



# JOURNAL of Ministry & Theology

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# Journal of Ministry & Theology

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## *From the Editor's Desk*

This issue of JMAT is dedicated to the memory of our dear friend, colleague, and NT professor, Dr. Bill Arp. Bill entered into his Savior's presence on July 2, 2017. Bill served faithfully and with distinction at Clarks Summit University for over 45 years. Since 1988 he taught Greek and NT courses at Baptist Bible Seminary (BBS). There has not been a week that has gone by since his passing that something has not triggered a remembrance of him. Everything from baseball season, to beach vacations, to not wearing socks in the summer and rarely a coat in winter, to alliterated sermons, all these things and more reminds us so fondly of Bill (1 Tim 1:12).

Instead of the introductory abstracts that summarize JMAT articles, I have asked each contributor to share a remembrance of Bill. I pray these memorials and articles provide a glimpse of the man who counted it a privilege and an honor to serve his Savior at BBS.

I had the privilege to minister alongside Bill for the past 11 school years. Never in that time did I ever hear him utter a complaint about life, church, or working at Baptist Bible Seminary. He was the humblest of men who counted it a joy and privilege to be put in this ministry by his Lord and Savior.

Bill had an open door policy on his office library. Any book needed we were free to come in and borrow at any time even without him being there and without asking. Bill rarely locked his office, so many of us took advantage of his kind offer since he held a number of quality commentary sets.

He counted those he ministered with as friends, mentioning it numerous times. Every Christmas he had the BBS team and their wives over to his house to meditate on the Christmas story, eat, fellowship, and play silly games such as "what can I bring to grandma's house?" The grand finale of the night was playing Christmas carols on kazoos! Christmas will never be the same.

Bill cared about each one of us. When I was diagnosed with Celiac Disease soon after I joined the faculty, he expressed his care and concern for me when I shared it at a faculty meeting. Two weeks later with a straight face, he gave me a coupon he found for gluten-free beer! He always expressed care for my unsaved dad and my dad's love for the NY Giants and Yankees, always asking me how my dad fared after a certain football or baseball loss.

Bill and I shared a love for the beach—especially North Carolina's Outer Banks. Almost any time off would have Bill asking me if I were going to the beach for vacation.

I will miss Bill. I mentioned to him that he was my job security because he was so technologically challenged and often needed computer help. He typed in one font, could do email and find the audio for Major League Baseball. Making files, passwords, and school-required matrices always brought him down to my office, which was always a joy since he was so appreciative and concerned about my time.

In life there are not many people who truly care about you on the job, and we at BBS have lost one of the few.

Mark McGinniss, Ph.D.  
Lead Editor

# Reflections on “Baptism Now Saves Us” in 1 Peter 3:21

Mike Stallard

**My remembrance of Dr. Bill Arp:** Dr. William (Bill) Arp was one of my closest friends at Baptist Bible Seminary where I taught for 22 years. I remember when I interviewed for the theology position in the spring of 1994, the first home where I had a meal was Bill’s. I learned immediately of his love for family, and his home became a place of peaceful repose whenever I had the occasion. Bill’s teaching specialty was Greek and New Testament. He was considered our “go-to guy” for many of the epistles. There was clarity as he used discourse analysis to highlight serious observation of the text for his students as he followed grammatical-historical interpretation. The last eight years of my time at the seminary, I served as Dean and had the opportunity to call upon Bill to help out in various academic capacities in addition to his teaching of students. Bill was known for his love for working through difficult passages in the Bible. In light of this, I asked him from time to time to lead the faculty in a discussion of selected New Testament “problem” verses. On one occasion I asked him to lead the faculty through a discussion of the knotty problems in 1 Peter 3:18-22. We never finished our discussion – we ended up mired in the discussion of the spirits in prison! But Bill’s leadership on the issues at hand was always helpful. I have chosen in this article to explore briefly one phrase in 1 Peter 3:21 -- “baptism now saves us.” By this discussion I hope to honor my good friend.

