

# Preaching Christ from the Old Testament and from Genesis 15:1-6

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## INTRODUCTION

The question of how we preach Christ from the Old Testament (OT) Scriptures is vital for those who proclaim the good news, and believers differ on the best approach. I am grateful for the essays of Dan Block, Elliott Johnson, and Vern Poythress who have carefully explored this matter. Dan Block and Elliott Johnson rightly and especially emphasize that interpreters must interpret OT texts in light of the OT context and historical horizon. Block warns us about the danger of superficially appealing to allegory or typology so that we end up reading Christ into the OT in ways that violate the integrity of the OT text in its historical context. Block maintains that we should preach christotelically instead of christocentrically. Johnson, with an approach that is quite similar in many respects to Block's, helpfully reminds us the role of promise when we interpret texts in the OT. Poythress's approach is quite different in that he stresses that OT

texts can be appropriated in a multiplicity of ways, and he, in contrast to Block, identifies his approach as christocentric. Whether we use the term christotelic or christocentric isn't a matter of great importance since the issue is what we *mean* by such terms, and they are defined in various ways. In what follows I will explore the question of how we should preach Christ from the OT by interacting with the three contributions of Block, Johnson, and Poythress and also by considering how we should interpret Genesis 15:6. In the reflections that follow I will reflect on the role of the human and divine author, the matter of the storyline of scripture, typology, and how we should interpret Genesis 15:6.

### **HUMAN AUTHOR AND DIVINE AUTHOR**

As I noted above, Block and Johnson remind us of the importance of the human author and of interpreting texts in their historical context. Focusing on the historical context and the meaning of the human author saves us from arbitrary and ahistorical readings, from artificial and bizarre allegorizing, and from appeals to typology that lack warrant. On the other hand, Block and Johnson do not consider or interact with the notion of divine authorship of Scripture. In this respect Poythress's contribution is more complete and compelling.

The concern when one refers to a divine author is that such an appeal sunders the text from its historical context and from what the original author intended. Such a worry is obviated, however, if there is (as I would suggest) an organic connection between the meaning of the human and divine author, and that the meaning of the divine author is always derived from a canonical reading. We must remember in reading the scriptures that the Bible differs from every other book in that it is authored by both human beings and by God (cf. 2 Pet 1:21, "men spoke from God"). Historical criticism is deficient and sub-Christian when it limits itself to interpreting the scriptures like every other book, as if the book is solely the product of human beings. In doing so, however, historical criticism denies the claims scripture makes about itself (2 Tim 3:16-17).

The issue is whether there is warrant for positing both a human and divine author. First Peter 1:10-12 makes it plain that OT prophets did not understand fully their own prophecies, and such a state of affairs is

scarcely surprising since they spoke about a future fulfillment. It makes perfect sense that the things the prophets spoke about would be clearer retrospectively. In some respects, it is like a mystery novel where the reader looks back and understands more clearly the meaning and significance of events and words which occurred earlier in the story.

The great prophecy of the servant of the Lord in Isaiah 53 (see Isa 52:13-53:12) functions as a good example. In Isaiah the servant is clearly identified as Israel (Isa 41:8-9; 42:19; 44:1-2, 21; 45:4; 48:20), and yet at the same time the servant will bring Jacob and Israel back to the Lord (Isa 49:5). Indeed, he suffers and is struck down by the Lord for the sins and iniquities of Israel (Isa 53:5-6, 11-12). How can Israel restore Israel? How can Israel atone for its own sins? The servant in Isaiah is identified as Israel and yet is distinguished from Israel. It is doubtful that Isaiah fully comprehended what he wrote, and indeed when Jesus explained to his disciples on a number of occasions that he would suffer, they were perplexed and confounded (cf. Mark 8:31-38; 9:30-37; 10:32-45). The meaning of what Isaiah wrote is only clear retrospectively, after Jesus of Nazareth suffers, dies, and is risen from the dead. Then the early disciples and Christians understood the meaning of what Isaiah 53 prophesied, and there is no evidence that anyone understood the meaning of the prophecy before the great events in Jesus's ministry occurred. Does the fulfillment in Christ contradict what Isaiah originally wrote? Certainly not. Retrospectively we see the textual evidence for the suffering of the servant on behalf of his people, and thus it is clear that there is an organic relationship between the original prophecy and the fulfillment in Christ.

