

FROM ALPHA TO OMEGA: A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL APPROACH TO GOD THE SON INCARNATE

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Abstract: *Is Christ legitimately revealed in all of Scripture? The answer to this question is central to and at the heart of the biblical disciplines and the doing of systematic theology. Yet, there is wide disagreement on exactly how Christ is in all of Scripture and how to read Scripture theologically. In this paper, I argue that Scripture rightly read, from beginning to end, is Christocentric and Christotelic, and that Scripture presents our Lord Jesus Christ as God the Son incarnate. My argument proceeds in three steps. First, I discuss how a right reading of Scripture is dependent on a theology of Scripture. Before we can ask how Christ is revealed in all of Scripture, we must first think through how to approach and read Scripture on its own terms. Second, I argue that Christ is not revealed in all of Scripture in hidden verses or hidden codes, but by tracing out God's redemptive plan, rooted in eternity, enacted in time, and unveiled for us by the progression of the biblical covenants. In fact, it is the Bible's covenantal storyline that serves as the background, framework, and theology to the New Testament's presentation of Jesus, and how all Scripture reveals Christ's identity as the eternal Word/Son made flesh (John 1:1, 14). Third, I contend that the Church's later confessions, namely the Nicene Creed and the Chalcedonian definition, are not a distortion of Scripture but a faithful confession of the biblical teaching regarding the person and work of Christ. No doubt the later Creeds utilize theological language that is not directly found in Scripture. However, the language the Creeds employ and the theological judgments they make correctly grasp and put together the biblical data in a way that faithfully renders who Jesus is from the entirety of what Scripture teaches.*

Key words: *God the Son incarnate, biblical theology, systematic theology, Chalcedonian Christology, reading Scripture theologically, Christ in the Old Testament, hermeneutics, progressive revelation, covenants, Christocentric, Christotelic, Messiah, typology, promise-fulfillment, covenantal storyline of Scripture*

How is “Christ in all Scripture?” The answer to this question is central to and at the heart of the biblical disciplines and the doing of systematic theology. Why? Many reasons could be given, but ultimately to answer how Christ is revealed in all Scripture is to demonstrate how the entire Bible, especially the OT, finds its unity, coherence, and center in Christ’s person and work. Despite the Bible being written by numerous authors over several centuries and addressing diverse topics, it is centrally about one thing: what our triune God has planned in eternity, executed in time, in order to redeem a people for himself and to make everything new in Christ

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Jesus (Eph 1:9–10).¹ To show, then, how Christ is revealed in all Scripture in a warranted way is to demonstrate this hermeneutical and theological point. In addition, it also allows us to think through a number of other issues central to the biblical disciplines and the doing of systematic theology—for example, the relationship between the OT and NT and the unity of Scripture, how the NT uses the OT, how God’s plan unfolds, etc. In fact, to misconstrue how Christ is revealed in all Scripture will fail to grasp how Scripture fits together and most certainly lead to various theological mistakes. So answering the question “How is Christ revealed in all of Scripture?” is vital to biblical studies and the doing of theology.

My task is to approach the question from the perspective of systematic theology. This involves not only thinking through how Christ is revealed in all of Scripture, but also reflecting on whether the church’s doctrinal confession of Christ at Nicaea (325) and Chalcedon (451) was true to Scripture or a departure from it. Chalcedon affirms that the Jesus of the Bible is God the Son incarnate—one person in two natures, the intra-trinitarian Son/Word who has always shared equally and fully with the Father and Spirit the divine nature, but now, has become fully human by assuming a human nature. Is this theological formulation true to Scripture? Or is the church guilty of distorting Scripture due to acute Hellenization (e.g. von Harnack), or in the words of N. T. Wright, is the church guilty of leaving the biblical narratives behind even though the theology of Nicaea and Chalcedon is basically correct?² I will argue neither. Instead, I will contend that Nicaea and Chalcedon exhibit a faithful reading of the entirety of Scripture, albeit in theological language, as the church sought to conceptualize (“faith seeking understanding”) and defend (apologetics) what Scripture teaches.

How will I approach the subject? I will do so in three steps. First, I will discuss some points of method and hermeneutics and my overall approach to reading Scripture theologically. Second, I will walk through how all Scripture is about Christ and how the Bible from beginning to end teaches us that Jesus is God the Son incarnate. Third, I will end with a brief reflection on how Chalcedon (along with Nicaea) is faithful to Scripture and not a distortion of it.

I. APPROACHING AND READING SCRIPTURE THEOLOGICALLY

Before we can ask how Christ is revealed in all Scripture, we must be clear how to approach and read Scripture according to Scripture, or on its own terms.

¹ Herman Bavinck not only reminds us about the centrality of Christ in Scripture, but also for systematic theology. He writes: “The doctrine of Christ is not the starting point, but it certainly is the central point of the whole system of dogmatics. All other dogmas either prepared for it or are inferred from it. In it, as the heart of dogmatics, pulses the whole religious-ethical life of Christianity.” See Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 3: *Sin and Salvation* (ed. John Bolt; trans. John Vriend; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 274.

² N. T. Wright, “Historical Paul and ‘Systematic Theology,’” in *Biblical Theology: Past, Present, and Future* (ed. Carey Walsh and Mark W. Elliott; Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016), 157–60. Wright argues that the patristic Fathers did a “great job of expressing all this [Christology] in fresh language, but by ignoring the ancient Jewish and biblical roots they gave hostages to fortune. Chalcedon itself looks like a confidence trick” (160).

This entails that our reading of Scripture is dependent on a theology of Scripture. For evangelicals there should be agreement on these matters, but in practice it is not always so. How, then, should we read Scripture? I will answer this question in two steps: What is Scripture? and: How should we read Scripture given what it is? Although I can give only summary points, it is important in answering the question: “How is Christ revealed in all Scripture?”³

1. *What is Scripture?* Three points will summarize what Scripture is.

a. *Scripture is God’s Word written through the agency of human authors unfolding God’s eternal plan* (2 Tim 3:15–17; 2 Pet 1:20–21). I will not defend Scripture’s authority claim; there should be agreement on this point among members of the Evangelical Theological Society.⁴ I will only state two hermeneutical points that follow.

First, since Scripture is God’s Word unfolding his eternal plan, there is an overall unity and coherence to it, despite its diversity. This canonical unity is not due to an ecclesiastical decision to choose these books as Scripture.⁵ Instead, its unity is due to “one Mind, one Actor”⁶ who reveals himself to us by a word-act revelation. Furthermore, this view assumes a specific conception of God (e.g. eternal, omniscient, sovereign, etc.), and it receives the Bible’s description, content, and categories as first-order/foundational in our theological formulations.

Second, since God’s Word is given through human authors, we discover God’s intent through the writing(s) and intention of the human authors by grammatical-historical exegesis and reading biblical books in their final form. What Scripture says, God says.⁷ But given that God has spoken through multiple authors over time, an intertextual and canonical reading is necessary to discover God’s ultimate intent, purposes, and plan.⁸ As God’s plan unfolds, more revelation is given and later revelation, building on the earlier, results in more clarity and understanding from the perspective of the later authors. Due to the progress of revelation and the multiplicity of the authors, we can legitimately speak of a “fuller sense” (*sensus plenior*) if we understand it along the lines of G. K. Beale. Beale argues, “The Old Testament authors did not exhaustively understand the meaning, implications, and possible applications of all that they wrote,”⁹ yet, as God gave more revelation, we

³ For a discussion of these hermeneutical points, see Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (2nd ed.; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 107–37.

⁴ For defenses of scriptural authority, see John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010); D. A. Carson, ed., *The Enduring Authority of Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).

⁵ This is the position taken by those who identify with the postliberal tradition. On this point, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Exegesis and Hermeneutics,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (ed. T. D. Alexander and Brian Rosner; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 60–62; D. A. Carson, “Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology,” in *NDBT*, 95–97.

⁶ Carson, “Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology,” 97.

⁷ This expression is from B. B. Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980).

⁸ See Vanhoozer, “Exegesis and Hermeneutics,” *NDBT*, 61–62.

⁹ G. K. Beale, “Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?,” in Beale, *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, 393. See also Douglas J. Moo and Andrew D. Naselli, “The

discover more of God's intent concerning his plan, and how the parts fit with the whole. And ultimately, we discover what, or better, who is central to that plan, namely our Lord Jesus Christ.

