongruity between the text and the Gospel. Baxter said, "You are going to have to get past the violence… and help [your audience] get there." Owen asks, "Is this the same God as the God of the New Testament?" Albert, referring to the previously mentioned Ricky Gervais video said for many people there exists a perception that, "You can't reconcile the OT God who needs anger management with the Jesus who loves everyone, who is meek and mild and gentle."

[563] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h6omFJhKr6o

Owen recognized this perception, not just with skeptics, but Christians as well. Some in his audience have a "contradiction or confusing idea about the nature and the love of God versus the wrath of God and how the Trinity functions." Baker addressed what he calls "the grandfatherly" type of God who overlooks sin. Consequently, even Christians end up with a confusing "contrast between this God who gave his Son and this God who would wipe out all these people." Both he and Walter discussed the character of God. Baker asked, "Is he violating his own character?" and Walter asked, "How is God maintaining the God-ness I expect?" The study will now turn to examining the preachers' solutions to these audience concerns.

Preachers Must Adequately Respond to Audience Concerns

RQs two and three asked how preachers address the current cultural barriers and theological barriers presented by OT war narratives. The interviews revealed that while preachers distinguish between cultural and theological barriers, that distinction does not have a practical application in their use of apologetics in their sermons. Therefore, this section addresses both barriers simultaneously as "audience concerns." It seeks to answer the adjusted RQ, "How do preachers address audience concerns when preaching OT war narratives?" The interview data revealed three necessary steps preachers take in addressing audience concerns. They settle the issues internally before preaching, address audience concerns directly, and preach a robust theology.

Settle the Issues Internally

During the interviews the final scripted question was, "What do you say to the preacher who is intimidated by a text like this?" The question received a variety of answers. Albert said, "I am glad you are intimidated," and Baker said, "It is good to be

intimidated." Conversely, Baxter said, "I would just say 'don't be intimidated,'" and Owen said, "You probably have an inadequate theology." Suarez was quiet for several seconds slowly and compassionately saying, "The Lord loves him [pause]. The Lord loves him [pause]. The Lord loves him [pause]. The Lord is happy with him. He doesn't need to live to please anybody else." He went on to discuss the importance of rooting out any "defective view of God," or "lack of confidence in the text…" or fear of being disliked. Regardless of their initial response to this particular interview question,[564] each of the pastors emphasized the importance of sorting through the theological implications of these texts personally before preaching them. The following three headings describe their approaches: consider personal experiences, bolster personal theological conviction, and allow time to personally mature.

Consider Personal Experiences

According to Baxter personal experience plays an active role in the audience's understanding of these difficult texts. One's struggle to understand what God is doing in war narratives stems from "trying to justify God's actions in a specific story based on their experience." They come with a pre-understanding that is not congruent with the text and "walk away very frustrated." The preacher must help them reinterpret their own experience in light of biblical truth.

The interview data suggested it is just as important for the preachers to wrestle through their own experiences before preaching the text. An earlier section revealed five of the interviewees admitted a personal emotional struggle with the violence of the text.

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[564] Each of the pastors contributed many more helpful thoughts while answering this question. This paragraph shares only their initial comments in order to capture the impact of Suarez's thoughtful response.

Such a majority indicates the experience itself is worth consideration. Baker reflected on years of experience that have taught him to "check" his reaction to the text with "what I know of God's character as revealed in Scripture." He says having knowledge of God's character infused into his personal life keeps him "from freaking out when I look a text like this." He said the process has made him "think deeper, more worshipfully about God."

Walter likewise speaks of a personal knowledge of God's character; however, he follows it in a slightly different direction. He suggests it is the voice of God himself giving the preacher pause. Responding to the language of Joshua he said, "we are … made in the image of God and we recognize injustice. I believe that Spirit of God within us, so I say my objection to that kind of activity is not just kind of self-conceived. That is the Spirit of God within me saying that is not right." He admitted this is part of what pushes him to interpret the text as hyperbolic. He said, "I have to interpret [the violence] in some way that is consistent with my understanding of who God is."

Albert also spoke of personal experience influencing his interaction with the text. Prior to seminary he was a social worker doing advocacy work for victims of crime. He attributes his revulsion of war text violence to those earlier personal experiences. Even further, his revulsion extends to any Christian who would handle the text lightly. Yet, his interpretation is different than Walter's. He is glad for the material. "It makes the book more real to me. More plausibly true. Historically accurate." Why? Because "it's the real world." So Albert's experience with heartache gives him an appreciation for the honesty of the war texts as well as sensitivity to his audience. He said the preacher must be able to empathize with the outrage or confusion the audience may experience from these texts.

Bolster Personal Theological Conviction

Owen believes the primary reason preachers find these texts difficult is due to an inadequate Biblical Theology. “Their metanarrative isn’t big enough to take in something like Joshua.” His solution: “sounds to me like there needs to be some bolstering.” The other preachers likewise emphasized the importance of strong theological conviction. Suarez believes that a preacher’s response to the text says a lot about his theology. If he is intimidated by the text it may stem from a weak bibliology or uncertainty about the character of God. Baxter, the only interviewee not bothered by the violence, attributes his stability to understanding the sovereignty of God.

Pastor Albert provides a series of theological questions for preachers to consider: What is judgment? What is legitimate judgment? What about the children? How does this reveal a good God? What does personal moral outrage reveal about the preacher? How does this relate to Jesus? He concluded the preacher must have “bravery for the name of God so he is not slandered.” Owen encouraged preachers to find the right theological material to help them pursue the necessary growth and ask, “How can I bolster my theological understanding so I don’t find this overwhelming?”

Allow Time to Personally Mature

The goal of this study is Gospel proclamation. The theological bolstering of the previous paragraph has Gospel proclamation as its aim. Suarez shared a time when he preached a 12 sermon series through Nehemiah. Upon concluding the study he recognized his only mention of Christ was in his closing prayer, “in the name of Jesus, amen.” He described this realization as, “overwhelmingly convicting. I realized I missed

the whole point of the Bible though I was a faithful, serious expositor who worked very hard in the text."

Baker believes human intellect can only go so far in answering some of the difficult questions presented by OT war narratives. "I feel like there is always a stopping point when you come to things like this. There is a wall that in your finite mind you cannot scale. That's where faith really has to kick in." Owen and Albert both discuss a maturation process an individual preacher may need to accomplish in order to develop the necessary faith. Owen shared a personal anecdote of a time he attempted to preach through Hebrews but it was too much for him. "I honestly needed a few years of growing and maturing in my understanding until I felt like I could handle Hebrews." Relating this to the topic at hand he said, "So maybe a guy does need some time."

Albert agrees. He understands that a preacher may encounter a portion of scripture he is not ready to tackle, and needs to give himself time. Owen warned that the preacher must not allow this to become an excuse to avoid difficult texts. Albert takes it further and recommends a two-part strategy to prepare oneself. First, choose a timeline. The preacher may need to say, "we'll tackle that a year from now." Second, the preacher should engage in regular, targeted study. He suggests, "taking an hour each week and reading."

Address Audience Concerns Directly

Baker said preachers should anticipate audience members who are already questioning the character of God. Through personal tragedies they "feel like they have been burned by God." He said, "You've got to address it with them." A later section explores the recommended apologetic and theological content of these sermons. The aim

of this section is to describe the preachers' approach to dealing with audience concerns. The interview data reveals that the preacher's manner of presentation is just as important as the sermon content. Two essential approaches emerged from the interviews. Preachers should walk in humility, and preachers should be patient with the audience's understanding.

Preachers Should Walk in Humility

Four of the preachers warned about the potential of doing damage by not handling these texts with their due care. Walter anchors this care to humility. "I think you have to have a certain amount of humility to say, 'that is a really hard question.'" He reflected on what he called the oldest interpretation of Joshua, which appeals exclusively to God's sovereignty. Briefly, "[God] made people and he can take them out." He said this approach "rings most hollow in today's ears." To simply say, "Oh, here is the answer," runs a great risk of doing damage. Rather, the preacher should have humility to present all the plausible interpretations. The kind of humility Walter models is present throughout all six interviewee's discussions of preaching and preparation.

Albert believes true humility requires preachers to be transparent concerning their personal struggles with the text. He said when preaching Joshua he finds it necessary to "have empathy with that outrage someone may feel or the confusion they might feel." In a sermon he may say, "If that is true, if Joshua is Hitler… I'm with you. I'm objecting to that God… I'm out of here. Let's go get a six-pack and get drunk." He stated clearly, "I'll talk like that from the pulpit." He will then challenge the audience to listen carefully to the intent of the text and see that Joshua presents "a completely different scenario. It's an

apple and orange." But to get them there, the preacher's humility and willingness to wrestle through the implications of the text with transparency is essential.

During sermon preparation Baker finds the difficulty of the text "creates a dependence on God." Owen urges preachers to ask a humbling introspective question, "how good are you as an expositor?" Though self-awareness is difficult, he believes an honest assessment of preaching skill is essential to how the preacher will develop and deliver difficult texts. The first words of Owen's interview were, "What first strikes me is the unrelenting holiness of God." His entire interview revolved around the humble posture of a sinful man standing in the presence and judgment of a holy God.

Be Patient with the Audience's Understanding

An earlier section talked about the importance of preachers patiently allowing themselves adequate time to mature into preaching difficult texts. Albert emphasizes the importance of extending the same patience to the audience. "However much time as a preacher we've needed to come to terms with these questions we have got to give people the same amount of time and access to the same resources." Patience will require preachers to give adequate sermon time to apologetics, preach as many sermons as it takes, and preach war texts in the context of a series.

Give Adequate Sermon Time to Apologetics

Two of the preachers talked about how much time they spend in apologetics, or addressing skeptic's questions, within a particular sermon. Albert's audience consistently contains skeptics. For their sake he regularly includes an "apologetic moment" in his sermons. Most are three-to-five minutes long. However, he said before preaching Jericho he would likely do an entire sermon dealing with anticipated questions regarding the text.

Walter said he would find it difficult to preach any sermon from Joshua without spending 20-30% of his time on apologetics.