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**W**hile the gospel mentioned in 1 Peter 3:18 is itself controversial, there are several other details in verses 18-21 that have made the interpretation of these verses among the most difficult in the New Testament.<sup>2</sup> First,

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in verse 18 the text says that Jesus was “made alive in the spirit.” Is this referring to the agency of the Holy Spirit, or is it a reference to Jesus’ being made alive in his human spirit. A more thorny issue is the identification of the “spirits now in prison” (v. 19) to whom Jesus went to make proclamation. What is the content of his proclamation? Is it the gospel or is it a statement of victory? Where is the location of the prison? Is it Hades or some other place? When did this take place? Between the time of his death and resurrection, after his resurrection, or some other time? Moreover, what is the connection between the spirits’ disobedience and the time of Noah (v. 20)? Significantly, one has to decide if these spirits are human or angelic. So few verses and so much exhausting study!

It is in this context that Peter draws a somewhat complex comparison between the eight souls on Noah’s ark being delivered through the waters of the flood and the relationship of believers being delivered in a way that somehow involves water baptism during the Christian era. I’ve chosen five views but many more could be given. Complicating matters is the fact that some of the views are not mutually exclusive. This is not an attempt to present a detailed exegetical presentation of the passage. The intent is to summarize and briefly assess some of the main views of the phrase “baptize now saves us.”

### **View # 1: Baptismal Regeneration and Initial Justification**

One view common throughout the history of the church is that Peter’s statement that baptism saves is a rather straightforward assertion that baptism brings regeneration and initial justification. This is the Roman Catholic position. The Vatican online catechism states: “Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (vitae

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, “Baptism in the Epistles: An Initiation Rite for Believers,” in *Believer’s Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2006), 69.

spiritualis ianua), and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: ‘Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word.’”<sup>3</sup> The statement could not be clearer. The Spirit comes into the believer’s life through water baptism. Rebirth or regeneration as well as remission of sins comes through the act of water baptism.

Water baptism also brings initial justification according to Roman Catholic teaching. In one statement in the Vatican catechism, justification is said to come by faith and baptism.<sup>4</sup> The Catholic tradition further teaches that justification is an ongoing process to which baptism is just the door by which one enters: “Scripture reveals that it is precisely through this justification and salvation the new Christian experiences in baptism that he enters into a process of justification and salvation requiring his free cooperation with God’s grace.”<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, “there are many biblical texts revealing both justification and salvation to have a future and contingent sense as well as these we have mentioned that show a past sense.”<sup>6</sup> In 1547, the Council of Trent (as part of the Counter-Reformation) rejected the Reformers’ view of justification by faith alone. In the place of this doctrine was asserted that baptism brings initial justification followed by an ongoing increase of justification through obedient sanctification.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> “Catechism of the Catholic Church,” *The Holy See*; 1213, accessed June 3, 2018, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_\\_\\_P3G.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P3G.HTM).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1987.

<sup>5</sup> Tim Staples, “Justification: Process or One-Time Deal?” *Catholic Answers*, September 19, 2014, accessed June 6, 2018, <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/justification-process-or-one-time-deal>.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Council of Trent, Sixth Session: Decree on Justification, Chapter 10. For a more detailed discussion, see Mike Stallard, “Roman Catholicism and the New Perspective on Paul,” *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 14 (Fall 2010): 5-24.

Such views as baptismal regeneration and initial justification based upon water baptism are not the only explanations and not even the best elucidations of verses like 1 Peter 3:21 as the discussion below will show. The belief that Peter's statement "baptism now saves you" is a straightforward assertion of such notions is simplistic. The language of typology or symbolism based upon the use of ἀντίτυπον cannot be ignored or so easily dismissed in the verse. What seems to be taking place in such interpretations is that a few words taken out of context are used to express truths that are coming into the passage from a specific theological system. There is no reason to interpret Peter here to contradict Paul's wonderfully clear assertions that a man is justified by faith alone and quite apart from water baptism (e.g., Rom 4:1-5; 1 Cor 1:17; 15:1-4). Consequently, that aspect of salvation-justification as a forensic matter, cannot be in view in Peter's declaration that baptism now saves.