For this reason, the NT's interpretation of the OT is definitive, since later texts bring greater clarity and understanding. The NT shows us how the OT is fulfilled in Christ, and the proper referent of OT texts. Yet, NT authors do not contravene the meaning of earlier texts, "but rather develop them in a way which is consistent with the Old Testament author's understanding of the way in which God interacts with his people"¹⁰ in previous eras of redemptive history. Scripture as an entire canon must interpret Scripture. The later parts must "draw out and explain more clearly the earlier parts,"¹¹ and theological conclusions are determined exegetically from the entire canon, especially in regard to Christ.

b. *Scripture is God's Word written over time, hence the idea of progressive revelation.* Revelation, alongside redemption, occurs progressively, largely demarcated by the biblical covenants. This entails that we read Scripture by carefully tracing out God's unfolding plan, tied to an unfolding storyline—the task of "biblical theology."¹² Biblical theology is the exegetical and theological discipline that attempts to read Scripture and "put together" the entire canon in terms of its redemptive-historical progression.¹³ Scripture consists of many literary forms that require careful interpretation, but what unites biblical books is God's unfolding plan, starting in creation, accounting for the fall, unpacking God's redemptive promises through the covenants, culminating with Christ's coming and the inauguration of the new creation. Our reading of Scripture and drawing of theological conclusions must be according to the Bible's own presentation, which involves the Bible's own categories, content, and description of reality. This is necessary to see properly how Christ is in

Problem of the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament," in *Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, 702–46. Moo and Naselli rightly argue that "the canonical approach decreases and may eliminate the questionable division between the human and divine authors' intentions in a given text. This approach does not appeal to the divine author's meaning that is deliberately concealed from the human author in the process of inspiration (*a sensus occultus*); it appeals to the meaning of the text itself that takes on deeper significance as God's plan unfolds (*a sensus praegnantis*). When God breathes out his words through human authors, he surely knows what the ultimate meaning of their words will be, but he has not created a *double entendre* or hidden a meaning in the words that we can uncover only through special revelation. The 'added meaning' that the text takes on is the product of the ultimate canonical shape, although often we can clearly perceive it only if God reveals it. . . . We can often verify the 'fuller sense' that the NT discovers in the OT by reading OT texts as the NT authors do: as part of a completed, canonical whole" (736).

¹⁰ Beale, "Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?," 393.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² For a helpful definition of biblical theology, see Brian S. Rosner, "Biblical Theology," *NDBT*, 3–11.

¹³ *Pace* Darian Lockett's interpretation of my view, by redemptive-history, I am not referring to a reconstructed history done within the limits of historical criticism (Darian Lockett, "Limitations of a Purely Salvation-historical Approach to Biblical Theology," *HBT* 39 [2017]: 211–31). For a helpful critique of Lockett's misunderstanding of what we mean by redemptive-historical, see D. A. Carson, "New Covenant Theology and Biblical Theology," in *God's Glory Revealed in Christ: Essays on Biblical Theology in Honor of Thomas R. Schreiner* (ed. Denny Burk, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Brian Vickers; Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019), 24–25.

all Scripture, from seed to full bloom, from shadow to reality. In fact, as God's plan unfolds and reaches its fulfillment in Christ, Scripture sets us up for and provides the categories to grasp who Jesus is as God's eternal Son and the nature of his work.

c. *Scripture is God's Word written, centered in Christ.* Why Christ? Because this is what Scripture teaches, namely that Scripture is Christotelic (God's entire plan, starting in creation reaches its *telos* in Christ) and Christocentric. Here are a few texts that warrant this assertion.

As the NT opens, Jesus is presented as the fulfillment of God's saving promises from the OT. For example, Matthew (1:1–17) and Luke (1–3) tie Jesus genealogically to the Abrahamic promises and the Davidic line. Jesus is clearly linked to the Abrahamic covenant, thereby emphasizing “that Jesus is the one through whom God's promises of universal blessing—a promise that will include all nations—is fulfilled.”¹⁴ Not surprisingly, Matthew ends his Gospel with the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations (28:18–20), thus the Abrahamic promises frame the entire book. So, from conception to death to resurrection, Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT story, God's promises, and the prophetic expectations. The Gospels claim that in Christ what the Law and the Prophets prophetically anticipated is now here.

Or, think of Jesus's own self-identity vis-à-vis the OT law in Matt 5:17–20. Much ink has been spilt on how best to interpret Jesus's words.¹⁵ In my view, the best interpretation stresses the antithesis between “abolish” and “fulfill.” Jesus is claiming that he “fulfills” the Law and the Prophets in that they point forward to him.¹⁶ This interpretation understands “fulfill” to have the same meaning as elsewhere in Matthew where emphasis is placed on the prophetic nature of the OT and how the OT points forward to Jesus specifically through typological persons, events, and institutions.¹⁷ Thus, what Jesus is claiming, as D. A. Carson notes, is not that he is abolishing the OT as Scripture but that “the OT's real and abiding authority must be understood through the person and teaching of him to whom it points and who so richly fulfills it.”¹⁸ The continuity of the Law and the Prophets is established with reference only to Jesus himself.¹⁹

¹⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 171.

¹⁵ For a discussion of the various options, see D. A. Carson, *Matthew* (EBC 8; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 140–47; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 177–91.

¹⁶ For a defense of this view, see Carson, *Matthew*, 143–45; cf. France, *Matthew*, 182–84.

¹⁷ Typology is only one way that the OT is prophetic and points forward to Christ. For a more detailed treatment of the prophetic nature of the OT, and the NT use of the OT, see Moo and Naselli, “Problem of the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament,” 702–46.

¹⁸ Carson, *Matthew*, 144.

¹⁹ William Dumbrell, “The Logic of the Role of the Law in Matthew V 1–20,” *NovT* 23 (1981): 16–19, argues that the “or” in “Law or Prophets” in verse 17 is disjunctive so that the Law is more than merely “legal” but also “prophetic” and that the Law is to be read through the Prophets. This confirms the need to read Scripture as a progressive revelation. Thanks to David Schrock who showed me this article.

The Christological claim is staggering. Jesus says *he* is the eschatological goal of the OT; the one the OT was pointing forward to and in whom all of God's plans and promises are realized. *He* is the OT's sole authoritative interpreter, and thus *he* has the authority of God himself.

Jesus makes the same point in Matthew 11. As he speaks of his relation to John the Baptist, he begins by focusing on John's greatness: "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (v. 11). Jesus is clearly defining John's greatness in terms of himself! John is great because he has the supreme privilege, as the last of the OT prophets, to identify the Messiah. No other previous prophet had this unique privilege. But, as Jesus expands, those least in the kingdom are greater than John precisely because they live after John. They, unlike John, will be able to bear witness to Jesus in a greater way than he could have done as they speak of Jesus's cross and resurrection. They will know in a greater way who Jesus is, and bear a greater witness to him than John. But note: This makes sense only if Jesus seems himself as the focal point of history, the one who brings to pass all of God's plans and purposes in himself.

Jesus teaches the same point in Luke 24.²⁰ Two of Jesus's disciples are confused regarding his death and reports of his resurrection. They were not thinking of a crucified Messiah, but Jesus takes them back to the OT to show otherwise.²¹ By rehearsing the OT plotline—Law, Prophets, and Psalms—Jesus opens the Scriptures (v. 32) and explains to them what was truly there in the OT, namely that Messiah had to suffer, die, and be raised. Jesus does not read something back on the OT that was not legitimately there. Instead, he explains what was there and he brings clarity to their failure to discern the OT properly.²² What was there all along—no doubt in seed and shadow form—is now unveiled and made clear. Yet, as Ardel Caneday notes, "Jesus expounds the Scriptures not backward by projecting Messiah back onto the OT or by reinterpreting the text, but forward by proceeding

²⁰ Jesus teaches these same truths in John's Gospel. "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life" (5:39–40). See D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 259–67.

²¹ Richard Hays writes: "It is essential to teach them about Scripture because Scripture forms the hermeneutical matrix within which the recent events in Jerusalem become intelligible. Understanding can dawn only when these shattering events are brought into an interpretive dialectic with Israel's story: [A]s Jesus cannot be understood apart from Jewish scripture, Jewish scripture cannot be understood apart from Jesus; what is needed is an interpretation which relates the two—and it is this that Jesus provides" (see "Reading Scripture in Light of the Resurrection," in *The Art of Reading Scripture* [ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], 230).

²² B. B. Warfield: "The OT is like a fully furnished but dimly lit room which when light is brought into it, nothing is added that was not already there, but the light dispels dark shadows and things shrouded begin to emerge with clarity even as shadows linger" (Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981], 141).

through the OT and climaxing upon himself to demonstrate that at many times and in numerous ways it foretells of both Messiah's suffering and glory."²³

Thus, despite Scripture's diversity, the NT teaches that the entire Bible finds its center in Christ.²⁴ Yet, as Jesus and apostles make clear, the Bible's entire story is necessary to reveal and disclose who Jesus is, and how he fulfills all of God's redemptive purposes and plan.