## **BIBLICAL AND COVENANTAL STORYLINE**

The Bible is a grand story from Genesis to Revelation, and thus any good reading of the scriptures considers the whole story in reading any particular part. Astute readers of any novel realize that the significance of particular parts of the narrative will only be grasped if they understand the story as a whole. For instance, in Leo Tolstoy's great novel *Anna Karenina*, the significance of Anna's adultery early in the story is only grasped when we read about her suicide near the end of the novel. Any good story must be read consecutively, and Johnson in particular rightly emphasizes the theme

of promise and fulfillment. The story of the scriptures must be read as an unfolding story, as a consecutive story, and those who fail to read it in such a way will certainly be led off course. Here Block and Johnson remind us that it is crucial to read the scriptures in their historical context.

Poythress agrees that we should read the scriptures according to the biblical timeline as well, saying that we should read them redemptive historically. Another way of saying this is that we should read the Bible covenantally, in that the story of the Bible unfolds through the covenants God makes with his people.<sup>1</sup> We think here of the covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Israel, David, and the New Covenant. In reading the scriptures according to the Bible's storyline we must always consider the epoch in which the story is told. The covenants represent key markers or progressions in the fulfillment of God's purposes for his people and for the universe he created. Another way of saying this is that we should read the Bible front to back, and in doing so we must always take into account where we are in the unfolding story. For instance, although there are hints from the beginning of the narrative, it becomes clear in the covenant with David that the promises given to Abraham will become a reality through a son of David, through a king.

Perhaps this is the place to interact briefly with what Block says about promises regarding a Messiah or a Christ. He rightly says that there are only a few places in the OT which speak of an anointed one, of a coming Christ. On the other hand, the Lord, in his covenant with David, pledges that the Davidic dynasty will never come to an end, that a descendant from David's line will rule forever (2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17; Psalms 89 and 132). We are reminded here that a word study approach is insufficient in detecting a theme in the OT, for we will fail to see the pervasiveness of the promise of a coming king in the OT if we limit ourselves to the word "Christ." Many texts forecast that a king will come who will fulfill the promises to David and will reign as king over Israel (e.g., Ps 2:4-12; 110:1; Isa 9:2-7; Jer 23:5-6; 30:9; 33:15-22, 26; Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Hos 3:5; Amos 9:11). We have often been warned in scholarship that those who rely on word studies alone may fail to see a concept or referent, and a careful reading of the OT demonstrates that the coming king from the lineage of David plays a significant role in the narrative.

I have been suggesting that we need to read according to the Bible's

storyline, from front to back and in terms of the unfolding story which develops covenantally. But it will not do, and Block and Johnson are not comprehensive enough here, only to read the story from front to back. We also need to read the story from back to front. Here the notion that the book has one divine author surfaces again. Yes, we must read the Bible covenantally, as an unfolding story, but we understand the story better when we read the whole story. When we read Psalm 110:1 we see that Yahweh says to David's Lord that as David's Lord he will sit at his right hand until his enemies are made his footstool. It is clear from the Psalm itself that someone who is superior to David is coming, but the promise is a bit fuzzy, just as my vision is fuzzy when I don't wear my glasses. Now that Jesus has come, now that he is the risen and reigning Messiah, we see clearly that he is the fulfillment of what we read about in Psalm 110:1. In other words, reading from back to front helps us understand Psalm 110:1 better than David did when he first wrote it, and as Christian preachers we must interpret every OT text both front to back and back to front. We carefully interpret the text in its historical context and in light of the entire storyline of the scriptures. We don't merely read the scriptures epochally in terms of redemptive-historical storyline, but we also read the scriptures canonically since there is a divine author.<sup>2</sup>