## **View # 2: Baptism as the Instrumental Agency of Salvation**

Another view is that Peter's words "baptism now saves" point to the fact that the experience of water baptism functions as the instrumental agency of salvation. Usually, this is voiced so that baptism is not the efficient cause of salvation.<sup>8</sup> In this way, the teaching of baptismal regeneration appears, at least on the surface, to be avoided. This distinction between the instrumental and efficient cause of salvation has long been discussed and advocated within the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement. It has also been voiced in Roman Catholic presentations where the sacrament of baptism constitutes one instrumental means by which the participant dips into the merits

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<sup>8</sup> A. B. Caneday, "Baptism in the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement" in *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2006), 315.

of Christ (the presumed efficient means).<sup>9</sup> Such a view sees baptism, faith, confession, and witnessing (among other things) as “means that operate in various ways congruent with the rational and moral nature of salvation.”<sup>10</sup>

Interestingly, even though some interpreters attempt to divorce the view of baptism as instrumental agency from baptismal regeneration, others appear to conflate the two positions as part of the whole. When a Baptist reviews such teaching, he usually sees confusion in the presentation. For example, in some Lutheran overviews of the issue, water baptism is labeled in terms of baptismal regeneration. Water baptism “gives salvation ... new life in Christ.”<sup>11</sup> Yet, the same author declares: “Baptism saves. It does not do so as mere water or as the cause of salvation, which lies in Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection. Baptism saves as one form of the *instrument* God has used from the creation of the universe on, namely, his Word” (italics added).<sup>12</sup> Here the commentator separates water baptism from the efficient cause of salvation and includes the word of God in the operation of grace at the moment of the baptismal act. The Baptist Nettles responds to the overall view (including the infant baptism inherent in the Lutheran understanding): “Such language has the enchantment of intriguing theological speculation, but compared to the biblical material it amounts to no more than an assertion. Passages that deal with divine sovereignty in salvation tie the intended salvation to the word, read or heard, and purposely embraced.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, the instrument of salvation is always faith exercised upon the hearing of the word

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<sup>9</sup> John Hardon, *The Catholic Catechism* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 176.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas J. Nettles, “Baptist View: Baptism as a Symbol of Christ’s Saving Work” in *Understanding Four Views on Baptism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 36-37. Nettles does not hold the view stated here but explains it succinctly.

<sup>11</sup> Roger Kolb, “Lutheran View: God’s Baptismal Act as Regenerative” in *Understanding Four Views on Baptism*, 91.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas J. Nettles, “A Baptist Response” in *Understanding Four Views on Baptism*, 111.

of God proclaimed. A presentation of baptismal agency appears to conflict at some level with *sola fide*.

One criticism of the conclusion that *sola fide* is in jeopardy if we accept an instrumental view of baptism is that the pendulum swings too far the other way: “Out of zeal to enforce Christian baptism, some have mistakenly exalted repentance and baptism to the place of effectual cause. This error of ‘baptismal regeneration,’ vesting baptism with effectual cleansing power, invariably diminishes grace. Yet others, excessively fervent to preserve *sola fide*, have committed the opposed error of ‘creedal (or popularly ‘decisional’) regeneration,’ assigning to faith the effectual saving power that belongs only to God’s grace.”<sup>14</sup> Although such advice must be considered, there is still the problem that there is always the temptation of baptismal regeneration lurking in the background when one holds to instrumental agency for the ordinance. Furthermore, the Bible makes it clear that faith has a special relationship as *the channel* by which the salvation of God’s grace is applied to the sinner’s life. The Apostle Paul without ambiguity affirms that faith is the instrumental cause of salvation for good reason: “Therefore, it [justification] is of faith that it might be according to grace” (Rom 4:16). Moreover, in Romans 11:6 grace is divorced entirely from good works. In other words, God has chosen the channel of faith (the simple trusting of what God has done) and not good deeds or actions that men do, so that salvation is totally by grace. In this way, salvation is wholly of the Lord. Participating in water baptism is never treated in this way in Scripture. Rather it is an action or deed that a believer exercises that memorializes what God has done but does not channel God’s saving grace in any fashion.

Yet there are other evangelicals who voice the instrumental view of baptism without invoking anything near the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. For example, Buswell uses the language of instrumental cause: “When one does something for something else, the first item is not necessarily the cause of the

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<sup>14</sup> Caneday, “Baptism in the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement,” 312.

second.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, baptism is not the “efficient cause of the remission of sins.”<sup>16</sup> Presumably, water baptism could be the instrumental cause in the way that Buswell states the case. Another example is found in Caneday who states, concerning 1 Peter 3:21, that “in this one verse Peter speaks of both the instrumental and efficient causes of salvation.”<sup>17</sup> Sometimes, this particular approach is stated when the interpreter also holds the fifth view below thereby showing that the views are not always mutually exclusive but sometimes constitute emphases within the commentaries.