Hebrews 1:1–3 is a summary of these truths. "In the past," the author says, "God spoke to our forefathers by the prophets," and he did so "at many times and in various ways." God's speech is given over time, and it points forward to something more to come. In fact, the phrase "at many times and in many ways," makes this point. The OT revelation is incomplete. But now, "in Son" (*en huiō*, v. 2), the last days the OT predicted are now here in Christ, in whom all of God's revelation and redemptive purposes culminate. There is no reduction of the OT's authority. God intended it to point beyond itself to God's full self-disclosure in his Son.²⁵

2. *Given what Scripture is, how should we to read it?* Because Scripture is God's Word written through human authors unfolding God's plan centered in Christ, it is best read according to three horizons, or better, contexts. As biblical authors build on each other, we discover how each part fits with the whole—how the entire Bible is Christotelic and Christocentric. In this regard, Richard Lints suggests that we think of biblical interpretation in terms of three horizons: textual, epochal, and canonical.²⁶

a. *The textual or immediate context.* Here we start with any text in its context (entire book), which we interpret to discover the author's intent by grammatical/literary-historical exegesis.

b. *The epochal context.* This context is reading the text by locating it in God's unfolding plan. Texts are not given in a vacuum; they are embedded in a larger context of what precedes them. As God speaks through authors, there is a unity in his plan but also development, as he enacts and reveals his plan. By locating texts in God's unfolding plan, this helps us see intertextual²⁷ links between earlier and later

²³ A. B. Caneday, "Biblical Types: Revelation Concealed in Plain Sight to be Disclosed—"These Things Occurred Typologically to Them and Were Written Down for Our Admonition," in *God's Glory Revealed in Christ*, 152.

²⁴ D. A. Carson writes, "The Bible as a whole document tells a story, and, properly used, that story can serve as a metanarrative that shapes our grasp of the entire Christian faith" (see D. A. Carson, *The Gaggling of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 194).

²⁵ This fits with 1 Pet. 1:10–12. The prophets investigated "what time and circumstances" (*εἰς τίνα ἢ ποῖον καιρὸν*) as they anticipated the coming of Christ. Yet, the full significance of what was written becomes clearer as the Bible's story unfolds. Each biblical author may not have understood the Bible's whole story to which his life and writing is a contribution, but in its own context, what he did and wrote communicated something of that overall plan. Yet because of the promises of God, the biblical authors knew that what they were writing was also pointing forward in the story to its resolution. See Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (NAC 27; Nashville: B&H, 2003), 71–76.

²⁶ See Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 259–311.

²⁷ "Intertextual" can be used in different ways. My use of the term refers to how later authors build on previous revelation but do not contravene the original sense. My use is different than Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 154–61, who argues that Paul read the OT in light of Christ but not always consistent with the OT's "original sense." On these

revelation. As later authors refer to earlier texts, they build on them, not only in terms of greater understanding, but also by identifying God-given patterns between earlier and later “persons, events, and institutions” (“typology”). By this means, but not limited to it, God unfolds his plan to reach its fulfillment/*telos* in Christ. As later authors draw out these God-given types (as features of divine revelation), they do not arbitrarily make connections; rather, they develop these patterns according to God’s patient unfolding of his design that spans the ages.

As we read texts in their textual and epochal contexts, we grasp God’s unfolding plan. Given how Scripture has come to us, it is important not to bypass how later authors build on earlier ones, moving too quickly from texts to canon (Christ). If we move too quickly from the textual to canonical horizon, individual texts become fragmented and we miss how they are part of an overall plotline that prepares us for Christ. We may even draw conclusions for ourselves today in ways that do not follow how God’s plan unfolds and reaches its fulfillment in Christ. In fact, some of our theological differences center on this point: circumcision to baptism, Israel to church, land promise. Theological conclusions must be made in light of the entire canon, but it is important that texts “fit” in Scripture as they do within God’s unfolding dramatic plan.

How do we determine Scripture’s epochal/redemptive-historical divisions? Within “biblical theology,” this is a major debate.²⁸ Scripture divides redemptive history in a number of ways. For example, Rom 5:12–21: Paul compels us to conceive of all human history under two heads: Adam and Christ. Under these two heads, Paul also obliges us to view history by the following epochs: Adam (vv. 12–13), from Adam to Moses (vv. 14–17), from Moses and the giving of the law-covenant to Christ (vv. 18–21). Or, in Acts 7:1–53, Stephen identifies three distinct periods: the age of the patriarchs (vv. 2–16), the Mosaic age (including the exodus and conquest of the land) (vv. 17–45a), and the age of the monarchy (vv. 45b–53). Or, in the genealogy in Matthew 1, Matthew divides up redemptive history into three distinct periods: Abraham to David (vv. 2–6a); Solomon to the exile (vv. 6b–11); and the exile to Christ (vv. 12–17).

In my view, what is important to note is that most of Scripture’s epochal divisions follow the unfolding of the biblical covenants. Although I cannot argue it here, I would contend that the best way to determine the Bible’s own internal epochal structure is by locating texts in terms of their covenantal progression from creation to Christ. We read texts, then, in terms of their immediate context, and then place them in terms of their covenantal location—creation, Noah, Abraham, Israel, David, and the prophetic era that anticipates the new covenant.

points, see Russell Meek, “Intertextuality, Inner-Biblical Exegesis, and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Ethics of Methodology,” *Bib* 95 (2014): 280–91.

²⁸ See Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 19–110.

Does viewing texts within their epochal/covenantal context matter? Yes. For proof of this see the arguments made in Romans 4,²⁹ Galatians 3–4,³⁰ and much of Hebrews.³¹ Entire arguments are built on how later texts build on earlier texts, and how earlier texts anticipate later texts in God’s unfolding plan. But given space constraints I cannot unpack this point fully.

c. *The canonical context.* Our interpretation of Scripture does not end with the first two contexts. We must also read texts in terms of the canonical context, which is now in light of Christ. Scripture is God’s unified speech act, so texts must be interpreted canonically in light of Christ’s coming and the NT.³² We cannot adequately interpret Scripture if we ignore the canonical horizon, since it is here that the “whole” plan is discovered, and where the earlier revelation is pointing forward to.³³

²⁹ In Romans 4, Paul argues that Abraham is the paradigm of how God justifies us by faith alone for Jews *and* Gentiles. Warrant is given from Gen 15:6, where God declares Abraham righteous by faith *before* he was circumcised (Genesis 17), thus arguing that Abraham’s justification was not tied to circumcision, thus making Abraham the paradigm for Jews *and* Gentiles. Against the Judaizers, Paul denies that the Gentiles must be circumcised to know God because it was not true of Abraham and now that Christ has come, circumcision is fulfilled in circumcised hearts (1 Cor 7:19). Paul’s argument, however, only works if he draws theological conclusions from texts in terms of what comes before and after them. See John D. Meade, “Circumcision of Flesh to Circumcision of Heart: The Typology of the Sign of the Abrahamic Covenant,” in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course Between Dispensational and Covenant Theologies* (ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker; Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 127–58.

³⁰ In Galatians 3–4, Paul’s argument depends on reading the OT in terms of an unfolding revelation with earlier texts paving the way for later texts, and later texts being read in terms of earlier texts. In Galatians 3, Paul counters the Judaizers who, like many conservative Jews, “saw in the law given at Sinai not only a body of instruction but a hermeneutical key to the rest of Scripture” (D. A. Carson, “Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology,” 98). The Judaizers viewed the law covenant as eternal/permanent and not as a temporary means to bring us to Christ and the new covenant. This is why they insisted that for Gentiles to become Christians, they had to obey the law by circumcision. Paul rejects the Judaizers because they misunderstand Scripture. Paul argues that Christians are not under the law *as a covenant* (see Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God* [NSBT 31; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013]). Rather, Jews and Gentiles are united to Christ by faith apart from the Mosaic law (vv. 1–6). Paul warrants his argument from Scripture by reading texts in terms of *before* and *after*. On this point, see Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 195–272. This text illustrates the importance of “putting together” God’s plan by locating texts (and entire covenants) in relation to what preceded and followed it. In fact, we risk theological error if we do not think about texts in their epochal-covenantal location.

³¹ Hebrews gives more examples of this point, i.e., texts must be read by virtue of their placement in the Bible’s story (e.g. Heb 2:5–18 and its use of Psalm 8; Heb 3:7–4:11 and its use of Psalm 95; Hebrews 7 and its use of Genesis 14 and Psalm 110; Hebrews 8 and its use of Jer 31:31–34). For example, in Hebrews 7, the author concludes that the OT viewed the Levitical priesthood as temporary because God announced later another priest in a different order (Heb 7:11, 28; cf. Psalm 110). In Hebrews 8, the author argues that the old covenant was temporary because God promised later a new covenant (Jeremiah 31). See Thomas R. Schreiner, *Commentary on Hebrews* (Nashville: B&H, 2015), 85–93, 120–49, 205–55.