Baker took a different approach. He said, "I would feel very inadequate in one sermon," and recommended personal conversations and entire sermons to address some of the more difficult issues. Both Suarez and Owen agree, recommending as many sermons as necessary to deal with complex issues before moving on with a text.

Preach As Many Sermons as it Takes

Even with his consistent apologetic moments Albert follows a similar approach. Over the years he has changed his approach to preaching hard texts. He used to feel he "had to solve everything in the 40 minutes." Now he hopes he can deal with a text in such a way that a skeptic will come back next week to hear more, or that they can have coffee together during the week to discuss the questions left unanswered. He compared preaching to a steady marathon. It's not a "sitcom… this is an epic movie. You can't get it all out there in minutes and wrap it up with a bow."

Suarez seems to want more closure to his sermons. He said, "I don't want to make any mess I can't clean up." Still, he recognizes the limitations of a single sermon. Depending on the text he will ask the audience to table certain questions until next week, and then dedicate a sermon to an apologetic or theological topic. Or, he will break from the series to tackle the issue the week before it comes up in the text.

Owen follows the same practice. Before preaching Jericho he recommends a preacher dedicate an entire sermon on the holiness of God and another on the sinfulness of man, because a single sermon simply does not provide enough time. He feels each preacher must decide how to handle these themes based on skill and audience

understanding. “Can I cover all of it in one? Or do I need to make this a two-part message, or even three? I think it depends on how much teaching you’ve done before this that has helped give the adequate theological framework and foundation…”

Preach in the Context of a Series

Each of the six preachers regularly preach exegetically through books of the Bible. They find the context helpful when presenting difficult texts. Baxter said he never seeks out difficult texts. “I’m only preaching them because they are in the section we are in… I don’t skip the hard stuff. But at the same time, I don’t go looking for it.” This is extremely important for Albert. He imagines the other-than-Christian-person who comes to a service when the preacher is in Joshua 6 or 10. This person thinks, “This is why I don’t go to church. This is why I’m not a Christian. This is why I wish I didn’t visit today. It took great courage just to visit this church today, and this is what you are talking about?” Baxter anticipates this person’s struggle, saying, “They aren’t thinking you preach the whole counsel of God, you go verse by verse through all books… And so their question is, what is in this for me? How is this helpful?” So the preacher’s task is “to get past the violence, or past the parts that are very hard to understand, and help them get there.”

For Walter, preaching in a series is essential. The context helps the preacher by framing the difficult texts in authorial intent. “I honestly don’t think the average Israelite was thinking, ‘was that unfair?’ I don’t think the Jew of Joshua’s time or the Jew of Jesus’ time is asking that question. I think it is still fair to say, ‘what was the intent of the author?’” Baxter finds that answer in the book’s metanarrative. “So we have to put this story in the context of the larger book. Whatever the book is about we are going to take

the story and track it back to that." They each attest that preaching in this way is a lengthy process, but none suggest it is wise to tackle a war text out of its context.

Preach a Robust Theology

One interview question asked, "What truth is in this text that your audience needs to hear?" At this point the conversation turned from methodology to content. Each of the preachers talked about the necessity of preaching sound theology. Both Baker and Baxter spoke of audience members who are "already questioning God." Albert said most of his audience only knows of God what they learned from Fox News or MSNBC. Consequently, Pastor Suarez believes many churchgoers are "functional universalists." The violence of war narratives does not fit into their view of God's behavior. When confronted with the divine judgment Baker imagines them asking if God is violating his own character. According to Owen the preacher must "torpedo all those boats" by correcting a "less than biblical concept" with sound theology. The interview data revealed significant agreement regarding the importance of three specific areas of theology: the sinfulness of man, the character of God, and the metanarrative of Scripture.

Preach the Sinfulness of Man

All six interviewees affirmed the inherent sinfulness of man to be both a barrier hindering the audience from receiving the text, and an inroad by which they may be convinced of its truth. Mankind's sinfulness acts as a barrier because men and women are largely unaware of their sinful state. Owen referenced a professor of philosophy who assigned a project requiring each student to write of a personal struggle of doing right versus wrong. The majority of the class did not turn in a paper. "When he asked them why they hadn't they said with no sense of irony, 'oh we've never done anything

wrong.'" Owen concluded, "that's self-esteem, but absolutely no self-awareness." Albert recognizes a similar lack of self-awareness in many of his audience members, leading to what they would consider to be a moral objection to God's behavior in war narratives. They believe, "God is immoral, and we are moral, if he does this kind of thing." This is bothersome to the preachers, because their theology teaches the exact opposite. God is righteous; all mankind is sinful.

Suarez is convinced that preachers must address inherent sinfulness directly. "[A] theological truth that does need to be conveyed is, everybody is guilty. Everybody is guilty. And God is the judge of all people." Baxter affirms, "all of us deserve the worst God could ever give us." He believes much of the OT message is a demonstration of human depravity, as does Baker. Baker suggests using war narratives as a "springboard to point out our depravity." According to him, the preacher should use depravity, which is very clear in the text, to "help people see the wickedness that lies in the heart of man." It is not just the reality of mankind's sinful state the preachers want to reveal, but also the devastating effects of sin. This is where the preachers began discussing sin as an inroad to the audience's reception of the text's message.

Albert recognizes that people are already asking why the world is in its present condition. "Why is this the way things are?" Why is "war like this?" How is it "that people do this to one another?" He said this is where the preacher should explain "what sin is and what sin does." According to Walter, the war narratives demonstrate that sin ultimately brings God's wrath. Baker wants preachers to be clear, God "is angry at sin. Sin does anger him." So, not only does sin bring pain, but also sin will eventually bring God's wrath.

Functionally, the preachers unanimously want their teaching of sin to lead the audience to God's grace. Though admittedly difficult, Albert wants to help his audience see past their American individualism and recognize they are the spiritual ancestors of the Canaanites. Baker recommends using Romans chapter one to reveal the similarities the audience has with the Amalekites. After building these kinds of connections Owen would ask, "Are you prepared my friend for the fact that if you are not in Christ you are in a genuine Jericho right now? The walls may seem quite secure right now… But they will fall. If you don't pull a Rahab you are doomed." Suarez provided a concise summary, "Apart from the Gospel everybody will perish." Owen invites his audience to throw themselves on the mercy of God by setting man's sinfulness in stark contrast to God's character.

Preach the Character of God

The interview data revealed preaching the character of God is important from two distinct perspectives. First, some interviewees were concerned with audience members who are already questioning the character of God. Such listeners see a contradiction between the character of God revealed in OT war narratives and the character they assume God should portray. Other interviewees were concerned with audience members who see OT war narratives as unhelpful. They are consumed with felt needs and do not see a connection between what is portrayed in the text and the help they likely came to church hoping to get. For both audience members, the preachers highlight the importance of preaching the character of God.

Baker helps the audience members who are questioning God by "helping them see the bigger picture of the character of God from the Word of God." He goes on to discuss

God's justice, mercy, holiness, and wrath. He wants them to understand that their problem with the God revealed in war narratives is due to a limited understanding of who God is. He says, "to box [God] in does a disservice certainly to him but it does a disservice to all of us. It does a disservice to our people in the end." For Owen, the task is to preach the character of God in such a way as to reconcile "a contradiction or confusing idea about the nature and the love of God versus the wrath of God…" Baker asked, "How surprised will we be in eternity if we show up and we have ignored some of these things?"

Baxter speaks to the needs of audience members who ask, "How does this apply to my tough circumstance?" Albert says there may be "no felt need application." He wants to help people in this situation understand God. "Sometimes it is about truth not therapy." He goes on to discuss certain characteristics of God like faithfulness to his promise and faithfulness to his people. "He is the God who will deliver them, defend them, advocate for them. He is that same God now." Baxter agrees. He preaches "God's character and God's work in relation to people." Admitting the difficulty of war narrative content, Baxter concluded, "at the end of the day I trust God's character."

The interview data included ample content in this area. Several specific characteristics rose to the surface as necessary in war text sermons. Owen uniquely developed his theological approach to God's character with several richly descriptive phrases that will guide the rest of this discussion.

Unrelenting Holiness

The first words Owen spoke in his interview were, "What first strikes me is the unrelenting holiness of God." He expounded the demands of the *ḥerem*, and the

specificity of divinely prescribed battle tactics for Jericho. Similarly, Albert referenced the appearance of the Captain of the Lord's army in Joshua 5 as the first thing that strikes him in the text. Joshua asked the Captain, "are you for us or against us?" The Captain's answer is no. Albert says, "That is unexpected." He defines it as a type of neutrality. The conquest is not about "Israel is good guys and Canaan is bad guys." There is a "larger story going on here."

Baxter says the simple, larger story behind every biblical text is that "You see people with a holy God and they are sinners and they need Christ." Baker sees this as God's basic motive throughout Scripture. "God has an agenda of making us holy and restoring what sin has broken in the world." In order for people to understand this in the text Owen says they must be educated about God's "distinctive otherness." He says, "God is not just an amplified version of us, but God really is different."

According to Baker, some texts are in the Bible merely to "strike awe." He explains, God's holiness makes his grace and mercy shine bright, like black felt behind diamonds in a jewelry display case. "You have God in such contrast in Scripture between his demand of what is holy and right and then he is gracious and merciful." The discussion will now turn to God's mercy.

Little Flashes of Grace

For Owen one of the most surprising things from the Jericho narrative is what he called, "these little flashes of grace," referring to Rahab. Baker anticipates a common audience question of war narratives is "Why is God so mean?" He believes the preacher's responsibility is to show them that "mean" is not the right word to describe what is happening in the text. Albert, in an extended monologue, described how he would ask his

audience to allow to him to demonstrate that Joshua is nothing like Hitler or a modern day terrorist. Both Baker and Albert lean heavily on God's mercy, as portrayed throughout scripture, to counter the perception of his "meanness." Of the four characteristics the preachers discussed they gave the most attention to God's mercy. They described his mercy in two categories. First, God shows *ḥesed* to his people. Second, he provides common grace to his enemies.