### **View # 3: Baptism as Salvation from a Bad Conscience**

Under this heading, two interpretive and related aspects are brought together. When the text states, “baptism now saves you,” a parenthetical explanation gives both a negative and a positive affirmation. On the negative side, baptism is not “the removal of dirt from the body.” One can debate here whether this is an image of literal cleansing of the body or moral cleansing in light of the fact that *σάρξ* is the Greek word translated either *body* or *flesh* in the various translations. The use of this word at times in Pauline thought to refer to a person’s propensity to sin sharpens the question. If moral cleansing is in view, which is likely, then the idea that baptism produces either justification, regeneration, or remission of sins cannot be maintained at all from this passage. If the literal cleansing of the physical body is meant to be excluded from baptism, then the positive side of the given explanation becomes more important.<sup>18</sup> The text says that baptism is the

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<sup>15</sup> J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 238. Buswell discusses both 1 Peter 3:21 and Acts 2:38 together in this regard. This statement is given in his discussion specifically about Acts 2:38 but applies to our discussion here due to his coupling of the two passages.

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

<sup>17</sup> Caneday, “Baptism in the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement,” 315.

<sup>18</sup> Schreiner is probably correct to argue that it is hard to rule out the moral aspect since “It would be strange indeed if baptism did not represent

“pledge of a good conscience toward God.” Such wording leads some interpreters to conclude that baptism “does not save from sin, but from a bad conscience.”<sup>19</sup> What gives the believer a good conscience is that baptism “is the symbol of what has already occurred in the heart and life of one who has trusted Christ as Savior.”<sup>20</sup> Presumably, the true believer can have a clear conscience since he now stands in an acceptable relationship to God through Jesus.

#### **View # 4: Baptism as Physical Deliverance from Corrective Chastening**

Bauder presents a specific way of looking at baptism as a pledge of a good conscience. He comments,

Since baptism is commanded by Jesus Christ as part of the Great Commission, refusing baptism would constitute a gross contradiction for any professing believer. To refuse baptism would be a clear step of disobedience at the very beginning of the Christian life. It would consequently open a believer to the kinds of chastening that accompany severe disobedience (Heb. 12:5-8; 1 Cor. 11:29-32). By being baptized in accordance with Christ’s command, the believer commences the Christian life with a step of obedience which, if maintained, will avoid the chastening that comes from waywardness.<sup>21</sup>

In light of this truth, baptism according to 1 Peter 3:21 gives “physical deliverance from corrective chastening.”<sup>22</sup> According to this view, when the verse states, “baptism now saves you,” it

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cleansing from moral impurity” (Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC, gen. ed., E. Ray Clendenen [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003], 195).

<sup>19</sup> Roger M. Raymer, “1 Peter” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 2:852.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Kevin Bauder, *Baptist Distinctives and New Testament Church Order* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 2012), 236-37.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 237.

is not talking about spiritual regeneration or baptism giving forgiveness of sins.

This interpretation has much in its favor. The entire text makes sense step by step. Particularly, there is a more appropriate one to one correspondence between the water of Noah’s flood in verse 20 as physical deliverance from God’s judging hand and water baptism in verse 21 leading to a similar physical deliverance from God’s judging chastisement upon believers.<sup>23</sup> However, there are some issues to be resolved under this scheme. First, while in both Noah’s time and the present time, believers are the ones delivered, there is no consistency in the analogy for those who are judged. In Genesis 6-8, unbelievers are judged severely by the deluge. In this view, Peter is speaking of Christian believers being judged if they fail to be baptized. This may not be what Peter had in mind. Second, there is some tension with baptism as the first step for a believer and not an ongoing practice. At the point of conversion, a believer can avoid chastisement, but only for a time. The rest of his life must also live up to correct standards to avoid chastisement from the Lord. Most Christian believers struggle with later life decisions more than they struggle with water baptism. While not wanting to denigrate the significance of the first act of obedience for every true believer, it is not clear that Peter was trying to communicate the view expressed here. Finally, the statement “baptism now saves you” is followed by the parenthetical statement about a clear conscience but concludes with “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” While the death and resurrection is, as Bauder says, the “ground of all blessing” for Christians,<sup>24</sup> one wonders if the gospel context is pushing more in the direction of baptism symbolizing something in relation to eternal life. This is especially true in light of the eternal salvation implied at the beginning of the passage in 3:18-19.

