

IN RESPONSE – A FRAMEWORK FOR PREACHING

by Dennis Prutow

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The matter of freely preaching Christ from the Old Testament has been a long time struggle for me. I've heard all the cautions. Look out for typology. There are types and shadows but unless the New Testament clearly identifies a specific type in the Old Testament, do not go there. You don't find leprechauns under every rock. Make sure you know the context of a passage. Unless there is a specific reference to Christ, take care.

I am also aware of going too far in the other direction. As a seminary student I heard Charles Fuller, of Old Fashioned Revival Hour fame, preach in the chapel of Fuller Seminary. Dr. Fuller discussed the veil in the temple. He problematically went into typological detail. His son, Dr. Daniel Fuller, professor of hermeneutics, walked out of the service.

Where is the balance? We clearly maintain all our preaching must be Christ Centered. Can we freely preach Christ from the Old Testament? In this lesson, I shall make four points leading me to more properly and comfortably preach the Savior from Old Testament texts.

First, there is the realization that the Bible is bound together by one covenant, the covenant of grace. For those of Reformed background, this is simple. Yet it is profound. In the institution of the Lord's Supper, Christ refers to His blood as the blood of the covenant. "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

The connection with Moses at the foot of Mount Sinai is clear. When God began the organization of the rabble of Israel into a people called publicly by His name, Moses read the people the Word of God. "Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words'" (Exodus 24:8).

The covenant promise of God comes in several forms. For example, God promised Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). Peter corroborates this promise is a form

of the covenant. He says to Israel, "It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed'" (Acts 3:25).

God confirmed the promise to Abraham upon his sacrifice of Isaac. "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (Genesis 22:18).

The apostle Paul tells us this repeated covenant promise is the gospel that embraces both Jew and Gentile. Galatians 3:8, "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying 'All the nations will be blessed in you.'" As the *second* important point, we confess, because there is one covenant, there is also one gospel.

Scripture states the promise of God in another significant form. "Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people" (Leviticus 26:11-12). The apostle Paul is quite clear. The fulfillment of this promise is the church of Jesus Christ. Speaking to the church at Corinth Paul declares, "We are the temple of the living God; just as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people'" (2 Corinthians 6:16). This is the *third* important point. Because there is one covenant of grace and one gospel, there is one church. Paul confirms this in Galatians 3:29. "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."

These three points are part of a framework within which we can preach Christ in the Old Testament. I add an important *fourth* point that is an even more fundamental and pervasive idea. There is not only one covenant, one gospel, and one church, most importantly, there is one God. "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4). And what is the basic Christian Confession? It is simple and direct. "Jesus is Lord" (Romans 10:9). We

confess Jesus is God and that He is our God. Jesus is Jehovah.¹

The Second Person of the Trinity is the bridge between eternal and temporal. We meet Jehovah in and through Jesus Christ. "There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus put it this way, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6).

Jesus Christ was and is God, the Creator (John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:16). Jesus Christ is Jehovah speaking through the prophets and speaking to us in Scripture (1 Peter 1:10-11). Jesus Christ is God in human form effecting redemption (John 1:14, 2 Corinthians 5:19). Jesus Christ is the covenant of Jehovah (Isaiah 42:6). He is the light of Jehovah (Isaiah 49:6, Acts 13:46-47, John 8:12). Conformity to the image of Christ in sanctification, means tasking on the moral likeness of Jehovah (Romans 8:29, Colossians 1:15 and 3:10). The judgment of God is the judgment of Christ (Romans 14:10, 2 Corinthians 5:10). When we enter glory and meet our Maker and Creator, we come face to face with Christ (1 John 3:2). Jesus is Jehovah, the creator, redeemer, sanctifier, and judge.

Since there is one covenant of grace, we may speak of covenant life in terms of obedience to Jesus Christ. Because there is one gospel, whether we come to this gospel in types and shadows in the Old Testament or in its fullness in the New, we point men and women to the same Savior. Because there is one church, if we deal with the people of God in either Testament, we call men and women to union with Christ, the cornerstone of this one church. Because there is only one God, we may legitimately preach Christ in the Old Testament in connection with creation, the gospel and redemption, sanctification, covenant life, church life, and the judgment to come.