³² See Vanhoozer, “Exegesis and Hermeneutics,” *NDBT*, 61.

³³ See Moo and Naselli, “Problem of the New Testament’s Use of the Old Testament,” 736, for their helpful comments on how the canonical horizon brings resolution between the human and divine author.

How does Scripture link the canon together on its own terms? What are its “intrasystematic structures”?³⁴ Much could be said here, but minimally most would agree, at least in principle, that the canon is “glued” together by the plot movements of the Bible’s story: creation, fall, redemption, new creation, and the Bible’s *covenantal* unfolding. In thinking about the latter, namely the Bible’s covenantal unfolding, two further points are important.

First, the “promise-fulfillment” motif unfolded through the biblical covenants. This motif is central to how Scripture glues the epochs of redemptive history together and how Christ is revealed in all of Scripture (cf. Acts 13:32–33). A case can be made for Gen 3:15 being viewed as the first “Gospel” promise (*proto-euangelion*) that anticipates the coming of a Redeemer, the “seed of the woman”—an enigmatic promise that gets unpacked with more content as God’s plan unfolds across time.³⁵ This motif establishes the continuity between God’s covenant promises and his fulfillment of those promises in Christ. Also, when one thinks of promise-fulfillment, it is difficult to think of God’s promises apart from the covenants. By covenantal progression, Scripture speaks of the continuity of God’s plan (tied to his promises) and its ultimate fulfillment in Christ and the ratification of a new covenant.

Second, one way that the “promise-fulfillment” theme is developed is by the use of *typology*, which is also unpacked by covenantal progression. To speak of “typology” is to raise a whole host of debates over what it is and how it works. With that in mind, let us make a few brief comments about typology.

d. *Typology: What is it and how does it work?* Typology is the study of the OT redemptive-historical realities or “types” (persons, events, institutions) which God has specifically designed to correspond to, and predictively prefigure, their intensified antitypical fulfillment aspects in NT redemptive-history.³⁶ Three points will develop this understanding of typology.

First, types are a feature or species of divine revelation rooted in *history* and the *text*.³⁷ Types involve an organic relation between “persons, events, and institutions” in one epoch (“type”) and their counterparts in later epochs (“antitype”).³⁸

³⁴ This term is from Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 1–19, 147–276.

³⁵ Contra R. W. L. Moberly, “Christ in All the Scriptures? The Challenge of Reading the Old Testament as Christian Scripture,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 1 (2007): 82–85. In response to Moberly, see C. John Collins, *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006), 155–59; T. D. Alexander, “Further Observations of the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” *TynBul* 48 (1997): 363–67.

³⁶ See Richard Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical TUPOS Structures* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1981), 397–408. See also Paul Hoskins, *Jesus as the Fulfillment of the Temple in the Gospel of John* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006); Brent E. Parker, “The Israel-Christ-Church Relationship,” in *Progressive Covenantalism*, 39–68.

³⁷ See Caneday, “Biblical Types,” 143–50; Parker, “Israel-Christ-Church Relationship,” 39–68.

³⁸ Peter Gentry notes that typology is tied to our view of God, the God who eternally plans all things and sovereignly enacts his plan in history. He argues that correspondences exist between the type and antitype because “God in his providence sovereignly controls history, and he is consistent in his

Second, types are *prophetic* and *predictive*. A type is not prophetic as a direct verbal prediction. Instead, types are more indirect in the sense of predictions built on models/patterns that God intends but which become unveiled as later texts reinforce those patterns and which reach fulfillment in Christ. It is part of the “mystery” theme, tied to God’s unfolding plan.³⁹ Given the indirectness of types, they require careful exegesis in their immediate contexts, and a type may not be fully recognized as a type until later authors pick up the discernable pattern. Yet, types are in the text, exegetically discovered, and we come to know types as God-intended patterns as later OT authors repeat the pattern before it reaches its fulfillment in Christ.

Third, how do types work? Types involve *repetition* of a person, event, or institution so that they are repeated in later persons, events, or institutions. This is how we discover the pattern. Ultimately, types reach their fulfillment/*telos* in Christ with a spillover effect to his people. For example, Adam is a type of Christ (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:21–49), the covenant head of the old creation. In God’s plan, Adam anticipates the coming of Jesus, the last Adam, and the head of the new creation. How do we know this? In the immediate context of Genesis 1–3, there are exegetical clues that speak of Adam’s significance. Then through the covenants “other Adams” take on Adam’s role (e.g. Noah, Abraham, Israel, and David). But none of these “Adams” are the fulfillment although they “predict” the last Adam to come. Or, think of the nation of Israel. As God’s son (Exod 4:22–23), Israel not only takes on Adam’s role in the world but anticipates the coming of the true Son, the true Israel/servant/vine, i.e., Christ (see, e.g., Isa 5:1–7; Hos 11:1; Matt 2:15; John 15:1–17).

In addition, types have an *a fortiori* character as the type reaches its fulfilled culmination in the antitype. For example, as one moves from Adam or David, to the prophets, priests, and kings, to the last Adam, the true Davidic king, the great High Priest, the antitype is always greater than the previous types. For example, Adam is a type of Christ, and “other Adams” arise, yet these “Adams” disobey, and thus anticipate the last Adam, who perfectly obeys. What is true of Adam is also true of other typological patterns such as various people (Moses, Israel, David, prophets, priests, kings), events (exodus), or institutions (sacrificial system, tabernacle/temple).

It is also important to see that types are developed through *covenantal progression*. For example, Adam and “other Adams” are associated with the covenants of creation, Noah, Abraham, Israel, and David. In these covenant heads, Adam’s role continues; each one anticipates Christ, who by his obedience secures our redemp-

character so that there are repetitive patterns to his works in history” (*How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017], 90).

³⁹ For a discussion of the “mystery” theme and its relationship to typology, see D. A. Carson, “Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul’s Understanding of the Old and the New,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 2: *The Paradoxes of Paul* (ed. D. A. Carson, P. T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid; Grand Rapids; Baker Academic, 2004), 393–426; G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd, *Hidden But Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014).

tion.⁴⁰ Or, think of the promise to Abraham regarding his “seed.” As the seed promise unfolds, it does so in Isaac, Israel, the Davidic king, and ultimately in Christ with application to the church.⁴¹ More examples could be given: Moses, David and his sons, the tabernacle-temple structure, the exodus event that anticipates a greater exodus to come (Exod 15:14–17; Isa 11:15–16; 40:3–5; Hos 2:14–15; 11:1, etc.). All of these types are tied to the covenants and progress through them to Christ and the new covenant. In this way, OT history is prophetic; it anticipates Christ’s coming and work (Matt 5:17–20; 11:11–15; Rom 3:21).

II. HOW IS CHRIST REVEALED IN ALL SCRIPTURE?

How is Christ revealed in all Scripture? Not in hidden verses or hidden codes. Instead, Christ is seen in all Scripture as we trace out God’s redemptive plan, rooted in eternity, enacted in time, and unveiled for us by God’s speech through human authors over time. Christ is revealed in all Scripture by starting where the Bible begins—in creation, with the Bible’s presentation of God as Creator and Lord, humans as image bearers created to know and serve God in covenant relationship, the entrance of sin into the world, and God’s gracious promise and determination to redeem a people for himself by a greater Adam who is also identified with YHWH.

In other words, Christ is seen in all Scripture by recognizing him in the Bible’s unfolding plotline and discovering how in God’s eternal plan, all of God’s promises and various persons, events, and institutions were intended by God to anticipate, foreshadow, and typify the eternal Son to come. Nevertheless, it was not until his coming that he was fully revealed. As Augustine said many years ago, “The New Testament is in the Old concealed, and the Old is in the New revealed.”⁴² By tracing out the Bible’s covenantal story, the identity of Christ as the divine Son who will take on our humanity to redeem us *and* why he as God the Son must do so, is unveiled step by step. In fact, all of Scripture is needed to fully grasp Jesus’s person and work. Jesus does not come to us *de novo* but instead rooted in the teaching and categories of the OT that alone reveal who he is, why he has come, and why he alone can redeem us.

To show how Christ is revealed in all Scripture, I will sketch four truths, grounded in the Bible’s covenantal storyline and set within the Bible’s theological-metaphysical framework, that illustrate how Jesus’s identity as God the Son incarnate is gradually unveiled in the OT, which then comes to full light in the Son’s incarnation and work in the NT. In this way, all of Scripture is Christotelic and Christocentric.⁴³

⁴⁰ See Gen 1–3; 5:1–2; 9:1–17; 12:1–3; Exod 4:22–23; 2 Sam 7:5–16; Psalm 8; Rom 5:12–21; Heb 2:5–18.