In spite of such questions, this view should be carefully considered. Too many times terms like *water* are automatically assumed to refer to baptism, and words like *saved* are

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

wrongfully thought to always reference deliverance for eternal life. Interpretation should be open to local context before theology from elsewhere creeps in.

### **View # 5: The Sign of Baptism is a Picture of God's Saving Grace**

In the history of the church, there has been a long and vigorous discussion of the difference between the sign and the actions signified by the sign. By sign is meant ceremony, ordinance, or sacrament, depending upon the tradition involved. Pertinent to the discussion here, baptism is the sign and what is signified is salvation. In one Catholic description, the relationship between the two comes the closest together: "It might be asked whether the sacrament is symbol or a reality. ... It is both. To begin with, it is a sign. ... The sacraments are signs which indicate symbolically Jesus' presence.... But that is not all. What they indicate, they also give. They actually accomplish what they signify."<sup>25</sup> One can see the conclusion of baptismal regeneration in these words.

On the other hand, in baptistic and many other evangelical presentations of the sign of baptism and the salvation it signifies, there is a wedge dividing the two. Baptism is a picture of salvation. It does not accomplish salvation. It points to salvation. Thus, it is a sign that saves only metaphorically or symbolically. This is the meaning of Peter. In the verse, salvation is accomplished by means of the resurrection of Christ. Assumed here is the death of Christ so that the entire gospel is in view in light of 1 Peter 3:18 where the paragraph begins with the death and resurrection of Christ.<sup>26</sup>

The support of several evangelical writers can be marshaled in favor of the view that baptism as the sign pictures the reality.

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<sup>25</sup> *A New Catechism: Catholic Faith for Adults* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 255.

<sup>26</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 196-97. See also, G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 261-62.

Only a handful of samples will be cited here.<sup>27</sup> Caneday summarizes, “Peter puts the *figure*, baptism (understood as cleansing) in the place of *the thing figured*, the ‘good conscience’ that makes a pledge unto God. That is to say, Peter employs the figure for the thing figured when he says, ‘baptism now saves you.’”<sup>28</sup> Lewis and Demarest give the general thought this way: “The picture of the flood waters bringing deliverance to Noah’s family (1 Peter 3:19-21) reminded Peter of the spiritual deliverance wrought by Christ’s death (cf. v. 18) and symbolized by Christian baptism. Peter made clear, however, that the efficacy of baptism resides not in the washing of water but in the individual’s faith in the resurrected Christ (v. 21).”<sup>29</sup> Grudem comments, “We could paraphrase Peter’s statement by saying, ‘Baptism now saves you’—not the *outward* physical ceremony of baptism but the *inward* spiritual reality which baptism represents.”<sup>30</sup> Schreiner highlights the significance of the moment of baptism in this regard when he declares, “Believers at baptism ask God—on the basis of the death and resurrection of Christ—to cleanse their consciences and forgive their sins.”<sup>31</sup> In all of these cases, baptismal regeneration is rejected. Baptism never saves as the efficacious means of bringing new life, forgiveness of sins, justification, and other blessings of God at conversion. Baptism is the sign or symbol that points toward or pictures the reality of salvation through faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus

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<sup>27</sup> The view of Lewis Sperry Chafer is worth noting but outside the categories of this article. Chafer appears to take the baptism of 1 Peter 3:21 as Spirit baptism and not water or ritual baptism. See Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), 6:150. Although he is correct to understand that the interpreter should not rush to assume that the word *baptism* always refers to water baptism, it is not at all clear that Peter has Spirit baptism in mind on this occasion.

<sup>28</sup> Caneday, “Baptism in the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement,” 315.

<sup>29</sup> Bruce A. Demarest and Gordon R. Lewis, *Integrated Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 3:272-73.

<sup>30</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 974.