Poythress certainly agrees with what I am saying, and I think we are on the same page. Still, I worry that his emphasis on multiplicity might not have sufficient clarity and might prove confusing to students. I think it would have been more useful if Poythress explained more clearly how to preach Christ from the OT instead of stressing that there are many ways to do it. Students need to see the warrants and boundaries for interpretations offered, and it seems that Poythress's essay is most helpful for those who are already experienced and sophisticated preachers, i.e., for those who are already well-acquainted with the biblical storyline and have had experience proclaiming the whole counsel of God. He doesn't offer much counsel on how to preach Christ from the OT, and one is struck by the fecundity of his own mind, but structures, procedures, and warrants for doing such are lacking.

## Typology

Christ-centered preaching, christotelic preaching, must also be typological preaching. Taking account of both the human and divine author of scripture, of the biblical storyline as it develops covenantally, and of typology are different ways of making the same point. The scriptures must be read as part of a whole fabric in terms of its redemptive historical development. Space is lacking to defend and define typology in detail here. The notion of typology, as we saw with the term “Christ,” must not be limited to the word “typology.” NT authors see typology in *events*, such as the exodus, in *institutions*, such as the tabernacle and sacrificial system, and in *persons*, such as David and Melchizedek. Typology is defined here as correspondences or patterns in events, institutions, and persons in redemptive history. Such correspondences aren’t merely retrospective but are prospective in that they were intended by God from the beginning since the Lord foretells and ordains the end from the beginning (Isa 46:9-11). At the same time, there is in typology escalation so that the fulfillment is greater than the type.<sup>3</sup>

Scholars debate the distinction between typology and allegory, and they also debate which types are warranted. Such debates, and even some fuzziness at the edges, doesn’t indicate that typology is arbitrary. We have to ask whether the correspondence or type has a historical anchor and if it is textually warranted. A prime example of typology is the exodus from Egypt where the Lord delivered Israel from Egyptian slavery. Block, if I understand him correctly, seems to think that the exodus can’t function as a type since it is a physical rather than a spiritual deliverance. At one level, this is entirely correct since Israel was liberated as a nation at the Exodus from serving the Egyptians. On the other hand, if we disconnect Israel’s freedom from the notion of deliverance of sin, God’s judgments become arbitrary. God’s wrath represented in the plagues against the Egyptians were not examples of Yahweh showing his power in judgment for no reason. The Lord judged Egypt in the plagues and in the slaying of their firstborn sons because of their sin, as even Pharaoh acknowledges (Exod 9:27), and Pharaoh’s hardened heart and refusal to listen also signify his sin (Exod 7:3-4, 14; 8:32; 9:7, 34-35; cf. 9:17). Indeed, the Egyptians failure to know Yahweh also testifies to their sin (Exod 7:5; 9:14) and thus the

Lord's plagues represent his righteous judgment because of Egypt's sin (Exod 7:4).

At the same time, the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, their redemption, is secured because they put the blood on the door of their houses. The deliverance of the firstborn among Israel at the Passover signifies the deliverance of the people as a whole. Israel would have hardly thought it was a great deliverance if they left Egypt and all their firstborn sons were dead! Certainly the blood on the houses spared Israel from the Lord's "judgments" and from the terrible plague that he promised to send on those who didn't have blood on their houses (Exod 12:12-13). Israel had to smear blood on their doorposts, for otherwise the Lord would destroy their firstborn just as he judged the Egyptians. The exodus story reveals that Israel deserved judgment because of their own sin just like the Egyptians, and thus they needed blood on their doors to escape. The Lord's judgments on Egypt and his deliverance of Israel were not arbitrary and capricious. Both *deserved* judgment because of sin, but the Lord had mercy on Israel because of his covenant and because of the atoning blood on the doorposts.