⁴¹ See Gen 12:1–3; 17:1–22; Exod 1:1–7; 2 Sam 7:5–16; Gal 3:16, 29.

⁴² Augustine, *Quaest. Hept.* 2.73.

⁴³ By “Christotelic,” I am not following Peter Enns’s use of it in “Fuller Meaning, Single Goal,” in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 214–16. Enns does not think the OT author predicted Christ’s com-

1. *God as the Creator-Covenant Lord.* To identify Christ in Scripture, we must start with God's identity. We cannot know who Jesus is, especially as the divine Son, apart from starting with theology proper. In fact, this is where Paul begins at Athens (Acts 17:16–32). Given that the Athenians were steeped in idolatry, pluralistic in their outlook, and ignorant of the biblical worldview, Paul first builds a biblical-theological metaphysical framework, so that his proclamation of Jesus will make sense on the Bible's own terms and in its own categories. How will he ever be able to establish the uniqueness and exclusivity of Jesus as Lord, as the divine Son who shares the divine nature with the Father and Spirit, apart from first identifying who God is as the Creator and Lord? By so doing, Paul not only establishes the Creator-creature distinction but then explains who Jesus is in relation to the one true and living God. Apart from doing so, as D. A. Carson reminds us, "The good news of Jesus Christ—who he is and what he accomplished by his death, resurrection, and exaltation—is simply incoherent unless certain structures are already in place ... one cannot make sense of the Bible's portrayal of Jesus without such blocks in place."⁴⁴

In this regard, I am reminded of Robert Funk's statement in his *21 Theses: The Coming Radical Reformation*: "It is no longer credible to think of Jesus as divine. Jesus' divinity goes together with the old theistic way of thinking about God."⁴⁵ For Funk, he rejects the "old theism" or better, biblical theism, for some version of panentheism, but he rightly notes the relationship between an affirmation of Jesus's deity and a specific view of God that Scripture alone gives. It is not surprising that his rejection of the God of the Bible entails the rejection of Christ's deity.

Much could be said about who God is, but we begin where Scripture begins: God identified as the Creator-covenant Lord.⁴⁶ From Genesis 1 onward, God presents himself as the uncreated, independent, self-sufficient Creator of the universe who creates and rules all things by his word (Genesis 1–2; Ps 50:12–14; Acts 17:24–25; cf. John 1:1). This truth establishes the central distinction of all theology: the Creator-creature distinction, which establishes a specific view of the God-world relationship. God alone is God; all else is creation that depends totally on him for life and all things. God's transcendent lordship (Pss 7:17; 9:2; 21:7; 97:9; 1 Kgs 8:27; Isa 6:1; Rev 4:3) also eliminates any notion of deism that rejects God's agency in human history; God is transcendent *and* immanent with his creation. As Creator and Lord, God is fully present and related to his creatures: he freely, powerfully, and purposefully sustains and governs all things to his desired end (Ps 139:1–10; Acts 17:28; Eph 1:11), but he is not identified with the world.

ing. Instead, NT authors read the OT in light of Christ "already knowing that Christ is somehow the *end (telos)* to which the OT story is heading" (214). Nor am I following the caricature of "Christocentric" in Abner Chou, "A Hermeneutical Evaluation of the Christocentric Hermeneutic," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 27 (2016): 115–23.

⁴⁴ D. A. Carson, "Athens Revisited," in *Telling the Truth: Evangelizing Postmoderns* (ed. D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 386.

⁴⁵ Robert W. Funk, "Twenty-one Theses: The Coming Radical Reformation," at <https://www.westarstitute.org/resources/the-fourth-r/the-coming-radical-reformation/>.

⁴⁶ See John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 1–115.

As the Creator, God sovereignly and personally rules over his creation. He rules with perfect power, knowledge, and righteousness (Pss 9:8; 33:5; 139:1–4, 16; Isa 46:9–11; Acts 4:27–28; Rom 11:33–36) as the only being who is independent and self-sufficient. As Lord, God acts in, with, and through his creatures to accomplish his plan and purposes (Eph 1:11). As personal, God commands, loves, comforts, and judges consistent with himself and according to the covenant relationships that he establishes with his creatures. Indeed, as we move through redemptive history, God discloses himself not merely as uni-personal but as tri-personal, a being-in-relation, a unity of three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit (e.g. Matt 28:18–20; John 1:1–4, 14–18; 5:16–30; 17:1–5; 1 Cor 8:5–6; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 1:3–14). In fact, the doctrine of the Trinity is unveiled with the unveiling of Christ as the Son, along with the Spirit of God.⁴⁷

God is also the Holy One (Gen 2:1–3; Exod 3:2–5; Lev 11:44; Isa 6:1–3; cf. Rom 1:18–23). God’s holiness means more than “set apart.” God’s holiness is particularly associated with his independence and glorious majesty, indeed his aseity (“life from himself”).⁴⁸ As God, he is self-sufficient metaphysically (self-existent) and morally (self-justifying; he is the moral standard of the universe). God is categorically different in nature and existence than his creation; he shares his glory with no one (Isaiah 40–48). God’s holiness entails his personal-moral perfection. He is “too pure to behold evil” and unable to tolerate wrong (Hab 1:12–13; cf. Isa 1:4–20; 35:8). God must act with holy justice when his people rebel against him; yet he is the God who loves his people with a holy, covenant love (Hos 11:9). God’s holiness and love are never at odds (1 John 4:8; Rev 4:8). Yet, as sin enters the world, and God graciously promises to redeem us, a question arises as to how he will do so and remain true to himself—a question central to the Bible’s unfolding storyline and Christ’s identity.

This brief summary of God’s identity is the first truth that is important in how the Bible will identify Christ. God as the Creator-covenant Lord and the Creator-creature distinction give a specific theistic shape and metaphysics to Scripture’s interpretive framework. Specifically, Jesus’s identity is tied to *this* God, and it is within *this* framework that Christ’s identity is unveiled. Why is this significant for understanding who Christ is and how all Scripture speaks of him?

First, as the Bible’s plotline unfolds, beginning in Gen 3:15—the seed of the woman—and then, especially in the Prophets, the Messiah-Son to come will be human *but also identified with God*. For it is he who will fulfill all of God’s promises, inaugurate God’s saving rule, and share God’s throne (Psalm 110; cf. Psalm 45)—something no mere human can do, especially when placed in the theistic frame of Scripture.

⁴⁷ On this point see Fred Sanders, *The Triune God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 37–153.

⁴⁸ See NIDOTTE 3:879; Richard A. Muller, *Past-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 3: *The Divine Essence and Attributes* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 497–503. On God’s aseity, see John Webster, *God Without Measure: Working Papers in Christian Theology. Volume 1: God and the Works of God* (T&T Clark Theology; New York: T&T Clark, 2016), 13–28.

In fact, one of the ways the NT teaches Christ's deity is by identifying Jesus with OT YHWH texts and applying them directly to him, thus identifying Jesus with *this* God (e.g. Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:11).⁴⁹ In addition, seven times *theos* is applied to Christ, but when set in the OT context, this identifies Jesus with God. In biblical thought, no creature can share the attributes of God (Col 2:9), carry out the works of God (Col 1:15–20; Heb 1:1–3), receive the worship of God (John 5:22–23; Phil 2:9–11, Heb 1:6; Rev 5:11–12), and bear the titles and name of God (John 1:1, 18; 8:58; 20:28; Rom 9:5; Phil 2:9–11; Heb 1:8–9) unless he is God equal with God, and thus one who shares the one, identical divine nature.⁵⁰

Second, given that God's will and nature are the moral standard, then sin before God is a serious problem. As the holy one, God is "the Judge of all the earth" who always does what is right (Gen. 18:25). But in promising to justify us before him (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:5), God cannot overlook our sin; he must remain true to his own righteous demand against sin. But how can God remain just *and* the justifier of the ungodly? In Scripture, this is *the* major question that drives the Bible's redemptive story. Ultimately, as God's plan unfolds, this question is answered in a specific person, namely, the Messiah, who is the Servant-Son, who alone can redeem us *because he is more than a mere human son*. He is also the divine Son who becomes human to act as our representative and substitute (Rom 3:21–26). As *God the Son*, he is able to satisfy *his own righteous demand* against us, and as *human*, he is able to satisfy the demands of covenant life for us as our new covenant head.