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¹ See *In Response*, September 1998 and July 1999.

IN RESPONSE – WORKING IN THE FRAMEWORK, PART ONE

by Dennis Prutow

The framework I suggest for approaching Old Testament preaching provides parameters in which we may work. Using the framework of one God, one covenant, one gospel, and one church, we learn much from types and shadows.

Speaking of Jesus Christ, Hebrews 8:4-5 says,

Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, 'See,' He says, 'that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.'

The Old Testament tabernacle and temple are pictures of heaven, a copy and shadow of heavenly things. Not only the tabernacle itself, but the priests also. They point to Christ.

Hebrews 9:23-24 explains. "Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." The sacrificial service was a copy of heavenly things. The bloody sacrifices were a copy of and pointed to the blood of Christ.

At the same time, aspects of the sacrificial service also have significance. For example, a priest went into the tabernacle in the morning and evening to burn incense on the altar of incense.

You shall put this altar in front of the veil that is near the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is over the ark of the testimony, where I will meet with you. Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it; he shall burn it every morning when he trims the lamps. When Aaron trims the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense. There shall be perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations (Exodus 30:6-8).

Revelation gives us a couple of explanations of the incense. Revelation 5:8

indicates the incense is prayer. "When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." Here the incense is the prayer of the Saints coming up to Christ.

Revelation 8:3-4 alters the picture slightly but significantly.

Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.

The incense placed upon the altar adds fragrance to the prayers of the saints as they come before the throne of God. This incense appears to represent the intercession of Christ (Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25).

Because there is one covenant and one gospel, these connections are not difficult. It is important to engage in morning and evening prayer. Our prayers are made a sweet aroma to the Father through the intercession of Christ.

We are also advised of the practicality of morning and evening prayers. "Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it; he shall burn it every morning when he trims the lamps. When Aaron trims the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense. *There shall be* perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations" (Exodus 30:7-8). Morning and evening incense portrays perpetual, continual, prayer. "This incense was offered daily, it was a perpetual incense (v. 8); for we must pray always, that is, we must keep up stated times for prayer every day, morning and evening, at least, and never omit it, but thus pray without ceasing."¹

These connections between Old and New Testaments, between the sacrificial system and Christ, are straightforward. We have ample biblical warrant for them.

They guide us in the path of interpretation and preaching. God uses pictures and types to present the multifaceted person and work of Christ. We have already noted God judges through His Son. Is it therefore too fanciful a stretch to preach Christ from the lives of the various judges of Israel?

Christ was a prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15). Christ is the King who sits on the throne of David (Luke 1:32). He is also the Judge. Look briefly at an incident in the life of Samson.

Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her. When it was told to the Gazites, saying, "Samson has come here," they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. And they kept silent all night, saying, "Let us wait until the morning light, then we will kill him." Now Samson lay until midnight, and at midnight he arose and took hold of the doors of the city gate and the two posts and pulled them up along with the bars; then he put them on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of the mountain which is opposite Hebron (Judges 16:1-3).

Several lessons from this text: Harlotry puts Samson in jeopardy. He gives his enemies an advantage. We are not to give the devil opportunity (Ephesians 4:27). Christ is victor over the devil who had the power of death (Hebrews 2:14).

Samson arises, bears the gate of the city, with its posts and bar, on his back and marches several miles to a prominent mountain to display the city gate to the shame of the Philistines. At the point of seeming death, there is victory. On the cross, when the devil thought he had won the day, Christ triumphed over rulers and authorities (Colossians 2:15). What is the import of the gate of Gaza? Hear the promise of Jesus Christ. "I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it" (Matthew 16:18). Given there is one gospel and one church, it is not fanciful to preach gospel verities from this incident in the life of Samson.

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¹ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 10 vols. (Rio, WI: The Master Christian Library, 1999), 1:890.

IN RESPONSE – WORKING IN THE FRAMEWORK, PART TWO

by Dennis Prutow

Working in the framework of one God, one covenant, one church, and one gospel, we looked at a short piece of narrative in the Old Testament to see how Christ presents Himself.