Block objects that the words "sin" and "redemption" are found together only once, but whether liberation from Egypt is connected to sin can't be resolved merely by looking at individual words. We have to consider the story as a whole and interpret it as a narrative. It is instructive that Ezekiel when he reflects on Israel's exodus from Egypt sees it as an act of grace, as deliverance from their sin. Considering a larger section of the text is instructive.

"In that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful of all lands. I also said to them, 'Throw away, each of you, the abhorrent things that you prize, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.' But they rebelled against me and were unwilling to listen to me. None of them threw away the abhorrent things that they prized, and they did not abandon the idols of Egypt. So I considered pouring out my wrath on them, exhausting my anger against them within the land of Egypt. But I acted for the sake of my name, so that it would not be profaned in the eyes of the nations they were living among, in whose sight I had made myself known to Israel by bringing them out of Egypt. So I brought them out of the land of Egypt and led

them into the wilderness.” (Ezek 20:6–10 CSB)

It is clear from Ezekiel 20:6-10 that Yahweh delivered Israel from Egypt despite their idolatry and sin, confirming that the redemption from Egypt was an act of his grace, and not merely a physical deliverance.

Once we understand the exodus along the lines suggested above, we find warrant in Paul identifying Christ as our Passover (1 Cor 5:7), seeing in his death a greater deliverance than that accomplished in the exodus. We remember that a feature of typology is escalation so that redemption, the exodus accomplished by Christ is greater than the freedom Israel experienced in being delivered from Egypt. There is continuity and discontinuity between the two events—the unblemished lamb of the Passover (Exod 12:5) points to the “precious blood of Christ” as “an unblemished and spotless lamb” (1 Pet 1:19). The voluntary death of the sinless one, the Son of God, and the Messiah of Israel, is certainly greater than the death of a lamb which has no idea why its life was being taken. And the blood on the doorposts points to a death, a sacrifice, a deliverance that is far greater—the blood of Jesus which cleanses us from all our sin (cf. 1 John 1:7). Jesus himself drew the connection when he instituted the Lord’s Supper which commemorates his death since the Lord’s Supper is a Passover meal (Mark 14:22-25 par.).

We find further warrant for understanding the exodus as a reference to the great deliverance accomplished by Christ in the OT itself. Both Israel and Judah violated the covenant stipulations declared in the covenant made at Sinai, and as a result of their blatant and persistent sin both Israel and Judah go into exile, in 722 and 586 BC respectively. In other words, both Judah and Israel when they were exiled returned to the servitude the nation experienced in Egypt. Hosea, for instance, draws a parallel between the slavery in Egypt and exile to Assyria (Hos 11:1-11). All this is to say something that is obvious in reading the OT storyline: Israel and Judah were sent into exile *because of their sin*.

The Lord, however, did not abandon his covenant with his people, and the exile was not the last word. When we look at the prophets, but we will limit ourselves to Isaiah, the theme of the new exodus, a new deliverance, is pervasive. What we see, then, is that the prophets pick up the theme of the first exodus as a type and anticipate a second exodus, a new deliver-



ance for the nation. A second exodus from Babylon is clear in Isaiah 51:11, “The ransomed of the LORD shall return / and come to Zion with singing; / everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; / they shall obtain gladness and joy, / and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (ESV, see also 40:3–11; 42:16; 43:2, 5–7, 16–21, 48:20–21; 49:6–11). Israel was exiled, as Isaiah makes plain, because of its sin: “Who gave Jacob to the robber, and Israel to the plunderers? Was it not the LORD? Have we not sinned against him? They were not willing to walk in his ways, and they would not listen to his instruction. So he poured out his furious anger and the power of war on Jacob. It surrounded him with fire, but he did not know it; it burned him, but he didn’t take it to heart” (Isa 42:24–25 CSB). Israel’s exile was not a historical accident, nor can it be explained merely in terms of power politics: the sin of Israel was the reason for exile (cf. 46:8; 48:1–2, 4; 50:1–2; 52:3–5; 57:3–13; 58:1; 59:1–15; 64:6; 65:2–7; 66:3–4).