Baxter employs the Hebrew word *ḥesed* to describe God's mercy toward his people. "He has loving kindness and mercy always." He traces this theme from Genesis onward and sees it as the backdrop of the entire OT. "I am trying to help people see God is covenant faithful to His promises as early as Abraham." He interprets the war narratives through a lens of God "working a plan that is consistent with what He promised to Abraham." Then he demonstrates God's *ḥesed* toward Christians saying, "just as much as God fights against evil [in Canaan] he fights for his people." Walter interprets Joshua consistent with Baxter's view of *ḥesed*, and the covenantal history of Abraham. Five separate times he said, "God is providing for his people what they cannot provide for themselves." He says this is the message for the Christian reading Joshua.

> God is saying to a people who cannot take care of themselves, like you and me, that he can show himself strong on behalf of people who are weak. He can show himself forgiving on behalf of people who are unpardonable. He can show himself a promise-keeper to those who have been faithless to him.

In the midst of this talk of mercy Suarez hears the voice of the skeptic who may not see mercy given to a select few as mercy at all. He anticipates the question, "Why didn't God offer mercy to the Canaanites before he destroyed them?" Both he and Baker answer that question with the doctrine of common grace, referencing the first chapter of

Romans. Suarez says, “Nobody can ever say ‘I never knew.’ They knew and suppressed it. That’s what the Bible says.” Baker looks to what Genesis 14 and 15 say of the Amalekites to conclude “there was opportunity for these people in this particular context. They had experienced the mercy the grace of God in some part. And yet continued in their ruthlessness until justice finally had to be served.” Walter agrees. He shows that God waited until the sin of the Amalekites was full because to bring his wrath prematurely would have been unjust.

Suarez gets to the bottom line of these concepts of guilt and judgment in order to elevate the beauty of God’s mercy. He said, “Everybody is guilty. And God is the judge of all people.” Baxter said it is essential that people understand they do not deserve grace. They deserve God’s wrath. Suarez said preachers must ensure people understand what it is Jesus came to save them from. “What is he saving me from? The wrath of God.”

Walter said preachers are obligated to show how their preaching text fits into this “redemptive context.” That is how Owen describes Rahab – “these little flashes of grace.” Rahab is “the last person on earth you would think would be trustworthy. She had violated God’s laws in so many ways, yet she finds mercy.” He called it “a striking thing. The kind of folks that the Lord rescues.” In this redemptive context of guilt and judgment Baker goes to Romans chapter two to say any glimmer of mercy in the story should be used to point people to repentance. “It is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance.”

Absolute Sovereign God

Four of the interviewees spoke of God’s sovereignty as a key characteristic necessary for understanding OT war narratives. However, Walter warns that the doctrine can be mishandled, causing harm rather than good. When responding to a skeptic’s

questions of God's character as revealed in violent texts, he says the oldest answer is "God is simply God." He said the older theologians would say, "It is his right to protect his own purity, the holiness of his people," and "If God made [the Canaanites] they are the creatures of his hand so he can do with them as he chooses." Baker and Suarez both emphasized that everything God does is right. Walter agrees these statements are true, yet he finds they ring hollow in modern ears and are not "sufficient truth for the skeptic."

Nevertheless, God's characteristic of sovereignty emerged from the interview data as a necessary topic. Baxter believes preachers should show that every detail of the text "happened in God's sovereign world." Albert believes it is important for the audience to hear from the text that God holds the nations in the palm of his hand. That God works in individuals' lives and in history. Owen preaches, "the Lord conquers. He either conquers us through our repentance or he conquers us through our recalcitrance and brings us into judgment." He reminds the audience that "God is not accountable to us. God does not owe us explanations." The God of the Bible is the "absolute sovereign God."

Not a Tame Lion

Both Owen and Suarez discussed the early scenes of the Book of Revelation. The conversations hung on the fifth chapter as they described the announcement of Christ to John. They both appeared mesmerized by the contrast between John's being told, "Behold! The Lion of the tribe of Judah," and him turning to see a slain lamb. Suarez pursued the theme of Christ the Lamb. Owen pursued the theme of Christ the Lion. He said, "We have to give equal weight to redemption and judgment." As judge, Owen concluded that for the guilty, "God is not safe." Similarly, Baker borrowed from C.S. Lewis and said, "He is not a tame lion."

The last of God's characteristics from the interview data is God's judgment. Albert spent considerable time discussing the natural human longing for judgment. When preaching on God's judgment he will tap into various real-life experiences. He gave examples such as various forms of victimization, school policies against bullying, an imaginary houseguest who proves to be unsafe, and well-known films recognizable to his audience. He will say, "Those of us who are being victimized long for judgment." As their heads start nodding in agreement he will begin to show them how "God is actually the most fair, right, and good judge of all."

Suarez spoke of the need to teach of God's judgment "from a systematic theology perspective." He suggests devoting an entire sermon on the topic of judgment either the week after it arises in the series, or pausing for it the week before. He senses a responsibility to ensure the audience understands "fallen humanity will be judged and apart from the Gospel everybody will perish." He said, "Everybody is guilty. And God is the judge of all people and determines what is right."

Owen likewise draws on the rightness of final punishment to reveal the rightness of all biblical judgments. When people struggle to accept God's judgment in OT stories he wonders, "what are they going to do with the doctrine of hell so thoroughly elaborated in the NT?" He sees God's judgment in two categories, final judgment, and immediate judgment. He is quick to point out that the instruments of immediate judgment are not necessarily righteous themselves. As Albert said regarding Joshua 5, the reader should not just assume that the Israelites are always the good guys. It "doesn't mean the instruments of his judgment are righteous."

The final interview question was, “Is there anything you would like to add as a closing thought?” Baker said, “Didn’t [God] say that from the beginning? ‘If you eat of the fruit of this tree you will die?’ …. Whether it is natural causes, whether it is through some act of judgment like Joshua or whatever, it is the inevitability. It’s not like he’s breaking a promise.” Baxter, pondering the best path through the difficulty of the text said, “Maybe we point to the fact that God is still the God of judgment.” Baker uses this judgment to point the audience to the cross. “The judgment that is happening here is the same judgment that is happening on the Cross.” A later section will explore that theme in greater detail.

Preach the Big Metanarrative

All six interviewees elevated the metanarrative of Scripture as essential when handling OT war narratives. Owen warned that without an adequate Biblical Theology, a preacher’s “metanarrative isn’t big enough to take in something like Joshua.” In that vein, Suarez looks to Biblical Theology for “longitudinal themes that run from one end to the other end” of the Bible, and he considers where his text fits in among those themes. When discussing the metanarrative of Scripture two requirements emerged from the interview data. First, the preacher must be convinced of the Bible’s integrity. Second, the preacher must understand how the Bible’s storyline ties together.

Integrity of Scripture

Throughout the interviews all six of the preachers check their personal reaction to the text against the truth of Scripture. Reflecting on his coming to Christian faith as an adult, Suarez said, “I have never, ever, ever, ever had any occasion to doubt the integrity of the Bible. Ever.” Similarly, Walter testifies, “I believe what the Scriptures say,” and

Baxter affirms the accuracy of even the hardest war narrative content "because that is what it says."

For Suarez, it is the reliability of the text that makes biblical theology effective. He warns, "don't forget that the little stories, while being actual historical accounts of real historical events, that tell real things about real people, don't forget that those little stories help contribute to the big story." Even Albert, whose interview was saturated in genuine concern for skeptics and victims of violence, remains utterly convinced of the integrity of Scripture. In fact, it is some of the difficult content that most bolsters his faith. He said without war narratives the Bible would read like "the worst kind of fairytale" because it would not address the harsh realities of a sin-cursed world. He concluded, "If the Bible didn't talk about war in these ways I don't know how we could take it seriously." He takes the real-life content of the war narratives and moves farther, recognizing "there is some type of larger story going on here." This leads to the second requirement, understanding the Bible's storyline.

Storyline of Scripture

The interview data analysis revealed each of the preachers value the storyline of Scripture. Three of the interviewees described their approach to developing this storyline in uniquely helpful terms. They are three sets of truths, lines of coherence, and the little story.

Three Sets of Truths

One interview question asked, "What truth is in this text that you think your audience needs to hear?" Albert shared three sets of truths, creation, fall, redemption. Regarding creation he points to God working in history, even on "this side of Eden." He

asks, if the creator God is working, how is it that things are the way they are? This leads to his second set of truth, the fall. The earlier section, "Preach the Sinfulness of Man," describes Albert's intent. He wants his audience to understand the reality of sin from Scripture. The third set of truth is redemption. He looks for "how God is bringing about a redemptive move in this situation." This is a theological conviction for Baker who said, "God has an agenda of making us holy and restoring what sin has broken in the world."

Lines of Coherence

What Suarez called "longitudinal themes," Walter calls "lines of coherence." Looking back to Genesis he traces the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham to the conquest of Joshua and all the way to Christ. "We have Jesus in the weeks before his death recapitulates Joshua's journey… he is fulfilling the covenant of promise that Joshua could not." Far more than the famous story of Jericho's walls falling, Walter wants his audience "to understand there is deep redemptive truth God is establishing… The establishment of the promised people and the Promised Land is part of that redemptive story."

Other interviewees traced a line of coherence through Rahab, judgment, and salvation. The final section handles these themes more thoroughly. Owen made a unique contribution to complete this discussion. He talked about the "strong military imagery" in 2 Corinthians 2 where Paul speaks of Christians as "brought along in the train of those conquered by Christ." Though Owen does not use the term "line of coherence," he points to the biblical theme of God's conquering through either repentance or judgment.

The Little Story

The final approach to understanding the storyline of Scripture is what Suarez called "the little story." Any given text tells a little story and Suarez wants to know where the little story "fits into the telling of the big story." This is similar to all three of Albert's sets of truths, or to Walter's lines of coherence. Where Suarez's perspective is unique is the question, "How would the telling of the big story be deficient if you take that little story and tore it out of your Bible?" So the question is not just, how does it fit, but more so, why is it important? He uses Ruth as an example. "How would my Bible be deficient if Ruth and its four chapters were suddenly torn away? What gap would it leave?"