<sup>31</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 196-97.

Christ. This view seems to fit the context of the difficult passage of 1 Peter 3:18-21 better than the other views. It also assists in harmonizing the NT teaching concerning the relationships of baptism, faith, and salvation. In the end, *sola fide* is preserved in a reasonable and biblical way.

### Conclusion

This brief study was not intended to be an exhaustive exegetical work of 1 Peter 3:21 and its context. Hopefully, enough has been said to pique interest for further study and to outline some major views that exist on the meaning of “baptism now saves us.” It was found that some of the views overlap. They are not always mutually exclusive. This might be expected in such a difficult passage that has many interpretive tentacles.

Perhaps one of the obstacles that modern evangelical interpreters face in understanding such passages is that today’s modern church culture differs sometimes drastically from NT times. In the Apostolic Age, water baptism was *the profession of faith*. There was not a tremendous time gap between the exercise of faith in Christ as Savior and participation in ritual baptism. Today, there are sometimes classes that churches make new believers attend before they are baptized. Doctrinal abuses in the past (namely, baptismal regeneration, among others) have perhaps intensified the problem. Schreiner eloquently describes the dilemma:

For some believers today the connection of baptism to conversion seems odd, for they associate conversion with belief, making a profession of faith, or even going forward at an evangelistic event. Baptism is separated from conversion because many were baptized long before or after their conversion. But in the NT era it was unheard of to separate baptism from faith in Christ for such a long period. Baptism occurred either immediately after or very soon after people believed. The short interval between faith and baptism is evident from numerous examples in the book of Acts (Acts 2:41; 8:12-13; 8:38; 9:18; 10:48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5). It follows, then, that when Paul connects death to sin with baptism,

death to sin takes place at conversion, for baptism as an initiatory event occurs at the threshold of one’s new life. Paul appeals to baptism because it dramatically represents the washing away of one’s sins and the new life to which believers are called.<sup>32</sup>

I believe my good friend, Bill Arp, in whose memory this article is written, would agree with Schreiner’s summary of the problem. Perhaps it is noteworthy to remind ourselves that Peter said that some of Paul’s scriptural writings were hard to understand (2 Pet 3:16). The challenge is that apparently, some of Peter’s writings are not so easy to understand either. I am sure my friend Bill relished the challenge as he opened his Greek New Testament with a smile.

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<sup>32</sup> Schreiner, “Baptism in the Epistles,” 92-93.

## Jesus Stills the Storm (Mark 4:35-41)

Wayne Slusser

**My remembrance of Dr. Bill Arp:** It was an honor and a privilege to be a doctoral student of Dr. Arp. His passion and care for the text, along with expressions of uncanny humor, were exhibited to his students both inside and outside the classroom. As a doctoral student who was taking courses at BBS and away from my family, I found myself on numerous occasions invited either to his house for dinner or to the Waverly deli for lunch. It is at these moments I realized that he didn't *just* teach his students God's word; he also lived it in front of us (Titus 2:1).

Although I cannot possibly alliterate quite as well as he could, I will nonetheless express my gratitude through three powerful take-aways. First, I learned to have a greater appreciation for the text itself. It is literally the creative breath of God (2 Tim 3:16). Second, I learned to expound with an exegetical passion, always looking to discover the author's intended meaning within its given context. His simple, yet profound statement comes to mind, "What does the text say?" Third, I learned that the goal of the interpretation, or meaning of any text, was its significance to me and others. The study of the text should ultimately be for the church and her growth. He would help his students balance their academic pursuits with a reminder, "Keep your people in mind."

It is with great respect and admiration for Dr. Arp that I pen this article. Two courses come to mind, NT-8 (Seminar in Gospel Studies) and NT-1 (Seminar in NT Hermeneutics and Exegetical Method), courses that generated a love for discourse analysis and the Gospel of Mark. These subjects eventually were woven together to serve as my dissertation. The article below is an example of discourse analysis applied to a miracle episode within the Gospel of Mark.