When Isaiah heralds a new exodus, return from exile, therefore, he makes it clear that the nation was exiled because of its sin, and that its freedom from exile will come when its sins are forgiven. Israel’s forgiveness of sins will be accomplished by the servant of the Lord (Isa 52:13–53:12), who will suffer and die and be raised again to atone for Israel’s sins. Return from exile, the second exodus, only comes because Israel is forgiven of their sins by the servant’s penal substitutionary work.<sup>4</sup> When the NT speaks of Christ as our ransom (Mark 10:45) and as the one who redeemed us (e.g., Rom 3:24; Eph 1:7; Col 1:13; 1 Pet 1:18–19), the theme of the exodus and the new exodus is picked up. Such an appropriation of the exodus, however, is not without warrant. We already see Isaiah and other prophets using the exodus theme as a type of the liberation of the nation, and NT writers (e.g., 1 Pet 2:21–25) proclaim that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies about the servant of the Lord. What was anticipated in Israel’s deliverance from Egypt and in the new exodus is fulfilled supremely in Jesus’s death and resurrection.

If we don’t preach Christ from Israel’s redemption from Egypt, what do we preach when we read about Israel’s exodus from Egypt? Do we preach about Israel’s political liberation a long time ago? But what does that matter to us today? The Lord doesn’t promise us today political liberation from our enemies, nor does he promise that we won’t suffer during this life. Indeed, we may suffer and even be put to death for the sake of the gospel. If

we don't preach Christ and him crucified from such texts, it seems that the passage remains a historical curiosity, unless one preaches from it liberation theology (which is a massive mistake) or prosperity during this present life (a popular heresy). Another way to put it is that the story remains largely irrelevant to us if it doesn't point to Christ.

Or let's think about the judges or saviors and deliverers in the book of Judges. Dan Block's commentary is one of the best in terms of the historical meaning of the text, and we are all grateful for his exegetical insight. He questions, though, whether we can apply what is said about the judges, who are better described as saviors and deliverers, to Christ. An understanding of typology, however, helps us to preach Christ today from the book of Judges. Certainly there is discontinuity between Jesus and the saviors and deliverers in the book of Judges, for as Block shows us in his commentary, though I think he overemphasizes this theme, the deliverers in the book of Judges are defiled by their sin, and Jesus is sinless. Furthermore, the saviors in Judges brought about a physical and temporary deliverance, and Jesus saves us forever from sin. The saviors in the book of Judges helped Israel stay in the land, its inheritance, and Jesus also gives us an inheritance, but one which is eternal in the new heavens and new earth. Even though the deliverers in the book of Judges preserved the nation physically, we must remember that these saviors were raised up because of Israel's sin. Israel suffered during the days of Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson because of their sin, and thus there is a typological connection between the sin of Israel and the sin of people today. The sin of Israel, if not forgiven, would deprive them of their earthly inheritance and our sin (apart from our Savior Jesus) will deprive us of our heavenly inheritance.<sup>5</sup>

We also have to think of the place of the book of Judges in the biblical storyline. Israel had just been granted rest from its enemies under Joshua, and it was in the land promised to Abraham. Perhaps the universal blessing (Gen 12:3!) promised to Abraham was around the corner. But we see in the book of Judges that even though Israel was in the land, their hearts were not transformed. Many of those in the land were not in the Lord! They needed a heart transformation; they needed the new covenant work of the Lord (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:26-27). What was happening during the days of the saviors and deliverers forecasted Israel's coming exile which we talked about in the last section. In fact, the book of Judges makes it

clear that what Israel needed was a king. As the book concludes the author zeroes in repeatedly on the fact that there was no king in Israel and that the people did whatever they thought was right (Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). And the story doesn't end there, because as the story unfolds in Samuel we see that Israel needed a king after the Lord's own heart, and that king was not Saul but David. And David himself, as was already mentioned, points forward in the Davidic covenant to a coming king, to a greater king (e.g., Isa 9:2-7) since David himself was flawed and sinful. Judges must not be read in isolation from the rest of the story, and the Davidic king is a type of Christ. Israel needed a greater savior than any of the saviors in the book of Judges, and finally it needed a king who is greater than David, one who can save it from its sins in a more profound way than any earthly judge, and that king is Jesus.