Much of what the preachers have said so far has hinted at Gospel Proclamation, but that theme has yet to be formally treated. Having uncovered apologetic methodologies to address audience concerns, and theological truths to equip the preacher, the conversation now turns to the goal of this study: How do preachers proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives?

Preachers Must Faithfully Exalt Christ

This study is organized around four RQs with the goal of uncovering how preachers proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives. The first three RQs sought to identify and resolve the unique challenges these texts present to preachers. The fourth RQ aims directly at the goal of this study by asking, "What methods do preachers use to proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives?" Five of the interviewees self identify as Gospel oriented preachers. Baxter does not. He cautions against the hermeneutics behind some methods of Gospel-centered preaching, which he sees as forcing New Testament theology into OT texts. He said, "there isn't any of the war narratives where the original

intent was to point us to Christ." He believes the authors had no knowledge of Christ, therefore to interpret their writings as anticipatory of him misses the text's message. However, the data analysis revealed his actual sermon methodology was not substantially different in most places than the other five interviewees.

Baxter emphasized the necessity of first faithfully preaching the text in its context, then pointing the audience to Christ. He said, "You try to make as many of those connections as you can. Grace. Faithfulness." Though his first priority is that people "understand the text in front of them," he also said, "I want people to think about Christ… I look for natural ways bring it in." Suarez follows the same process. He described his approach in this way:

> I've got to be honest and fair with this text. I've got to parse the verbs [and] diagram sentences. I've got to do all the work. And then I read to this end of the Bible, and I read to [the other] end of the Bible. And figure how does all of that, that big story, influence this here. And of course the beauty is in the process of doing this you see where the connections to Christ often come.

Each of the preachers mentioned specific ways these connections to Christ emerge.[565]

Suarez recommended "Preaching Christ from the OT" by Sidney Greidanus.[566] Specifically, he pointed to the center of the book where Greidanus provides seven ways to get to Christ from the OT. Suarez called these pages "worth their weight in gold," and said all passages of Scripture can be legitimately tied to Christ through at least one of these ways. The data analysis agrees, as each of the seven are demonstrated. Therefore,

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[565] In this study the terms Christ-centered and Gospel-centered are interchangeable.

[566] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,* 239–78.

the remainder of this study will use Greidanus's seven ways[567] to Christ as a guide to discover how preachers proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives.

The Way of Redemptive-Historical Progression

Greidanus describes Redemptive-Historical Progression as "the meta-narrative that underlies Scripture."[568] This meta-narrative has four pivot points, similar to Albert's creation, fall, redemption. These pivot points are creation, redemption in the OT, redemption through Christ, and the new creation. The stream of Scripture flows along this singular story, culminating in Christ.[569] This counters Baxter's strict adherence to authorial intent. If redemptive history is the metanarrative of Scripture, "sound interpretation requires that every part of this history be interpreted in the context of its beginning and end or goal."[570]

Four of the preachers demonstrated this approach during their interview. Walter said it is the preacher's task is to establish the redemptive context of any passage and show "the creator God in redeeming mode." This is much like Albert who said, through the OT in general and the conquest in particular, God is "bringing up redeemers" which point forward to Christ. Walter said the theme of the conquest of Canaan is God doing for his people what they cannot do for themselves. Over and above the destruction of the Canaanites he said the audience needs to see "deep redemptive truth God is establishing" for his people. Owen develops the theme through Rahab. In terms of redemptive history

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[567] These seven ways are not mutually exclusive, but can overlap and combine according to the passage. Ibid., 276.

[568] Ibid., 235.

[569] Ibid..

[570] Ibid., 236.

he points out Rahab had very little knowledge of the God of the Hebrews. Responding to what truth she had was enough to draw her into saving faith. Baker believes "if you seek more light God will give more light." He sees the Amalekites rejecting the light God offered them, bringing judgment. The judgment "pushes us forward to mercy, grace, the cross."

The Way of Promise-Fulfillment

The Way of Promise-Fulfillment looks for Christ as the fulfillment of OT promises. Greidanus provides two rules for interpreting OT promises. First, promises are fulfilled progressively. The OT may refer to a promise that is being fulfilled, yet incompletely. Second, in interpretation the preacher should "move from the promise of the OT to the fulfillment in Christ and back again to the OT Text."[571] Or in the words of Suarez, "Part of what I think is helpful to do with God's people is promise/fulfillment. Sometimes it is very beneficial to understand the fulfillment and then go back and reread the promises."

When it comes to war narratives Greidanus does not provide specific examples. He does not see a direct promise of Christ in the conquest of Canaan.[572] However, as a defining example he points to Christ's fulfillment of Genesis 3:15, both through his earthly ministry and his Second Coming.[573] The promise of Christ's victory over sin and death is important for Owen. He speaks of those conquered by Christ in 2 Corinthians 2 and of the eternal reign of Christ over his enemies in 1 Corinthians 15. He describes these

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[571] Ibid., 242.

[572] Ibid., 341.

[573] Ibid., 248.

passages as "powerfully militaristic," and concludes, "The Lord conquers. He either conquers us through our repentance or he conquers us through our recalcitrance and brings us into judgment."

Three of the interviewees see God's covenant faithfulness as an example of promise-fulfillment. Baxter consistently uses the Hebrew word *ḥesed*, and says it is the backdrop of the entire OT. God's faithfulness to that promise will prove true throughout the whole of Scripture. War narratives demonstrate God's *ḥesed* toward Israel, which will culminate in Christ and ultimately follow into eternity. He says for the Christian, between the time of Christ and eternity "there is covenant faithfulness to us."

Albert brings this into focus for the Church. "He is the promise-keeping God. He is the God who will not abandon his people. He is the God who will deliver them, defend them, advocate for them. He is that same God now. We are his people. He is the same today as he was then." Walter agrees. For him the message of Joshua's war narratives is God is taking care of a people "like you and me" who cannot take care of themselves. "He can show himself strong on behalf of people who are weak. He can show himself forgiving on behalf of people who are unpardonable. He can show himself a promise-keeper to those who have been faithless to him."

The Way of Typology

Greidanus recognizes a common avoidance of typological interpretation and suspects the cause may be a legitimate fear of reading meaning into the text that is not there.[574] The interview data revealed this concern in each of the preachers.[575] Two of the

[574] Ibid., 252.

[575] The interviews did not seek a definition of typology from the interviewees. It is possible that the

preachers spoke directly to their uncertainty of how to properly use typology. The other interviewees made no mention of it. Walter is the one exception, although he did not use the term typology. He sees Jesus, in the weeks before his death, recapitulating Joshua's journey. He says that Jesus is completing what Joshua could not. This interpretation seems difficult to substantiate, but corresponds with Greidanus who sees the entire conquest of Canaan as a type of God's deliverance for his people through Christ.[576] Chapter five will evaluate these interpretations further. The only other discussion of typology in the interview data comes from Albert and Baxter.

A guiding principle for Albert is that the OT points forward to Jesus. This does not mean "our Lord Jesus is hidden somewhere in every text of the Bible." He tries to limit any typological interpretation to what is explicit in the New Testament. He uses the OT example of Moses striking the rock and water coming forth. The New Testament reveals the rock to be a type of Christ. Albert calls this confounding and does not consider himself qualified to make such interpretations.

Baxter agrees, calling on preachers to be "very much measured" lest they fall into allegory. Where Baxter and Albert differ is that Albert considers the New Testament method of interpretation to be something he wants to carefully move toward. He describes the OT as a "historical narrative of a picture of spiritual truth" and desires to develop the "imaginative capacity" to read the text the way the author of Hebrews does.

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differing opinions of typology are largely related to differing definitions of typology. Chapter two of this study defined typology as "an event, person, or object that prophetically prefigures the person or work of Jesus Christ" and presented three criteria necessary to identify biblical typology. These criteria are the requirement of a strong theological correspondence between type and antitype, a heightening or intensification from type to antitype, and the theocentricity of both type and antitype.

[576] Ibid., 260.

Albert does not define exactly how the author of Hebrews read the text, but in the context of his interview this statement implies a typological freedom none of the interviewees consider legitimate for interpreters today. Those who utilize typology do so with great care.

The Way of Analogy

Greidanus describes analogy as a method of applying the OT text to the Church today.[577] It is looking for similarities between what God has done for Israel and what God is doing for the Church through Christ. The emphasis can be on both redemption and the required response.[578] Analogy is not a method of interpretation but a method of application. Baker sees an analogy of the Christian life in these difficult war texts. He tells the story of a child who sees his grandmother working on a tapestry. He sees all the strings hanging down from the bottom, and what he sees is ugly. "His grandma laughs and picks him up and sets him on her stool where he sees it is beautiful and it is forming together perfectly. And I think that's what eternity will be like for us." The analogy is that like the brutality in these texts the hardship of one's life may be appalling. Just as God's eternal plan will resolve all the unknowns of the Canaanite conquest, so will all life's hardships be restored through Christ.

Walter sees an example of God's grace in the Rahab story. "I'm not trying to say this represents Jesus. I am saying it represents the grace of God that is fulfilled in Christ… there is grace on display that culminates in Christ." Owen gets to grace from a different angle. He sees an analogy in God's zeal to "preserve his people from something

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[577] Ibid., 261–62.

[578] Ibid., 263.

that would be destructive for them." Baxter finds an analogy of Christ in God's activity for and presence with his people. He says God is just as active today as he was in Joshua's day through Christ. This presents "incredible implications for the average person in the pew… he is protecting you, he is for you, he is with you."

The Way of Longitudinal Themes

The Way of Longitudinal Themes traces biblical themes from the OT into the New. From the conquest of Canaan, Walter looks back to the Abrahamic covenant of Genesis 15 and says, "There are all kinds of lines of coherence of what God is doing." Greidanus provides several examples of longitudinal themes that are congruent with the interview data.[579] These themes are judgment, redemption, kingdom of God, and divine warrior.