2. *Adam (and humans) as image-bearers and the requirement of covenantal obedience.* To grasp how Christ is revealed in all Scripture, we must also identify humans rightly as image-bearers/sons and covenant creatures. Specifically, we must go back to Adam and then trace the Bible's link between the command to and curse of the first Adam that is remedied only by the last Adam. Otherwise, we cannot make sense of why the divine Son became man to save us from our sins (Matt 1:21) and how the Bible's storyline from Adam anticipates Christ.

Scripture divides all humans under two representative heads: first Adam and the last Adam (Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:12–28). In God's plan, Adam is a type of Christ, who anticipates the Last Adam (Rom 5:14). Adam is not only the first man, but also humanity's representative. Adam's headship defines what it means to be human, and sadly, by his representative-legal act of disobedience, he plunges all people into sin (Genesis 3; Rom 3:23; 5:12–21).

Central to God's relationship with us is his demand of covenantal obedience.⁵¹ Regardless of how one speaks of the covenant here, God demands com-

⁴⁹ See David F. Wells, *The Person of Christ* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1984), 21–81; Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008). See Psalms 2, 45, 110; Isa 7:14; 9:6–7; Ezekiel 34; Daniel 7.

⁵⁰ On this point, see Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate* (Foundations of Evangelical Theology; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 189–208.

⁵¹ There is a debate over whether there is a covenant in creation. In Reformed theology, it is identified as the "covenant of works." Although I agree with this basic theological point, I prefer to identify it as a creation covenant. For a discussion of the various views, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 73–84, 666–85.

plete covenant loyalty and obedience from Adam as our head, and by extension to us (Gen 2:15–17). After all, what else would God demand? The tree of the knowledge of good and evil tests whether Adam will be an obedient covenant keeper. Adam disobeys, and the consequence of his action is not private. Post-Fall, all people are born “in Adam”—guilty and corrupt—and who continue to act in sin. Also, Adam’s sin impacts the entire creation; we now live in a fallen, abnormal, cursed world that requires *God* to remedy (Gen 3:15; Rom 8:18–25). The tree of life holds out an implied promise of life. Yet, because of sin, God the Judge expels Adam from Eden. Yet, there is a concealed revelation of hope in God’s promise of Gen 3:15 and the unfolding covenants.

Why is this important for how Christ is in all Scripture? Because the truth of who Adam is, his disobedience that results in sin-death, and God’s gracious promise to redeem and provide a coming deliverer drives the Bible’s story. It gives the rationale for why the divine Son must become incarnate for us, and why he must be greater. Why? Because to undo and to pay for Adam’s sin, the “seed of the woman” (Gen. 3:15) must come. For redemption to occur, *a human* must do it. He must render our required covenantal obedience as a greater Adam. Yet, the reversal of Adam’s sin and all of its disastrous effects will require more than a mere man. It will also require the divine Son, the true image of God (Col 1:15; Heb 1:3) to do the work of God: to remove the curse, to pay for our sin, and to usher in a new creation. To underscore why the reversal of Adam’s sin will require more than a mere human, let’s turn to the third truth.

3. *The nature of the human problem.* Central to the covenant and the purpose of our creation is that God has created humans to know him and to be his image/sons to display his glory and to expand the borders of Eden to the entire creation.⁵² But what happens when humans rebel against God, deface the image, and do not act as sons? Can the divine purpose still be accomplished? How is covenant peace possible without covenant obedience? How will God forgive those who sin against him?

From Genesis 3 forward, Scripture reveals that Adam’s disobedience brought sin into the world and humans under God’s wrath. In Gen 1:31, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” In Genesis 3, God expels Adam and Eve from his presence due to sin, and the transmission of sin is universal. By Genesis 6, human sin has so multiplied that it results in a flood. Looking back on the course of human history, Paul confirms our universal fallenness: “There is no one righteous, not even one . . . for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:10, 23). Adam’s sin turned the created order upside down and brought on us the sentence of death (Rom 6:23). We were made to know, love, and serve God. But now we live under his righteous condemnation as his enemies and objects of wrath (Eph 2:1–3).

What is God’s response to our sin? Judgment and wrath, yet given God’s promise to redeem, there is now what John Stott calls the “problem of for-

⁵² See G. K. Beale and Mitchell Kim, *God Dwells Among Us* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014).

giveness.”⁵³ What is this problem? Considering the divine response to human sin, it seems that God must do two things that appear to be mutually exclusive: punish *and* forgive our sin. On the one hand, God must punish sin because he is holy and just. On the other hand, God created and covenanted with us to glorify himself in the righteous rule of humans over creation, not in our destruction (Rom 3:25).

However, the problem goes deeper, into the nature of God himself. God *is* holy and just, sin is against *him*, and sin *must* be punished. God cannot and will not overlook our sin. All of his attributes are essential to him, including his holiness, righteous, and justice. Regarding his justice, God is not like a human judge, who adjudicates laws external to him; God *is* the law. Our sin is not against an abstract principle or impersonal law, but it is against God (Ps. 51:4). So for God to forgive us, he must remain true to himself! That is why our forgiveness is possible only if the full satisfaction of his moral demand is met. But this raises a crucial question: Who is able to satisfy God’s righteous demand other than God himself?

Now it is precisely this necessity in God to judge human sin and his promise to redeem that creates a tension in the Bible’s covenantal relationships.⁵⁴ God promises to be our God, and for us to dwell in his presence, but he is holy and we are not. No doubt, in the covenants God initiates and provides means by which to deal with sin (e.g. the priesthood, sacrificial system, tabernacle-temple [Lev 17:11]). But the old covenant by itself was not enough. God was teaching his people about its built-in limitations that pointed beyond itself for a greater provision and covenant (Hebrews 8–9), which is precisely what the prophets teach.⁵⁵ But how and by whom?

These three truths are foundational to the Bible’s teaching, framework, and plotline, and they are necessary to grasp how Christ is revealed in all Scripture. (1) Because of who God is and his promise to save, he must provide his own solution to the problem of forgiving sin. (2) Because God has created humans to rule over creation, salvation must come through a man. (3) Because of the universal corruption of sin, this last Adam must be greater than the first, and identified with God. The Messiah/Redeemer to come must identify with God in his nature and with us in ours, which is underscored in the unfolding of God’s plan through the biblical covenants.

4. *God himself saves, redeems, and recreates through his obedient Son.* Just as human sin and God’s promise to redeem brings tension into the Bible’s storyline, so its resolution raises the question of who it is that is qualified to establish God’s kingdom on earth and to save us from our sins. God created humans as his image/sons to rule over the world (Gen 1:26–31; Psalm 8). Yet, no one “in Adam” is able to do so.

⁵³ John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (20th anniversary ed.; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 89–111.

⁵⁴ Exodus 34:6–7 reveals this tension. Due to Israel’s sin, the covenant is broken, and it is only by God’s grace that it can be restored. But God cannot forever overlook Israel’s sin. The tension is only resolved by the coming of Christ and the new covenant he ratifies by fully paying for Israel and our sin (see Rom 3:21–26; Heb 9:15).

⁵⁵ This is why Jeremiah anticipates a new covenant that will result in the full forgiveness of sin (Jer 31:34).

Who, then, is able to establish God's rule, to undo what Adam did by rendering perfect covenantal obedience, and to pay for our sins before God? The answer: Messiah alone as God the Son incarnate, which is unveiled for us by the unfolding of God's plan through the biblical covenants.⁵⁶

After Adam's sin, God does not leave us to ourselves. God acts in grace and promises to reverse the manifold effects of sin through *his* provision of the "seed of the woman" (Gen 3:15)—a promise that is given greater clarity over time. Although the divine promise was given in embryonic form, we learn that this coming Redeemer will destroy the works of Satan and restore goodness to this world. This promise creates the expectation that when it is finally realized, sin and death will be destroyed, and the fullness of God's saving reign will come. As God's plan unfolds, we discover who this Redeemer is and how he will save us. Three points will develop this last point.

a. *God's promise of the coming of the "seed of the woman" is unfolded through the covenants with Noah, Abraham, Israel, and David.* Each covenant contributes to the unfolding of God's plan and the development and anticipation of the promise. Gradually, God prepares his people to anticipate the coming of a person who will be human but also more. How? Scripture teaches that the fulfillment of God's promises will be *through a human*, anticipated by various typological persons such as Adam, Noah, Moses, Israel, and David, along with the development of the priesthood, sacrificial system, and temple. But Scripture also identifies this "anointed one" (Messiah) *with God*. How? Because of what this Messiah-King does: he inaugurates God's rule, shares God's throne, and does what only God can do (e.g. Psalms 2, 45, 110; Isa 9:6–7; Ezekiel 34).

b. *How does God's kingdom come in its redemptive-new creation sense (Isa. 65:17)?* As the OT unfolds, God's saving kingdom is revealed and comes to this world, at least in anticipatory form, through the covenants and their heads—Adam, Noah, Abraham and his seed, Israel, and most significantly through David and his sons. Yet, the OT repeatedly reminds us that these covenant heads disobey; they are not the promised "seed of the woman." Specifically, this is evident in the Davidic kings and the Davidic covenant.