If the book of Judges doesn't point to Jesus, then how do we apply it today? Does God promise that saviors will arise to deliver us from our political enemies? Certainly not. Does he promise earthly blessing if we obey? In a sense yes, but we also suffer and are exiles during this present evil age as Peter tells us (1 Pet 1:1, 17; 2:11). I suggest that the reason many preachers don't preach from the OT is because they limit themselves to reading the text in its original historical context, and they rightly sense that the historical meaning has little to say to us today. I am not diminishing what God did in the past, but what does it ultimately matter if Israel won victories years ago during the days of the saviors and deliverers? What do such victories mean for us today? As I already said, they certainly don't promise us political victories or triumph over our enemies. Unless one teaches the false prosperity gospel! No, the story must be read in light of the whole storyline of the scriptures, and the saviors must be read typologically, as pointing to the king.

Block also raises objections about Joshua being a type of Christ in Matthew, suggesting that such typology doesn't work since the Lord was the Savior instead of Joshua. Block, of course, is right in saying that the focus is on Yahweh instead of Joshua in the book of Joshua. Joshua is reminded that he was simply a servant in contrast to the commander of Yahweh's army (Josh 5:13-15). Still, when we read the book of Joshua, Joshua was clearly the agent by which Israel triumphed over the Canaanites. The human agent isn't completely inconsequential, and the author of Hebrews sees a corre-

spondence between the name Joshua and Jesus (Heb 4:8), in that both of them provided rest for the people of God. We have an example of typological escalation since Joshua granted earthly rest, and Jesus grants his people heavenly rest. Since the NT itself sees a typological relationship between Joshua and Jesus, we should do the same. Once again, what does the story mean to us otherwise today? We aren't promised the land of Canaan as an inheritance, and the political and religious fortunes of Israel long ago don't have much relevance to our lives today. Some might say that we need to exercise the faith and obedience that Joshua had. But faith in what? And what is the object of our obedience? If it is faith in God's promises, certainly they all culminate in Christ (2 Cor 1:20) since we aren't promised earthly blessings. The same truths apply to obedience. We obey to receive eternal blessings, not merely temporal ones, and such eternal blessings are ours only through Christ. We come back to the conclusion we saw earlier. If one doesn't preach Christ from the OT stories, if one only tells the stories from the OT context, then Christian preachers aren't going to preach from them much. They will tend to ignore the OT and will stick mainly to the NT. Preachers need to be the models of preaching the OT in light of both the human and divine author, in light of the covenantal storyline, and typologically, for otherwise, as we have often seen, preachers will continue to ignore the OT or just preach messages where OT characters function as good examples. It isn't wrong to appeal to OT characters as good examples, but the OT stories are much richer and deeper than this, and the danger of the former approach is a kind of moralism in which the gospel of grace is neglected.

### **GENESIS 15:1-6**

There is space here only for the briefest of comments on Genesis 15:1-6. First, we need to read the story in terms of the biblical storyline, in terms of the Lord's covenants with his people. The covenant with Abraham was graciously given by the Lord to solve the problem introduced by the sin of Adam. Abraham was Promised Land, offspring, and universal blessing (Gen 12:1-3). The curses introduced through Adam would be reversed through the blessings promised to Abraham. Romans 4 and Galatians 3:6-9 pick-up on the story recorded in Genesis 15:1-6. In that sense Romans

and Galatians provide the perspective of the divine author on the story in Genesis 15, and the divine perspective is given through Paul as the human author. Abraham's obedience (cf. Gen 12:1-3; Heb 11:8) isn't the foundation of his relationship with God, for Abraham was an idolater (Josh 24:2), showing that God's grace is the basis, not Abraham's works, for his relationship with the Lord.