The Theme of Judgment

Suarez followed the theme of judgment, concluding every man, woman, and child is guilty and stands under the wrath of God. He references Psalm 19 and Romans 1 to say general revelation is enough to hold all mankind accountable to God. He goes to the final judgment in the book of Revelation where the wrath of the Lamb slays entire nations. He emphasizes that Jesus is the judge. So when Suarez preaches war narratives he says, "Joshua doesn't bug me because I dealt with Revelation." Owen wonders what people, bothered by the judgment in Joshua, will do "with the doctrine of hell so thoroughly elaborated in the New Testament."

The theme of judgment pushes Suarez to the Gospel. "[Jesus] is the Savior. What is he saving me from? … Divine wrath. And salvation is never more beautiful and

[579] Ibid., 267.

compelling than when it is set against the context of judgment. So I think the opportunities to preach the Gospel from a passage like that are huge." Baxter follows the same thought process. "Maybe we point to the fact that God is still the God of judgment. That's why he offers us the grace that is in Christ." Owen shared a homiletic example for how he handles judgment and Jericho: "Are you prepared my friend for the fact that if you are not in Christ you are in a genuine Jericho right now? The walls may seem quite secure right now... But they will fall. If you don't pull a Rahab you are doomed."

Because of this, Baker said, "Take them to Calvary and show them the justice of God that was enacted on the cross." He will show the audience that the judgment happening in the text is the same judgment being poured out on Calvary with Christ as the substitute recipient of God's wrath. Owen says the result is "We will never experience an ounce of God's judgment." Albert adds an application for the believer in response to Christ's vicarious suffering. "He is not only serving the sentence for sin. He is also taking up the cry of the victim. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? All of us."

The Theme of Redemption

Baxter says OT war narratives fit into the "creation/salvation narrative [of] fall and redemption." Beginning with the fall of man he briefly walks through the OT showing that as time progresses the sin problem grows worse. Yet, because of God's mercy he is constantly working to "provide for his people, to provide their salvation, to provide help." In the midst of these stories of sinners "we have God come to their mercy and aid."

Baker also speaks of the theme of redemption, but he speaks in terms of redemption's ongoing sanctifying work. He says God has an agenda of "making us holy and restoring what sin has broken in the world." Baxter says some OT texts are there merely to demonstrate human depravity. For Baker, the depravity on display in war narratives is a jumping off point into the theme of redemption and holiness. These texts allow people to "see the wickedness that lies in the heart of man. But where do we get a new heart? How does that take place? In Christ crucified there is new life." He encourages preachers to follow the theme of holiness through Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Romans, Colossians, and 1 Peter. Following the theme of redemption's sanctifying work provides ample Gospel oriented application from war narratives.

The Theme of the Kingdom of God

Walter follows the longitudinal theme of the kingdom of God. God established his kingdom among the Israelites with the command to drive out all the inhabitants and not intermarry with pagans. When Israel failed to obey God, judgment came through war with the Philistines; and Saul, their king, was killed. God reestablished his kingdom in the land through David, the king of his choosing. Yet David's rule also failed. For Walter the message is that ultimately God will establish his eternal kingdom for his people through "Christ because they can never maintain [it] for themselves."

Earlier this study examined two preacher's perspectives of God's covenant faithfulness, or *ḥesed*.[580] Baxter believes war narratives demonstrate God's *ḥesed* toward Israel, which will culminate in Christ and ultimately follow into eternity. Walter used

[580] See "The Way of Promise-Fulfillment" above.

similar language. The nationalistic focus of God's *ḥesed* towards Israel has significant overlap with the longitudinal theme of the Kingdom of God.

The Theme of Divine Warrior

Owen connects the military imagery of Joshua to Christ, the divine warrior of Revelation. "Who is this one who comes on the horse? Wielding a sword from His mouth, and laying waste?" He points to the Lion of the tribe of Judah in Revelation 5. He also looks back to the strong military imagery of "the train of those conquered by Christ" described in 2 Corinthians 2:14. He describes the scene as a victorious general dragging his vanquished enemy behind him in chains. He also looks to 1 Corinthians 15:25, "For he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet." According to Owen this theme has the potency of Philippians 2:10-11, "every knee should bow, every tongue confess."

The Way of New Testament Reference

Greidanus says New Testament references to OT texts may also fit into other categories, such as promise-fulfillment, typology, or longitudinal themes.[581] The way of New Testament reference is helpful for preachers because, as Albert said it, the New Testament sometimes uses the OT in ways that are confounding. According to Greidanus, New Testament references "may at times provide an unexpected link to Christ in the New Testament."[582]

Only two preachers made the connection of New Testament references to OT war narratives. Walter looked at a large portion of the Gospels. "Jesus in the weeks before his death recapitulates Joshua's journey." He is completing what Joshua could not. He also

[581] Ibid., 269.

[582] Ibid.

referenced Rahab's mention in Matthew's genealogy of Christ. Owen was also impressed with this, calling it a "striking thing, the kind of folks that the Lord rescues." These references are congruent with Greidanus's description of New Testament reference. It pulls the reader into the New Testament and provides a Christological meaning to what may appear otherwise distant from the Gospel.

The Way of Contrast

The Way of Contrast centers on what changes Christ initiated between how things were in the OT versus how things are now in the Church. Albert speaks of this in terms of looking for what is dissonant in the text. He says the daily activity of the Christian life is nothing like the role of Israel's soldiers in war narratives. Greidanus puts the focus of the contrast on the work of Jesus. "The way of contrast clearly centers in Christ, for he is primarily responsible for any change between the messages of the OT and those of the New."[583] The data analysis revealed a few clear contrasts providing Gospel content.

Baker draws two sharp contrasts. One is between how God judged sin then versus now, and the other is how the Church functions as God's agent differently than Israel did. God destroyed the Amalekites because of their wickedness. Baker thinks preachers should help their audience identify with the Amalekites as the just recipients of God's wrath. "I feel like in this text we are the wicked." God sent Israel as the "acting agents of God's wrath." The great contrast comes with the Gospel. Jesus took the place of the wicked. "In that story we are the Amalekites who need to be wiped out because of our sinfulness. And Christ steps in and takes the judgment of God … so we can walk free."

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[583] Ibid., 272.

The other contrast Baker sees in the text regards the role of the Church. He says Christians should not in any way identify with the role Israel plays as God's agents of judgment. "I don't know that there is any application for us as being the conquistadors of Joshua." According to him the Church's call to being salt and light has a very different application than Israel's. Albert drew a similar contrast warning against a nationalistic interpretation of the text. Neither America nor the Church functions as Israel did in terms of God's agents of judgment. For Baker, Christ's call on the Christian "is a call to stand as a testimony of what is right and righteous in the world."

Summary

The purpose of this study is to examine how preachers proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives. The research included interviews with six preachers. Following the interviews, four research questions guided the data analysis. Three imperative statements emerged providing actionable concepts for sermon construction. First, preachers must anticipate audience concerns when preaching OT war narratives. Second, preachers must adequately respond to audience concerns when preaching OT war narratives. Third, preachers must faithfully exalt Christ when preaching OT war narratives.

First, as preachers anticipate audience concerns they should be aware of their audience members' backgrounds, namely, whether they are of a Christian or other-than-Christian mindset. Though some overlap exists between Christian and non-Christian concerns with war narratives, the two communities will likely exhibit some concerns unique to their respective culture. For example, Christians are likely to be embarrassed by the text and wish to hide it or find quick explanations for God's violent behavior. Those Christians who accept the text and its implications may be inclined to a spiritualized or

nationalistic interpretation. Other-than-Christian people are more likely to find the text utterly irreconcilable with what they perceive to be a positive spiritual message, or what they assume to be true about God's character. The interviewees recommended extensive preparation to anticipate the depth and nuances of these concerns before preaching these portions of Scripture.

The second imperative statement was preachers must adequately respond to audience concerns when preaching OT war narratives. Simple answers appealing to God's authority and wisdom are not likely to satisfy skeptics and may do more harm than good. The preachers spoke of the importance of a balance between humility and conviction. Preachers must have a genuine humility that allows tough questions to linger and audience members to respond slowly. They must also have a personal theological conviction that satisfies any uncertainty they may still have concerning the surrounding issues. This balance of humility and conviction will come through in sermons as thoughtful apologetics and proclamation of sound doctrine, respectively.

The final imperative statement to emerge from the data analysis was preachers must faithfully exalt Christ when preaching OT war narratives. "Faithfully" is the operative word. Illegitimate typology and allegory must be avoided. At the same time, preachers must be explicitly Christian in order for God's grace in Christ to satisfy the skeptic's concerns of violence. One interviewee recommended Sidney Greidanus's "Preaching Christ from the OT."[584] The study utilized his seven ways to Christ from the

[584] Ibid., 239–78.

OT as categories to analyze the interview data. The result provided useful content answering the intent of this study, how preachers proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine how preachers proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives. There exists a growing body of literature helping preachers construct Gospel-centered sermons from the OT. However, very little of this literature directly applies Gospel-centered hermeneutics and homiletics to OT war narratives. It is my theological conviction that these passages are just as necessary for the Church as any other passage of Scripture. Therefore, this study sought to discover what methodology Gospel-centered preachers use when preaching OT war narratives.

Summary of the Study

Chapter one framed the unique challenges OT war narratives present and introduced the research questions that guided the study. What challenges do OT war narratives present for preachers? How do preachers address the current cultural barriers presented by OT war narratives? How do preachers address the theological barriers presented by OT war narratives? And, what methods do preachers use to proclaim the Gospel from OT war narratives?

Chapter two examined four areas of pertinent literature. The first area of literature was a textual study of key passages surrounding OT war narratives. I focused on *ḥerem* warfare because of the absolute demands of these texts. The logic was if preachers could apply Gospel-centered methodologies to these texts, surely these same methodologies would prove useful with other war texts. The second area of literature addressed

American attitudes towards war violence. It did so by looking at four subcategories, secularism, pacifism, Islam, and Just War Tradition. The aim of this section was to anticipate what unique challenges preachers would encounter when presenting *ḥerem* texts to an audience. It discovered human flourishing as a foundational American value. Texts that speak of God's commission of war and destruction require special consideration for preachers.