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The Gospel of Mark seems to be the “go-to Gospel” when one discusses a passage within the synoptic Gospels.<sup>2</sup> Although this is often the case, the decision made to choose Mark 4:35-41 for this article is due to its theological significance within the narrative of Mark, not due to Mark’s position as source.<sup>3</sup> For no other reason, this miracle episode presents an example of Jesus’ authority, a theme Mark intends to communicate by answering the question, “Who is he?” Hooker claims that the central issue of Mark concerns itself with the identity of Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

This article suggests that episodes within the story or narrative of a Gospel can make an impact on the intention of the story as a whole.<sup>5</sup> To discover this impact one must first

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<sup>2</sup> Those that typically assume the use of Mark’s Gospel in this way are convinced that Mark is the gospel that lies at the basis of both Matthew and Luke. This is known as Markan priority. Carson and Moo present five important arguments (brevity of Mark, verbal agreement, order of events, Mark’s awkward style and vocabulary, see 96-98) that “while not all of equal weight, these arguments taken together make a strong case for thinking that Matthew and Luke have independently used Mark’s gospel in writing their own” (D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, eds., *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005], 98).

<sup>3</sup> McKnight states, “Source criticism attempts to identify the written tradition behind the Gospels in order to determine the relationship of the Synoptics” (Scot McKnight, “Source Criticism,” in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001], 76). The fact that scholars look for potential clues to determine priority and sources, illustrates the reason for their initial start with Mark’s gospel. The author of this article, however, is not advocating this kind of criticism nor does he hold to Markan priority.

<sup>4</sup> Morna D. Hooker, “Who Can This Be: The Christology of Mark’s Gospel,” in *Contours of Christology in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 81.

<sup>5</sup> Narratives are stories and often difficult to interpret. There is a tendency to interpret episodes individually rather than understanding them as they relate to entire books. For a brief treatment of some of the problems related to interpreting narratives see Walt Russell, *Playing With Fire: How the Bible Ignites Change in Your Soul* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress,

understand the location of the episode within the larger context. In other words, how does Mark 4:35-41 fit within 4:35-5:43?<sup>6</sup> Second, the exegete must examine the episode in its totality as well as its parts. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to examine Mark 4:35-41 both in its context as well as in its parts using the discipline known as discourse analysis. This article claims that discourse analysis assists the reader to discover Mark's intent both within the passage as well as within the narrative as a whole.

This article consists of three parts. Part one is the introduction that includes two parts. First, discourse analysis is defined and/or described. Second, the context of Mark (i.e., genre, theme/purpose, and context of 4:35-41 within the story) is summarized. Part two of this article analyzes Mark 4:35-41 at the discourse level including a translation, a verb and conjunction analysis, and a diagram discussing the grammatical and syntactical role of the various words and phrases of the passage. A concluding note concerning the words and phrases and their contribution to the meaning and significance of this episode is also included. Part three provides some concluding implications regarding discourse analysis and its contribution to the exegetical process.

### ***Discourse Analysis: A Definition and Description***

Some exegetes tend to analyze passages at the level of the sentence; others in an incomplete manner, analyze at the word

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2000), 195-209; and Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 151-52.

<sup>6</sup> This author follows other scholars who assume 4:35-5:43 as a unit. See William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 29-30, 173; James A. Brooks, *Mark*, NAC, vol. 23 (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 86; David E. Garland, *Mark*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 189-91; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 219-20.

level.<sup>7</sup> However, Carson suggests that responsible exegesis is that which focuses on “linguistic analysis, both lexis (analysis of the vocabulary) and syntax (analysis of the way words are related to each other) . . . . It will also analyze the text at the level of the clause, the level of the sentence, the level of the discourse, and the level of the genre”<sup>8</sup> Not only is Carson’s point well stated, it is also important that the exegete understand that communication rarely occurs at the word level or simply in isolated sentences. Rather, communication occurs in larger units called discourses.<sup>9</sup> Although discourse can refer

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<sup>7</sup> Richard A. Young states that this is unfortunate: “This calls our attention to an inherent weakness of traditional sentence grammars for exegetical purposes. Because they focus only on isolated sentences, they cannot possibly be considered definitive to analyze meaning” (*Intermediate New Testament Greek: A Linguistic and Exegetical Approach* [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994], 247).

Daniel B. Wallace is a proponent of sentence-level exegesis. He does not include a discussion regarding discourse analysis in his grammar. See his grammar for reasons as to why there is no discourse analysis discussion: *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), xv.