The Davidic covenant is the epitome of the OT covenants; it brings the previous covenants to a climax in the king. There are two main parts to it: (1) God's promises about the establishment of David's house forever (2 Sam 7:12–16), and (2) the promises concerning the "Father-son" relationship between God and the Davidic king (2 Sam 7:14; cf. Psalms 2; 89:26–27). The meaning of this "sonship" is twofold. First, it inextricably ties the Davidic covenant to the previous covenants, and second, it anticipates in type the greater Sonship of Christ.

Regarding the former, the sonship applied to *corporate* Israel (Exod 4:22–23; cf. Hos. 11:1) is now applied to the *individual* Davidic king, who, in himself, is "true

⁵⁶ For a detailed treatment of the covenants, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*. In historical theology, Anselm picks up this point although he does not emphasize the covenants as much. For a discussion of Anselm, see Stephen J. Wellum, *Christ Alone* (The Five Solas Series; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 167–73.

Israel.” He becomes the administrator of the covenant thus representing God’s rule to the people and representing the people as a whole (2 Sam 7:22–24). This also entails that the Davidic king fulfills the role of Adam; it is through him that God’s rule is effected in the world (2 Sam 7:19b).⁵⁷ This makes sense if one links the covenants together, building toward climactic fulfillment.⁵⁸ At the center of God’s redemptive plan is the restoration of humanity’s vice-regent role in creation via the seed. By the time we get to David, we now know it is through the Davidic king that creation will be restored. In the OT, this truth is borne out in many places, especially the Psalter, which envisions the Davidic son as executing a universal rule (e.g. Psalms 2, 8, 45, 72, cf. Isa 9:6–7; 11; 53).

Further note: in the Davidic covenant, not only is the Father-Son relationship unpacked first as YHWH-human son, but in the Prophets it begins to break the categories. So also is this true of the Son-Spirit relationship (first tied to leadership in Israel: prophets, priests, and kings) but then in the prophets it is heightened. David’s greater Son will fully have the Spirit and will pour out the Spirit on his people (Isaiah 11; 42; 61; Ezekiel 36; Joel 2; cf. Acts 2).⁵⁹

But in OT history, there is a major problem. As previous covenant mediators disobeyed, so the Davidic kings. Yet the hope of salvation depends on them. God continues in his unilateral determination to keep his promise to bring forth the promised one, now more specifically a Davidic king, who will rule the world. Yet, there is no faithful son-king who effects God’s saving reign. This leads to the message of Prophets and the anticipation of a new covenant.

When thinking of the OT writing prophets, it is crucial to note that their epochal location is post-Davidic. Why is this important? Because their prophecies build on what God has already revealed through the covenants in promises and typological patterns.⁶⁰ The Prophets not only speak of God’s judgment on the nation for their violation of the covenant; they also proclaim an overall pattern of renewal by recapitulating the past history of redemption and projecting it into the future. The prophets announce that God will unilaterally keep his promise to redeem and *that* he will do so through a faithful Davidic king (Isa 7:14; 9:6–7; 11:1–10; 42:1–9; 49:1–7; 52:13–53:12; 55:3; 61:1–3; Jer 23:5–6; 33:14–26; Ezek 34:23–24; 37:24–28). In this king, identified as the “servant of YHWH,” a new, everlasting covenant will come, and with it the pouring of the Spirit (Ezekiel 36–37; Joel 2:28–32), God’s saving reign among the nations, the forgiveness of sin (Jer 31:34) and a new creation (Isa 65:17). The hope of the prophets is found in the new covenant.

Regarding the new covenant, all of the prophets teach on it, but Jeremiah 31 is probably the most famous of the OT texts.⁶¹ Jeremiah focuses on what is central

⁵⁷ See Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “The Blessing of David, The Charter for Humanity,” in *The Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Oswald Thompson Allis* (ed. John H. Skilton; Nutley, NJ: P&R, 1974), 311–14.

⁵⁸ On this point see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 700–12.

⁵⁹ See *ibid.*

⁶⁰ Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 123–32, makes this point but does not tie it to the covenants.

⁶¹ See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 487–765.

and foundational to the new covenant, namely, the promise of the complete forgiveness of sin (Jer 31:34).⁶² Under the Mosaic covenant, forgiveness of sin was normally granted via the sacrificial system. Yet, God never intended for the old system to be an end in itself (Galatians 3–4). Thus, God announces that in the new covenant sin will be “remembered no more” (Jer 31:34), which entails the full payment of it. Under the new covenant, what is anticipated is the perfect fellowship of God and his people and the dwelling of God with us in a new creation—ultimately the fulfillment of Gen 3:15.

c. *We can now see how the Bible’s basic covenantal storyline identifies and anticipates Christ.*⁶³ If we step back and ask: “Who is able to fulfill all of God’s promises, inaugurate God’s saving rule in this world, and achieve the full forgiveness of sin?” the answer is: God alone. And this is precisely what the OT teaches (Isa 43:11; 45:21).

As Israel’s history unfolds, it becomes evident that God alone must act to accomplish his promises; he must initiate in order to save; he must unilaterally act if there is going to be redemption at all. After all, who can achieve the forgiveness of sin other than God alone? Who can usher in the new creation, final judgment, and salvation? Certainly, none of these great realities will arrive by the previous covenant mediators since they have all, in different ways, failed. Nor will it come through Israel as a nation, for her sin has brought about her exile and judgment. If there is to be salvation at all, God himself must come and usher in salvation and execute judgment; the arm of the Lord must be revealed (Isa 51:9; 52:10; 53:1; 59:16–17; cf. Ezekiel 34). Just as God once led Israel through the desert, so he must come again, bringing a new exodus to bring salvation to his people (Isa 11:10–16; 40:3–5; 43:1–7; cf. Hos 11:1–12).

However, as the covenants establish, alongside the emphasis that God himself must come to redeem, the OT also stresses that God will do so through another David, a human “son,” but a “son” who is also closely identified with YHWH. Isaiah pictures this well. This king to come will sit on David’s throne (Isa 9:7) but will also bear the very titles/names of God (9:6). This King, though another David (Isa 11:1), is also David’s Lord who shares the divine rule (Ps 110:1). He will be the mediator of a new covenant; he will perfectly act like YHWH (Isa 11:1–5), yet he will suffer for our sin to justify many (Isa 53:11). It is through him that forgiveness will come, for he is “the LORD our righteousness” (Jer 23:5–6). In him, OT hope and expectation is joined: YHWH must save but through his King-Son—who is fully human yet bears the divine name.

In sum, it is this covenantal storyline that serves as the background, framework, theology, and worldview to the NT’s presentation of Jesus, and how all

⁶² All the promises of Jer 31:31–34 depend (grammatically) on the final clause: “For [יָ] I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 710–12.

⁶³ No doubt Christians disagree on the specifics of how the covenants relate to one another, yet most varieties of Christian theology admit that the biblical covenants establish a central framework that holds the Bible’s storyline together. On this point, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 31–34, 51–105.

Scripture reveals Christ's identity as God the Son incarnate. In the OT, it is there, but concealed even in its revealing through the covenants, the unfolding of the divine promise, and the patterns/types that point forward to Christ's coming. But now in the "Word made flesh" (John 1:14), what was there, but concealed, is now unveiled with fuller clarity of understanding (John 1:14–18; Heb 1:1–3).