The third area of literature examined *ḥerem* warfare in the field of Biblical Theology. This section considered how OT war narratives fit into the metanarrative of Scripture. It started searching for theological and apologetic solutions to some of the problems that surfaced in the first literature categories. The final area of literature examined the current preaching books that have a focus on Gospel-centered homiletics. This portion of the study revealed that experts are asking many of the same questions the literature review raised. However, these questions remain largely unanswered.

Chapter three described the research strategy I employed in search of those answers. I interviewed six experienced preachers who share my doctrinal convictions regarding Scripture and Gospel-centered preaching. Chapter four consisted of the findings from that study. In the following section I will provide recommendations drawn from the literature review and the interviews.

Discussion and Recommendations

This study has brought together the insights of experts from diverse academic fields and seasoned ministry practitioners. This section will synthesize these discoveries into four areas of general guidance and then provide some practical tips for sermon

building. Last, it will share some specific examples of Gospel-centered interpretations of select passages from Joshua.

General Guidance for Constructing Gospel-Centered Sermons from War Texts

I assume readers already have an effective system for constructing sermons. This study sought to discover principles that will compliment preachers' established processes as opposed to developing a system of sermon mechanics. These principles are:

1) Preach OT War Narratives Out of Necessity

2) Interpret the Text According to Its Own Terms

3) Carefully Engage Cultural Concerns

4) Make Christ the Goal of Every Sermon

Preach The OT War Narratives out of Necessity

Zack Eswine admonished preachers to "Handle the War Passages in an Age of Terror."[585] Reading these words for the first time in *Preaching to a Post-Everything World* is what prompted this study. Though I understood the importance of Eswine's challenge I did not know how to effectively complete the important work he prescribed. He reminded us that in a post 9/11 world Americans are concerned about religious violence[586]- violence that looks very similar to much of the content contained in the Bible we preach every Sunday.[587] Our audiences need to be taught how to understand violence from the truth of God's Word. Pastor Albert expressed this concern when he talked about the differences between Joshua and Hitler or between the conquest of Canaan and *jihad*.

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[585] Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World,* 193–204.

[586] Ibid., 195.

[587] Longman, "The Case for Spiritual Continuity," 161.

Preachers must help their congregations see the stark difference between what God has done in Israel and what sinful man does today. Albert also raised the importance of war narratives by showing how these texts give vocabulary to the victims of violence. Since the Garden we have lived in an age of perpetual violent conflict, and the Bible is not silent to these concerns. Our culture needs faithful preachers who will address the matter of violence with God's truth.

There are practical reasons why we must preach these texts, as seen above. There are also theological reasons why we must preach these texts. All six interviewees spoke of a common ignorance of Biblical Theology and God's character among their audience members. These difficult passages provide content uniquely suited to address some of these frequently overlooked aspects of theology. Dale Davis said it is through these difficult texts that we will "find the God of scary holiness and incredible grace waiting to reveal himself."[588] Pastor Owen spoke at length about the unrelenting holiness of God revealed through war passages. Suarez and Baker made similar statements about God's holiness, sovereignty, and authority. John Piper said, "People are starving for the grandeur of God. And the vast majority do not know it."[589] This study has demonstrated that war narratives contain a concentrated theological portrayal of God's attributes found nowhere else in Scripture. In order to open eyes to the glory and holiness of God, preachers must not avoid OT war narratives. As we preach them we must interpret the text according to its own terms.

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[588] Davis, *The Word Became Fresh,* 74.

[589] Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 147.

Interpret the Text According to Its Own Terms

Just as *ḥerem* warfare passages contain unique theological content, they also present unique challenges not found in other portions of Scripture. Chapter two discovered the high value American society places on human flourishing.[590] Messages of God's love correspond seamlessly with this value where messages of judgment do not. The destruction of men, women, and children does not readily correspond with Jesus' message to love our enemies. Chapters two and four also touched on interpretive approaches ranging from hyperbolic interpretations of *ḥerem* commands,[591] to rigorous textual and archeological study, to a simplistic appeal to God's sovereignty as the only justification for the Canaanite's destruction.[592] Albert cautioned that a simplistic approach may do more harm than good. I strongly agree, while at the same time caution that no amount of complexity will resolve the tension caused by the cultural expectation of human flourishing. Preachers must carefully interpret the text on its own terms recognizing that not all of their questions and cultural concerns are answerable. I will provide some examples to illustrate.

The annihilation of Jericho in Joshua 6 demonstrates that while the text includes intentional hyperbole the ethical questions will remain. In verse 17 God commanded through Joshua, "And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are in her house shall live." In Pastor Walter's interview he suggested reading this as hyperbole. He likened it to a basketball coach who

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[590] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 639.

[591] Wright, *The God I Don't Understand,* 87-88.

[592] Calvin, *Joshua/Psalms 1-35,* 97.

fires up his team by saying, "get out there and kill them!" It's an intentional overstatement meant to energize the men for the more obvious purpose of driving them out of the land. Samples from the literature review make the same appeal. Matthew Flannagan[593] argued the commands to exterminate the Canaanites really meant to drive them out of the land as opposed to kill them. The continue existence of some of these nations in Judges 1:28-35 supports this interpretation, but it does not resolve all of the issues. Interpreting the text according to its own terms requires further study.

For example, hyperbole does not explain God's distinction of battle tactics against cities inside and outside Canaan. In Deuteronomy 20:10-15 God instructs the Israelites to kill only the males when making war against cities outside Canaan. Verses 16-18 command the death of all the inhabitants of the cities inside Canaan. If God intended his people to interpret the extermination commands only as hyperbole the contrast is meaningless.

Additionally, hyperbole does not explain the text's prominent portrayal of Rahab's salvation. Almost half of the Jericho narrative in Joshua 6 describes in detail how God rescued Rahab and her family from destruction. If God had never expected his people to exterminate the women and children of Jericho the dramatic emphasis of one household being saved loses its significance and does not justify the thorough treatment it receives. Further, if only some of the women and children were to be killed, the difference between some and all is not significant enough to resolve the moral difficulty of the text. Without further theological work all the preacher has really accomplished is spend valuable sermon time to say in essence, "See, it isn't as awful as it looks. But it's

[593] Flannagan, "Did God Command the Genocide of the Canaanites?," 245.

still pretty awful." As Christopher Wright said, the realities of the conquest are "horrible at any level."[594]

Another example from Joshua chapter six is regarding the size of the city of Jericho. Richard Hess carefully examined the textual and archaeological evidence pertaining to Jericho. He presented a case that the city may have only housed up to 100 people, almost all of them being soldiers.[595] The conclusion here is similar to the hyperbolic interpretation. Using this argument the preacher would say, "Israel only wiped out 100 soldiers instead of the thousands of civilians we have commonly assumed." The preacher must be careful to not communicate that annihilating a few is somehow morally superior to annihilating many. Hess's study, if presented properly, may help an audience gain a greater understanding of the culture and language of the OT, but their moral outrage has not been alleviated.

Though some of the elements in these narratives are difficult to digest preachers are best served by interpreting the text according to its own terms. At the very minimum God gave the command to kill some women and children. Preachers should plumb the depths of theological and biblical studies to carefully address cultural concerns while faithfully presenting the text.

Carefully Address Cultural Concerns with Sound Theology

In order to anticipate audience concerns preachers will need to know their people and study their culture. The interviews revealed a genuine pastoral concern for the people of their churches and communities. Albert's interview was perhaps the most insightful in

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[594] Wright, *The God I Don't Understand*, 88.

[595] Hess, "The Jericho and Ai of the Book of Joshua," 42.

this area. He empathized with suffering and was patient with confusion. He was zealous for the integrity of God's Word, but he communicated it with sensitivity to the understanding and emotional condition of his audience members. Additionally, the literature review revealed some important cultural perspectives that intersect with the text. Thus, it is important for preachers to not only know their people, but also study the current culture.

Anticipating Audience Concerns

According to Pastor Baker people arrive at church already questioning the character of God. Baxter said when the preacher begins reading a war text most people in the pew "won't have a clue" what is going on. Albert anticipated a stronger reaction than confusion. He said people are revolted by the story, the God portrayed in the story, and the preacher who speaks favorably of the story. The field of sociology has recognized a correspondence between faith in biblical authority and favorable attitudes toward war.[596] Conversely, Charles Taylor identified human flourishing as the West's highest cultural value.[597] The OT speaks from a world-view contradictory to culture's assumed highest value. In an increasingly secular society preachers must be aware how conflicting world-views potentially predispose audience members to resisting the text (or the preacher himself!) even before the sermon begins.

Albert recognized that to many people *ḥerem* warfare looks and sounds very much like Islamic terrorism. He wants to help his audience see how the two are significantly and categorically different. Muslim expert John Esposito said, "Muslims are

[596] Roy, "Religious Roots of War Attitudes in the United States," 258–74.

[597] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 639.

and increasingly will be our neighbors, colleagues at work, and fellow citizens."[598] This introduces some complicated dynamics. Church members may assume a Muslim coworker or neighbor to be sympathetic to terrorist causes. Or, a Muslim who visits church one Sunday may hear a war narrative and see no difference between the biblical text and the current events unfolding in the Middle East. The literature review demonstrated that the vast majority of Muslims worldwide want nothing to do with violence.

In order for preachers to serve their audience and their community well it is important they fairly and accurately discern the similarities and differences between the text and terrorism. This will require the redemptive-historical hermeneutics the final section of chapter two discussed. By demonstrating how war texts fit within the meta-narrative of Scripture preachers can show how God is establishing a kingdom not built by humans wars like a caliphate, but established through the sacrificial redemption of King Jesus. Membership into this kingdom is not through coercion or human effort, but by grace and grace alone.