The promise of the offspring is center stage in Genesis 15:1-6, but part of the significance of the whole story is that Abraham doesn't have the ability to produce even a single child. In other words, the promise of offspring will be fulfilled by God alone and by grace alone. Every time Abraham looked at his sex-organ, he was reminded that his children came from God's grace, for in the covenant of circumcision (Genesis 17) he is promised that he will be the father of many nations. Abraham is frustrated in Genesis 15 that he hasn't had many children and complained to the Lord that his servant, Eliezer, would be his heir. The Lord took him outside on a starry night and promised him that his offspring would be as uncountable as the stars. Abraham could do nothing to bring the pass the promise, but he believed God could and would fulfill it, showing that he put all his trust in God's strength. In the same chapter (Genesis 15) the Lord alone passed through the cut up pieces of the animals, showing that the covenant will ultimately be fulfilled through God's grace and not by human strength. When we read the whole storyline of the scriptures, we recognize that the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, the true offspring of Abraham, the true Israel, is Jesus Christ (Gal 3:16). Even if Abraham didn't understand clearly how the promise would be fulfilled, he put his hope in the future deliverance the Lord pledged.

In Romans 4 and Galatians 3 Paul emphasizes that Abraham was saved by faith, not works, by believing not achieving, by resting not performing. The emphasis on God's grace in Genesis 15—the Lord passed through the cut up animals alone—indicates, contrary to Block, that we should not construe Abraham's faith *as his* righteousness. Abraham's faith was counted as righteousness, not because of his great faith, but because of the object of his faith—the Lord himself. So too, in Romans 4 the faith of believers that saves is like the faith of Abraham. It saves, not because faith *is our* righteousness, but because we trust in the atoning death of Jesus (Rom 3:21-26). Paul teaches us in Romans 4 that Abraham believed in a God who

could call into existence what did not exist and who could raise the dead (Rom 4:17). This faith in the God who can raise the dead finds its ultimate fulfillment in the death and resurrection of Jesus (Rom 4:25). When we preach the story of Abraham today, we must point people to Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, as the object of their trust. God doesn't promise us today that we will have children as he promised such to Abraham and Sarah. He doesn't promise us that we will inherit the land of Israel. He doesn't promise us that kings will come from our body (Gen 17:6, 16). Abraham isn't merely a good example of faith, though he is that of course. His faith, when interpreted in light of the covenantal story of the Bible, is forward looking and is finally fulfilled when we trust in Christ as the crucified and risen Lord. Those who don't preach faith in Christ from the story of Abraham are actually misinterpreting the story of Abraham because the story of Abraham must be proclaimed from front to back and from back to front. There is an organic relationship between the promises originally give to Abraham and to the fulfillment realized in Christ. If we don't preach the story of Abraham and other OT texts in light of how the story ends, in light of the how the story is fulfilled, in light of the biblical covenants, we aren't preaching the story rightly. In preaching Christ from the OT we interpret the OT in its historical context and in light of the fulfillment in Christ. We consider the role of the human author and the divine author. We read both epochally and canonically, both historically and typologically, and in doing so we find textual warrant for preaching Christ from all of scripture.

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1. See especially Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018). Cf. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Covenant and God's Purpose of the World* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017).
  2. See here Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).
  3. See especially Richard Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical TUPOS Structures* (Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 2; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1981).
  4. Israel, of course, returned from exile before the death of Jesus, but the initial return from exile points forward to the greater deliverance from exile in Christ.
  5. There is much more to be said here, for I am not claiming that Jesus saves us from our sin, and we go on sinning without any corresponding change in our lives after salvation.