As the NT opens, and Jesus arrives on the scene, this is precisely how the NT presents him. Jesus is the *human* son (Matt 1:1: "son of David and Abraham), yet he is also the *eternal, divine* Son of the Father, identified with YHWH who has come to save his people from their sins (see Matt 1:21; 11:1–15; 12:41–42; 13:16–17; Luke 7:18–22; 10:23–24; cf. John 1:1–3; 17:3). As the human son, he perfectly fulfills all the typological patterns and roles of the previous sons for our salvation (e.g. Adam [Luke 3:38], Israel [Exod 4:22–23; Hos 11:1], David [2 Sam 7:14; Psalms 2, 16, 72, 110]). By his incarnation and work, he becomes David's greater Son who inaugurates God's kingdom and is now seated as the Davidic king, leading history to its consummation at his return (Matt 1:1; 28:18–20; Luke 1:31–33; Acts 2:32–36; Rom 1:3–4; Eph 1:9–10, 18–23; Phil 2:9–11; Col 1:15–20; Hebrews 1 [cf. Psalms 2, 45, 110]). He becomes the true Israel who fulfills Israel's role and brings the nation's exile to its end in a new exodus and who obeys where Israel disobeyed (Matt 2:15 [Hos 11:1]; Matt 3:15–17 [cf. Isa 11:1–2; 42:1; 61:1]; Matt 4:1–11; John 15:1–6 [Isa 5:1–7]). Jesus is Abraham's true seed (Gal 3:16) who constitutes all those in faith-union with him, true children of Abraham, and inheritors of all the Abrahamic promises (Rom 2:25–29; 4:9–22; Gal 3:6–9; Heb 2:14–18; Rev 5:9–10). Jesus is also the last Adam and the first man of the new creation (Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:21–22; Heb 2:5–18). In his conception, the Spirit, parallel to the first creation (Gen 1:2), overshadows and brings about the beginning of the new creation (Luke 1:35). In Jesus's baptism, he is identified as the promised Messiah who receives the Spirit in full measure (Isa 11:1–5; 61:1–2; Luke 4:14–21) and who pours out the Spirit on his people (Luke 3:16–17; John 20:21–23; Acts 2:1–36; 10:44–48; Gal 3:1–6; 3:26–4:7), fulfilling OT expectations of the new covenant. Also, in his work, Jesus fulfills Adam's role of ruling over the creation as the obedient royal son-priest (Heb 2:5–18 [Psalm 8]), evidenced by his healings and miracles tied to the inauguration of God's kingdom (Matthew 8–9).

Yet, Jesus can only do all of this because he is the *divine* Son of the Father (Matt 11:25–30; John 5:16–30) who assumed our humanity and lives, obeys, dies, and is raised for our justification. For it is only as the divine Son assuming our human nature that he can fulfill all of the Law and the Prophets (Matt 5:17–20; 7:12) *and* take on himself our sin, guilt, and make this world right by the ratification of a new covenant in his blood (Rom 3:21–26; 5:1–8:39; 1 Cor 15:1–34; Eph 1:7–10; Heb 8:1–13).

In this way, from beginning to end, the Bible's covenantal plotline bears witness to Christ. It not only anticipates his coming; it also identifies him, namely Jesus of Nazareth, as God the Son incarnate, fully God and fully man, the eternal Word and Son of the Father made flesh (John 1:1, 14) for us and our salvation. This is the truth that the church confesses immediately (John 20:28) and later sys-

tematizes with biblical fidelity in the confessional orthodoxy of Nicaea and Chalcedon, which leads to my third and final point.

III. FROM CANON TO CONCEPT: IS CHALCEDON FAITHFUL TO SCRIPTURE OR A DISTORTION OF IT?⁶⁴

How we answer this question depends on everything we have discussed. If one approaches and reads Scripture on its own terms (i.e., according to its self-attestation, categories, content, metaphysical-theological framework, unfolding storyline, etc.), then we will conclude that the entire Bible gives us the highest Christology imaginable. Chalcedon and Nicaea, then, are not a distortion of Scripture but are in conformity to it. No doubt the theological language that is later used is not found directly in Scripture (e.g. *homoousios*, *hypostasis*, etc.). Yet the language used, and theological “judgments” made, are correctly understanding and putting together the biblical data in a way that faithfully renders who Jesus is from the entirety of what Scripture teaches.⁶⁵

However, if we approach and read Scripture *not* on its own terms but by the “light” of some “extratextual” framework that is alien to the theology and storyline of Scripture, whether the assumptions of methodological naturalism associated with historical criticism or some postmodern construction, then inevitably the Jesus discovered will not be the Jesus of the Bible nor the Jesus of the church’s confessions. Instead, it will be a Jesus that looks a lot like the extratextual system one started with and imposed on Scripture. This was the lesson illustrated, but often forgotten, by the various quests for the historical Jesus. Scholars tended to look down the well of history to discover Jesus but they only saw a reflection of their own faces.⁶⁶ The problem with the various Quests is that they carried out their Jesus research (Christology) assuming metaphysical and epistemological assumptions foreign to Scripture and Christian theology. Because such an approach is not operating within the theological framework of Scripture, grounded in a high view of God and Scripture, it will never lead us to the Jesus of the Bible. A biblical and orthodox Christology is rooted in a specific conception of God, Scripture, humans, etc., and apart from that worldview it cannot stand.

So if we approach Scripture according to its own self-attesting claim and within its own worldview, then, from Genesis to Revelation, Scripture teaches us that Christ Jesus is Lord (Phil 2:6–11). And within the Bible’s framework and storyline, to say that Jesus is Lord is to say that he is the eternal Son of the Father in

⁶⁴ This expression is from Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “From Canon to Concept: ‘Same’ and ‘Other’ in the Relation between Biblical and Systematic Theology,” *SBET* 12 (1994): 96–124.

⁶⁵ Theological “judgments” is taken from David S. Yeago, “The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis,” in *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (ed. Stephen E. Fowl; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997), 87–102. Yeago argues that the Nicene *homousion* is not imposed or distantly deduced from the NT “but rather describes a pattern of judgements present in the texts, in the texture of scriptural discourse concerning Jesus and the God of Israel” (*ibid.*, 88).

⁶⁶ See George Tyrrell, *Christianity at the Crossroads* (London: Longmans, 1909), 44.

relation to the Spirit who shares God's nature and does God's works and now, due to his incarnation and work, is our only Lord and Savior.

No doubt, as the church confessed and proclaimed Christ, she had to engage in further theological reflection and formulation. In fact, to take Scripture seriously, to work from biblical exegesis to biblical theology leads to systematic theology as an exercise in "faith seeking understanding." In light of legitimate questions arising from Scripture from believers, denials of biblical truth by unbelievers, and false ways of putting together the biblical data, Christological exposition, apologetic defense, and proclamation were necessary. For example, given Jesus's self-identity as the eternal Son of the Father, reflection must arise on how they share the same divine nature along with the Spirit. Or, given the truth of the Creator-creature distinction, reflection must arise on how we make sense of the divine Son becoming human and growing and learning. Or, given that the Son is fully God and omniscient, it is legitimate to ask: Why, then, does Jesus say he does not know certain things (Matt 24:36)? Scriptural teaching demands careful theological thinking and accounting for all the scriptural teaching in the way Scripture teaches it.

In fact, this is what Nicaea and Chalcedon were doing. They were summarizing scriptural teaching and doing so in such a way as to confess, defend, and proclaim the God of the Bible as triune and Jesus as the eternal Son made flesh. Furthermore, the creeds do not represent, for example, the imposition of the extratextual worldview of Hellenism on Scripture. In truth, the high Christology of Scripture is rooted in a Jewish theological context, and Christological heresy is more indebted to Greek philosophical categories than to Jewish or biblical ones. After all, it was Greek thought that had difficulty attributing full humanity and/or deity to Christ. Gnosticism and Arianism substituted the biblical-theological categories of Scripture for a warmed-over Platonism. In these false views, Jesus was no more than semi-divine—neither truly God nor truly human—something the church rejected as unfaithful to Scripture. Although the Chalcedonian definition employed extrabiblical language to theologize about Jesus, it rightly identified who Jesus is from the Bible's theology and storyline, not an alien one. This is why the Chalcedonian definition gives us a Christology in continuity with Scripture and not Greek thought.⁶⁷

It is also the reason why Nicaea and Chalcedon are rightly viewed as "rules of faith." Confessions are always secondary standards; Scripture alone is primary and foundational. Yet, because these Confessions faithfully formulate biblical teaching, they rightly function as theological standards for Trinitarian and Christological orthodoxy.⁶⁸ Yet, as important as they are, they never replace Scripture. Although they accurately summarize and theologize rightly about Christ, we are constantly

⁶⁷ On this point, see Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1: *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)* (trans. John Bowden; 2nd rev. ed.; Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 7–9. Cf. Aaron Riches, *Ever Homo: On the Divine Unity of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 21–87.

⁶⁸ This is not true of all confessions, given later divergences in theological conclusions. Nicaea and Chalcedon have catholic agreement because they faithfully reflect scriptural teaching. This is not necessarily the case of later confessions, which must always be arbitrated by Scripture.

driven back to Scripture again and again, both the OT and NT, to reflect on, to proclaim, and to glory in Christ's person and work, for our good, the church's life and health, and ultimately for the glory of our triune God in the face of his own beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ I want to thank the following for their reading and feedback of this article: Tom Schreiner, Ardel Caneday, David Schrock, Peter Gentry, Kirk Wellum, Brent Parker, Adam Jacobs, Greg Strand, and Trent Hunter.