The literature review addressed other significant cultural elements. Many Americans ascribe to varying degrees of either pacifism or Just War Tradition (JWT). American culture shares a general assumption of JWT ethics even if many individuals have no formal knowledge of JWT teachings. Pacifists are generally more precise in what they believe and why. Regardless the rightness or wrongness of one's position they will evaluate what they see in the biblical text against their assumed morality of warfare. They may or may not be able to cite a reason, but many audience members will sense an ethical

[598] Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*, 3.

breach when they hear God say, "kill them all." In order for preachers to adequately address these concerns they must understand the source and nature of cultural assumptions of war ethics.

The study concluded that *ḥerem* warfare does not fit into any of these categories. Israel did not use terrorist tactics or commit genocide. God is not a pacifist, and the Canaanite Conquest did not meet any of the JWT criteria. Preachers should follow Albert's lead and connect with their audiences by openly confessing shared concerns with what is read in the text. Then they should turn to sound theology to show them the justness of what God did in Canaan. This will require establishing an understanding of the holiness of God that transcends cultural categories. The following section further develops this theme.

Addressing Audience Concerns with Sound Theology

Pastor Walter described three ways to address the audience's moral concern over the genocidal nature of *ḥerem* warfare texts. The first appeared in the literature review as John Calvin's position. He appealed to God's sovereign ownership of human life and said, "this puts an end to all discussion."[599] The second is Flannagan's hyperbole, seen above. Walter prefers an answer somewhere between the two. Through the course of this study I have become convinced that the oldest answer is the correct answer. However, Walter was entirely right to say it will not satisfy the skeptic and can cause more harm than good if employed flippantly or too quickly.

[599] Calvin, *Joshua/Psalms 1 - 35*, 97.

Tim Keller's A and B doctrines provide the right tool to bridge this gap.[600] Keller describes A doctrines like heavy stones the preacher needs to get across a river into the audience's understanding. These doctrines are solid and true but will not float because they are contradictory to the secular man's understanding. The B doctrines are like logs. They will float because their truth is shared by Christian and secular culture. The task is to strap enough B doctrines together to build a raft capable of transporting the A doctrines. Piper said because of the Fall there are conceptual categories of which natural man cannot conceive.[601] He said one of the preacher's jobs is to help the audience create concepts enabling the comprehension and acceptance of the biblical message. Keller's B doctrines can help create categories enabling people to accept an A doctrine like, "God is perfectly just and orders the complete destruction of the inhabitants of Canaan."[602]

For example, Albert demonstrated how justice can be an effective apologetic (B doctrine). He said all mankind shares a natural human longing for judgment. He used examples of victimization, bullying, and stories from popular culture. He will say, "Those of us who are being victimized long for judgment." As their heads start nodding in agreement he will begin to show them how "God is actually the most fair, right, and good judge of all." Walter talked about God's provision and protection for his people. Owen pointed to the grace shown to Rahab. These are all usable themes for B doctrines that will lead our congregations toward the foundational truth of God's sovereign rule.

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[600] Keller, *Center Church,* 124.

[601] Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 129.

[602] Ibid., 130.

Owen pointed to many A doctrines like God's holiness and wrath. Suarez preached the fallenness and inherent guilt of all mankind. *Ḥerem* warfare texts are replete with these A doctrines. Additionally, the interviews revealed numerous B doctrines ready to be used. As pastor Owen said, "you take what is offered to you." In the case of Jericho that is Rahab. Other narratives will provide other resources. Preachers will be well served to build a raft from the logs of justice, mercy, and patience in order to more effectively proclaim the A doctrines of sovereignty, wrath, and holiness.

Make Christ the Goal of Every Sermon

The final section of chapter two provided scriptural and practical reasons to make Christ the goal of every sermon. Recognizing the redemptive-historical meta-narrative of Scripture allows this to happen naturally. Rather than searching for Christ-centered applications preachers must first faithfully exegete the text in its cultural and redemptive-historical context. As Greidanus says, we are "preaching sermons which authentically integrate the message of the text with the climax of God's revelation in the person, work, and/or teaching of Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament."[603] I have made the assumption the reader already practices sound exegetical methodology. My focus in this study is the Christological conclusion of the exegetical study of OT war narratives.

Pastor Suarez shared a time when he preached a twelve-sermon series through Nehemiah. Upon concluding the study he recognized his only mention of Christ was in his closing prayer. He said, "I realized I missed the whole point of the Bible though I was a faithful, serious expositor who worked very hard in the text." In *Preaching*, Tim Keller

[603] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,* 9-10.

admonishes us to preach Christ from every genre, every theme, every major figure, every major image, and every deliverance storyline.[604]

Preachers must be convinced of what it means practically to be Christ or Gospel-centered. Greidanus was content to highlight some aspect of the person, work, or teaching of Christ,[605] while Keller insists on articulating the exclusivity of personal salvation through Christ.[606] My own sense is that Greidanus is correct. The reason for this is Collins's definition of Gospel. He says the Gospel is "the report that this great era has begun through the death and resurrection of Jesus," and the Gentiles' invitation to be grafted into the people of God as full citizens.[607] The Bible presents such a broad picture of the Gospel it is impossible to contain that message in a single sermon. However, given my transient ministry context my practice is to, as consistently as possible, spend at least some time explaining the necessity of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Practical Advice for Sermon Building

The research returned much practical advice for constructing and delivering sermons from war texts. What follows are five tips that can help preachers navigate some of the complex issues. They are:

1) Keep Greidanus's Seven Ways to Christ on Your Desktop

2) Don't Get Bogged Down in Secondary Issues

3) Balance Apologetics and Exposition As Each Text Requires

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[604] Keller, *Preaching*, 71–88.

[605] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,*16.

[606] Keller, *Preaching,* 77.

[607] C. John Collins, "The Old Testament As Christian Scripture" (2007), 3.

4) Preach in A Series

5) Set Realistic Goals for Each Sermon

Keep Greidanus's Seven Ways to Christ on Your Desktop

I agree with Suarez describing pages 239-78 in Sidney Greidanus's book as in "worth their weight in gold."[608] In these pages Greidanus provides seven ways to the unfolding revelation of Christ from any OT passage. Having examined much of the available literature on the subject I can recommend no greater resource in both its comprehensiveness and brevity. If a preacher is working through an OT series I highly recommend keeping a list of these seven ways to Christ in a convenient location for constant reference.

The seven ways to Christ from the OT are the way of redemptive historical progression, promise-fulfillment, typology, analogy, longitudinal themes, New Testament references, and contrast. Chapters 2 and 4 defined each of these. A later section demonstrates the use of each way with passages of Scripture from Joshua.

Don't Get Bogged Down in Secondary Issues

The literature review and interview data analysis agree the primary issue of preaching is the proclamation of the Gospel. That must be kept foremost in the preacher's mind during sermon preparation and proclamation. This is not to say secondary issues are unimportant. The secondary issues provide the context for the Gospel message to unfold. When handling war texts these secondary issues will largely be in response to the audience concerns. Eswine says to ignore or flippantly handle these concerns makes

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[608] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,* 239–78.

preachers look "naive, cruel, not having answers, or tritely dismissive…"[609] Secondary issues must be dealt with.

Keller agrees that preachers must answer culture's questions. However, he says preachers must not allow these questions to set the parameters of the Gospel message.[610] In other words, preachers must not become overwhelmed with secondary issues and shortchange the primary issue of Gospel proclamation. Davis said, "we must not let Rahab's lie eclipse Rahab's truth."[611] He said preachers must "go for the gold rather than piddle with the difficulties [of a text]." So yes, by all means necessary use the apologetic resources from chapters 2 and 4. But don't allow a Christian sermon to become nothing more than information. How does one do that? By balancing the apologetics and exposition of each sermon according to what the audience needs.

Balance Apologetics and Exposition as Each Text Requires

Preachers should allow the content of each passage and the understanding of their audience to determine the appropriate balance of apologetics and exposition. Walter, who pastors a theologically mature congregation, recommended 20-30% of any Joshua sermon be spent on apologetics. Albert said he normally spends only about 7-10% of his sermons on apologetics. But when dealing with Jericho he would likely devote an entire sermon to addressing audience concerns before dealing with a particularly difficult text.

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[609] Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World*, 195.

[610] Keller, *Preaching*, 98–99.

[611] Davis, *The Word Became Fresh*, 132.

Davis covers the battle of Jericho in six pages in his commentary.[612] The only apologetic he offers is presenting the sins of the Amalekites as justification for their extermination. And, he does this is a single paragraph. Albert would likely do much more. John Calvin did considerably less. Preachers must find the balance that fits their congregation and the specific text from which the sermon is drawn. My own practice is to provide at least some apologetic content in each sermon. The more controversial the topic the more time I spend in apologetics. I find that even if my audience consists of only Christians, the apologetics not only strengthen their faith, but strengthen their confidence in evangelism.

Preach in a Series

Baxter preaches through books of the Bible. He would never seek out a war narrative intentionally, but would handle it as it comes. That is generally my practice as well. However, Eswine's challenge to preach war texts in response to current events[613] resonates with American culture. It may be appropriate for pastors to seek out some of these hard texts to address the current cultural climate. Still, the research indicates it is best to handle these texts in a series rather than a single sermon.

Pastor Baker said he would feel extremely limited in a single sermon to handle something like Jericho. As seen above, Albert recommends dedicating a sermon addressing the anticipated questions arising from the Jericho narrative. Suarez and Owen both suggest preaching topical sermons before or after a war narrative to bolster the audience's theological understanding of what is happening in the text. The challenges

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[612] Davis, *Joshua*, 51–56.

[613] Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World*, 193–204.

war narratives present are just too great to handle in a single sermon. Preachers need to be patient enough to take the necessary time.

Set Realistic Goals for Each Sermon

Preachers must determine what they need to convey in a single sermon and not allow secondary issues to cloud the message. A sermon on Ai may need to be preached in three parts: one to deal with the matter of collective guilt, another with God's justice in wiping out Ai, and a final part on accountability within God's covenant community. Covering too much ground at once will leave too many unanswered questions. Owen said what determines a realistic goal depends largely on the skill of the preacher, but "self awareness is difficult." Preachers should come back to the primary objective of preaching and ask, "how can the Gospel be best presented from this text?" From there they can determine if they have too large a text or too small, too much apologetic content or not enough, and if they should preach this sermon in one or two parts or more.