Paul reminds us, “Whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction” (Romans 15:4). Of the Israelites he teaches, “Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Corinthians 10:11). There are lessons to be learned from the ancient narratives applicable to each of us as we live in the New Testament era.

In addition, the framework I’m suggesting outlines similarities in the theme of both Old and New Testaments. As a working example, we take Isaiah 55:6. “Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.” Matthew Henry observes, regarding the immediate context in Isaiah, “As we had much of Christ in the 53rd chapter, and much of the church of Christ in the 54th chapter, so in this chapter we have much of the covenant of grace made with us in Christ.”

The wider context introduces the Servant of the Lord.

Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold;
My chosen one in whom My soul delights.
I have put My Spirit upon Him;
He will bring forth justice to the nations.
He will not cry out or raise His voice,
nor make His voice heard in the street.
A bruised reed He will not break
and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish;
He will faithfully bring forth justice
(Is. 42:1-3).

Matthew 12:17-20 applies these words to Christ. Isaiah 49:6 also presents this Servant of the Lord. “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” Jesus Christ is “a Light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel” (Luke 2:32).

Isaiah 55:6 urges, “Seek the LORD while He may be found.” In the first instance, the LORD is Jehovah. There is

only one way to the Father. It is in and through Jesus Christ (14:6). The New Testament also requires us to confess Jesus as LORD. To seek the LORD is to seek Jesus Christ, the Servant of the LORD. Those of us who are Gentiles see our names writ large on these pages of Scripture. We are bruised reeds and dimly burning wicks in need of healing and light. Only Jesus Christ, the Servant of Jehovah, remedies our need. We must seek Him.

Isaiah 55:6 exhorts, “Call upon Him while he is near.” Here the connection with Jesus Christ is simple and direct. The apostle Paul is quite clear. The basic Christian confession is “Jesus is LORD.” Paul quotes Isaiah 28:16, “Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.” Paul adds a quote from Joel 2:32, “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Paul applies this text, referring to Jehovah, directly to Jesus. The Lord upon whom we must call is Jesus. Here is the complete quote.

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:9-13).

We must seek the Lord Jesus and call upon Him while He may be found and while He is near. Paul once again gives us the clue we need. Christ is near. Salvation by grace through faith is near. Romans 10:6-8,

The righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down), or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).” But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth

and in your heart” that is, the word of faith which we are preaching.

To seek the Lord and call upon him while He is near is to apprehend Him in the word of God preached to you. Christ is that close. You do not have to go to heaven. He has come to you. You do not have to go to the grave. Christ has risen from the grave. He is near. Seek Him in His word. Call on him as He comes to you in that word and the preaching of that word. Matthew Henry puts it this way. “When we speak of looking upon Christ, and receiving Christ, and feeding upon Christ, it is not Christ in heaven, nor Christ in the deep, that we mean; but Christ in the promise, Christ exhibited to us, and offered, in the word. Christ is nigh thee, for the word is nigh thee.”²

We include the context of Israel’s sins and her captivity to Babylon. God confronts Israel with her sins. She must call upon the LORD. We may add the plea from the Lord Jesus. “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

All those, and those only, are invited to rest in Christ, that are sensible of sin as a burden, and groan under it; that are not only convinced of the evil of sin, of their own sin, but are contrite in soul for it; that are really sick of their sins, weary of the service of the world and of the flesh; that see their state sad and dangerous by reason of sin, and are in pain and fear about it...³

We seek the Lord in His word. We come to Christ as presented to us in His word. We call upon the LORD. Thus we find rest for our souls.

There is one LORD. There is one gospel, one covenant, and one church. Working within this framework, as outlined, we also must be continually guided by Scripture. Thus we can and we must preach Christ from the Old Testament.

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¹ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 10 vols., (Rio, WI: The Master Christian Library, 1999), 6:717.

² *Ibid.*, 9:969.

³ *Ibid.*, 5:374.

IN RESPONSE – WORKING IN THE FRAMEWORK, PART THREE

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Using the framework I've suggested, we now turn to a Psalm.

Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, bless His name; proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day. Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples. For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before Him, strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name; bring an offering and come into His courts. Worship the LORD in holy attire; tremble before Him, all the earth. Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns; indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity." Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; Let the sea roar, and all it contains; let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy before the LORD, for He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness (Psalm 96:1-13).

The context of the Psalm is the celebration of Israel when David brought the ark of the covenant from the house of Obed-Edom back to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:12). "On that day David first assigned Asaph and his relatives to give thanks to the LORD" (1 Chronicles 16:7). Psalm 96 takes the bulk of its content from the middle of ensuing song of praise forward (1 Chronicles 16:23-33). Spurgeon observes, "The former part of that sacred song was probably omitted in this place because to referred to Israel, and the design of the Holy Ghost in this psalm was to give forth a song for the Gentiles, a triumph hymn wherewith to celebrate the conversion of the nations to Jehovah in gospel times."¹

Psalm 105:1-15 takes its content from the first half of song in 1 Chronicles 16.

When Ark of the Covenant rests in its appointed place, the throne of God is established. There is a reason for great joy among God's people. There is a message to relate to the nations of the world. Verse 10 enjoins, "Say among the nations, 'The LORD reigns; indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved; He will judge the peoples with equity.'"

We are brought quickly back to the basic Christian confession, "Jesus is LORD" (Romans 10:9). Yes, the LORD Jesus reigns supreme. As He puts it, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). Jesus Christ "has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Hebrews 8:1).

As a result of His rule and reign, "the world is firmly established, it will not be moved." All that takes place comes about at His bidding, according to His plan, and for his good pleasure (Ephesians 1:11). And all that takes place is arranged with the good of the people of God in view (Romans 8:28). We may have supreme confidence in our Sovereign Lord.

Christ assumes His throne, He reigns, and He comes to judge. "He will judge the peoples with equity." The judgments of our LORD will be without error, bias, prejudice, or malice. Christ judges and will judge with absolute rectitude and righteousness. Christ will come a second time in glory for this purpose. Verse 13, "He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness."

This is the message of the Kingdom. This is the message we are commissioned to proclaim. This is reason for great joy and exuberant yet solemn worship.

Verses 1-3, "Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, bless His name; proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day. Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples."

A new song is a song for new favors, for those compassions which are new every morning. A new song is New Testament song, a song of praise for

the new covenant and the precious privileges of that covenant. A new song is a song that shall be ever new, and shall never wax old nor vanish away; it is an everlasting song, that shall never be antiquated or out of date.²

"Men are made new creatures and their song is also new."³

The subject of the new song is the gospel. It is a gospel message, God's gospel. The song is to be a daily song and a song of heart. The glory of God is the gospel. "His salvation is his glory, the word of the gospel glorifies him."⁴ If we seek God's glory, we will preach Christ and the gospel of Christ.

Skipping to verse 8 we read, "Worship the LORD in holy attire; tremble before Him, all the earth." We must sing a new song to the LORD. It must not be a song coming from a heart of stone. "We must worship him with holy hearts, sanctified by the grace of God, devoted to the glory of God, and purified from the pollutions of sin." Since holiness is the requirement. We also enter our worship, not on our own merits, but clothed with the good deeds of our Savior Jesus Christ. There must be regeneration of the sinner's heart, cleansing from the guilt of sin, faith in Jesus Christ the LORD, ensuing sanctification, and the receipt of righteousness from Christ. When this takes place in our lives, we can genuinely "ascribe to the LORD glory and strength." We are equipped to "ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name."

We are working within the framework of one God, one covenant, one gospel, and one church. Within this framework, the historical and geographical settings, the typological significance of God's throne above the mercy seat, which is the cover for the ark of the covenant, point us toward the praise of God in Christ on the basis of the gospel of salvation. We preach Christ the LORD.

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¹ Charles Spurgeon, Treasury of David, 7 vols. (Newark, DE: Cornerstone, n.d.), 4:336.

² Matthew Henry, 4:1445.

³ Spurgeon, 4:337.

⁴ Ibid., 4:338.