Davis demonstrates that sometimes a large portion of Scripture is best. His preaching commentary handles Joshua chapters three and four as a single entry. He covers the essential content of the passage, and his Gospel presentation is clear. He establishes a realistic goal for the sermon and meets it, not allowing himself to get bogged down with secondary issues.

Examples of a Gospel-Centered Interpretation of Selected War Narratives

Space does not allow a thorough exposition of these texts. The aim is to apply the Gospel-Centered concepts and tips to a few select passages as examples of what can be done. I will demonstrate each of Greidanus's seven ways from war narratives in Joshua. I

will also attempt to show how Keller's A and B doctrines can help bring the audience from opposition to acceptance of God's sovereign authority.

The Canaanite Conquest as a Whole

Before getting into the specific examples I will briefly describe three proposed Christological approaches considering the story as a whole. The literature and interviews suggested examples typology, promise-fulfillment, and contrast when looking at the message of Joshua. Greidanus said Joshua is a type of Christ, and the book as a whole is typological of the Kingdom of Heaven.[614] Walter said Jesus recapitulated Joshua's journey in his final weeks, demonstrating how he completed on the cross what Joshua did not complete through battle.

Chapter two defined biblical typology as "an event, person, or object that prophetically prefigures the person or work of Jesus Christ." This definition alone may support the views above. However, chapter two also discovered three widely held criteria by which the legitimacy of a typological interpretation may be evaluated. These criteria are the requirement of a strong theological correspondence between type and antitype, a heightening or intensification from type to antitype, and the theocentricity of both type and antitype. Walter's interpretation appears weak when evaluated by the first criterion. One could argue that Joshua, as the leader of God's people, prefigures Christ. However, presenting this as a strong theological correspondence seems strained. A heightening or intensification is certainly present. Joshua secured Jericho, while Jesus secured salvation for all who believe. However, the final criterion of theocentricity does not appear to be present in Walter's position. I have not been able to establish exegetical evidence that

[614] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,* 341.

Jesus recapitulated Joshua's journey. Perhaps the case can be made, but the significance of it does not seem to be mentioned anywhere in Scripture. For an event to be typological the correspondence must appear to be God intended.

I think Greidanus makes a better case for typology in the figure of Joshua himself, and the conquest of Canaan as a whole. The definition allows for identifying a person or event as a type. The rest of Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13 meets the first criterion of a strong theological correspondence, as well as the third criterion of theocentricity. The writer of Hebrews makes the divinely intended correspondence clear. The second criterion, intensification, checks as well. Hebrews 4:8-10 says, "For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his." The rest ultimately secured by Christ far surpasses the rest provided through Joshua. Thus, interpreters can make a strong case for typology in the person of Joshua and the event of the Canaanite conquest.

Additionally, Walter sees the overarching message of the book as an example of promise-fulfillment. He says the message of the book is God is doing for his people what they cannot do for themselves. They needed deliverance, protection, and sustenance. God provided all these things in Canaan. In this God proves himself "a promise-keeper to those who have been faithless to him." The promises go back to the Abrahamic covenant of Genesis 15. God's faithfulness to his promise sustained the Israelites through their captivity in Egypt, through the wilderness wanderings of the Exodus, and through the Conquest for Canaan. Hebrews develops the Christian's rest in Christ as the final fulfillment of the promise. Preachers can pick up this theme at several points throughout

Joshua but perhaps most clearly in 1:15 where God promises rest in the day when war is complete. Christ is the fulfillment of the ancient promise to Abraham in Genesis 15.

Greidanus sees a strong contrast in conquest as a whole. According to his definition, a Christ-centered contrast must exist because of Christ's work.[615] It is not enough to merely notice differences between events spanning the biblical epochs. The significance must be centered on the cross. Looking at the conquest, Greidanus notes the move from national Israel to "supranational" Church. Because of this, no nation can claim biblical authority waging war in God's name. He notes the danger of neglecting this contrast. "Groups as radically different as the Crusaders and the Nazis disregarded the discontinuity between Israel and the New Testament church." He continues, listing some of Jesus's teachings to love our enemies (Matthew 5:43-44) and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19).

Using contrast in this way must not overlook what is similar between Israel and the Church. Israel's mission was to establish God's blessing on the earth (Genesis 12:1-3) and included individuals from other nationalities such as Ruth, Rahab, and the Gibeonites. However, highlighting the contrast provides two useful tools to the preacher. It helps provide some apologetic content explaining why Christians hold to the text yet abstain from religious violence, and it provides a natural path to Christ. Or, maybe better said, it naturally reveals where Joshua fits in the meta-narrative of God's redemptive work through Christ.

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[615] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,* 343.

The Destruction Jericho in Joshua 5-6

The battle for Jericho provides at least two examples of legitimate ways to Christ. The Captain of the Lord's Army appears in Joshua chapter 5 providing preachers longitudinal themes pointing to Christ. In 5:13 Joshua asks if he is for Israel or their adversary. The Captain's answer in the following verse is no. Albert describes this as a type of neutrality, in that God's purpose is not merely Israel's victory, but their establishment as a blessing to the world (Genesis 12:1-3). He says it signifies this story is not about Israel's own righteousness or national identity, but about something that God is doing in the world. Edmund Clowney helps the reader see that God is establishing his kingdom through judgment. He sees all the warrior activity of Israel pointing to "a greater Deliverer and Savior to come."[616] Just as God brought the victories at Canaan, Jesus brings victory of sin and death on the cross, and ultimately at the Second Coming. James Hamilton agrees, saying, Jesus is "a conquering new Joshua" in the final judgment of Revelation 19-20.[617] Owen drew a comparison between the strong military imagery of 2 Corinthians 2 and the battles of Joshua. The preacher is equipped with the divine warrior theme running through Scripture and culminating in Jesus.

Rahab's salvation is a popular story among the pastors and authors to show redemptive-historical progression.[618] Pastor Baker noted that she did not have much

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[616] Ibid., 141.

[617] Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment,* 548–49.

[618] Rahab's story is also a fitting place to use New Testament Reference, since she is mentioned in Matthew's genealogy of Christ.

knowledge, but she responded to the knowledge she had. The Canaanites, as a people, rejected God. Yet, one of them was saved by grace through faith. Rahab's appearance in the genealogy of Christ is a strong appeal to the biblical progression of redemption history.

Israel's Defeat and Destruction of AI in Joshua 7-8

The way of analogy presents an opportunity to discuss congregational life. Greidanus describes analogy, not as a method of interpretation, but as a method of applying the OT text to the Church today.[619] Preachers must be especially cautious when using analogy to not make the text say something that is not there. To avoid this, first exegete the text in its biblical and historical context, then make a clear break from exegesis to discuss practical application for the Church. After spending adequate time in the text preachers may say something like, "We have seen God's concern for the holiness of Israel. God is still concerned for holiness in the corporate life of his people. As Christians he has given us clear direction to protect holiness in congregational life." From there, many texts become useful for application.

In Revelation 1-3 Jesus warns of his judgment against congregations who condone continued, unrepentant sin. Preachers can naturally move to the principles of church discipline taught by Christ in Matthew 18:16-20 and reiterated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:9-13. Owen made this move in his interview. However, as preachers anticipate audience concerns they should consider Keller's A and B doctrines in a place like this. Church discipline and communal guilt are not easily accepted concepts in a

[619] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,* 261–62.

secular culture. They may need to address the contrasting grace as an A doctrine before delving into the B doctrine of responsibility in congregational life.

The Battles with the Five Kings in Joshua 10

Israel's battle with the armies of five Amorite kings provides the ways of redemptive-historical progression and New Testament reference. I will demonstrate the two ways simultaneously. In Joshua 10:24 Joshua commands his chiefs to "Come near; put your feet on the necks of these kings." The five kings are executed, and their bodies hung on five trees until evening. Citing Genesis 9:25 and Joshua 9:23-24, Dempster points back to the curse on Ham "working itself out on his son, Canaan."[620] Further, he notes Paul's Christological interpretation of Deuteronomy 21:18-23 in Galatians 3:10-14. Joshua's observation of the teaching from Deuteronomy 21:18-23 leads Dempster to a Messianic connection. "Jesus is the obedient Son who is sentenced to hang on a tree for the disobedient."[621]

In my opinion this story provides some of the richest Gospel content in the book of Joshua. However, before secular people or skeptics are ready to receive this message they need to be convinced of their guilt. This may be another place for A and B doctrines. Or, perhaps by the time the preacher arrives to chapter ten he will have already laid much of the groundwork.

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[620] Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 127.

[621] Ibid., 234.

Recommendations for Further Study

I attempted to be as broad as possible without spreading the study too thinly. However, with the making of books there is no end. Given human limitations there is always more to be said and better ways to say it. Now that the project is complete I see three areas needing further study, with probably many more outside my limited perspective.

Sermon Manuscripts

One glaring gap in this study is the failure to reference sermon manuscripts as part of the literature review. It would be helpful to read Gospel-centered sermons from OT war narratives, if any exist. Complementary or contrasting methodologies may emerge that could provide a greater understanding of how to proclaim the big story of the Bible through these narratives.

Sermons and Literature from non-Western Cultures

The apologetic content that surfaced throughout this study was all from and for Western thinking people. It would be a fascinating study to compare preaching literature from cultures more acquainted with war and with different understandings of guilt and justice. Such material may even provide western world preachers with useful apologetic content as they interpret a non-western text with the help of eastern world scholars. With a lack of written material an additional qualitative study of majority world preachers may be the best tool to glean these insights.

Violence Narratives Other Than War Texts

The methodologies described in this study are focused almost exclusively on *ḥerem* warfare texts. I expect these principles to be seamlessly transferable to other

violence-laden narratives. The Flood, the rape of Dinah, and the imprisonment of Daniel and the four Hebrew children are just some examples of violence narratives that also must be preached with the aim of Gospel proclamation. Whatever the text, people hungry for the holiness of God will be satisfied through preaching that is not afraid to wade into the difficult texts of God's Word.

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