<sup>8</sup> D. A. Carson, “Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. Brian S. Rosner, T. Desmond Alexander, and Carson Goldsworthy, 89-103 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 91. See also *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger, Benjamin L. Merkle, and Robert L. Plummer (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016), 458-61; and Richard J. Erickson, *A Beginner’s Guide to New Testament Exegesis: Taking the Fear out of the Critical Method* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 63-93.

<sup>9</sup> William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard provide understanding as to how communication is developed. They state, “In one sense language consists of combining various elements, as building blocks, to construct meaningful communication. In simple terms, combining morphemes (minimal elements of meaning, like the plural –s in English) produces words; putting words together produces phrases, clauses, and sentences; and combining sentences results in texts, passages, or discourses” (*Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* [Nashville: Word, 1993], 201).

to the word, sentence, and paragraph levels, typically discourse consists of more than one sentence and more frequently refers to the paragraph or pericope level.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, “discourse analysis shifts the focus of biblical exegesis from individual words, and even passages, and places it on whole discourses.”<sup>11</sup>

This shift in emphasis from words to discourses provides the exegete with a better understanding of the text as a whole. The discipline of discourse analysis examines such a shift. Discourse analysis is an “attempt to see how a text coheres, how it fits together as a unified whole, and how the relationship between its sentences constitutes the ‘text.’”<sup>12</sup> Discourse

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<sup>10</sup> See Stanley E. Porter and his discourse pyramid. The pyramid demonstrates the various levels of discourse as well as a representation of the discourse as a whole (*Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic P, 1999], 298-99).

<sup>11</sup> George H. Guthrie also states, “This does not mean that the individual words, sentences, and paragraphs are any less important than in traditional approaches to exegesis. Rather, discourse analysis moves the ‘text’ or ‘discourse’ from a place of ambiguity, and often obscurity, to a place of rigorous consideration and analysis” (“Discourse Analysis,” in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001], 256).

David Alan Black confirms Guthrie’s point. He writes, “Just as we are seldom interested in isolated morphemes, so we are rarely concerned with words as separate entities. A spoken or written word in isolation may have many different possible meanings, but a discourse, which is the environment in which words exist, imposes limitations on the choice of possible meanings and tends to shape and define the meaning of each word” (*Linguistics For Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995], 138).

<sup>12</sup> David Alan Black, “Introduction,” in *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis*, ed. David Alan Black with Katharine Barnwell and Stephen Levinsohn (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 12.

Jeffrey T. Reed defines discourse analysis as the “sub-discipline of modern linguistics that seeks to understand the relationships between language, discourse, and situational context in human communication”

analysis is an expression of the text. It is an understanding “of the organization of material as related to a given context.”<sup>13</sup> The emphasis of the relationship between words and phrases and paragraphs brings about an analysis of discourses. But how is one to implement discourse analysis?

Discourse analysis is not just a “bottom-up” or “top-down” approach. It incorporates both. It moves from the micro-level (word) to the macro-level (paragraph) and back again. This helps to understand the intent of the discourse and therefore also enhances the understanding of the unit and its parts. On the one hand, the exegete must not forfeit the most basic level of exegesis (i.e., translation, word studies, analysis of sentence-level syntax, etc.). This is important. But on the other hand, the exegete must also consider the literary context of the whole and how the most basic parts impact it as well as how the whole impacts the parts. This is discourse analysis.

In sum, discourse analysis provides the exegete with the answer to the question, “how has the author organized his statements into a coherent whole to convey his intended meaning to his target audience?”<sup>14</sup> Discourse analysis does not replace exegesis but includes and complements it. Implementing discourse analysis provides the exegete with the appropriate context for an investigation of both the parts within a given context and the whole context. This article illustrates

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(“Discourse Analysis,” in *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter [Leiden: Brill, 2002], 189).

<sup>13</sup> Guthrie, “Discourse Analysis,” 255. Stanley E. Porter states, “the distinctiveness of discourse analysis and the concern of discourse analysts is to be able to provide as comprehensive a description as possible of the various components of a given discourse, including its meaning and structure, and the means by which these are created and conveyed” (“Discourse Analysis and New Testament Studies: An Introductory Survey,” in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson, JSNTS 113 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic P, 1995], 19).

<sup>14</sup> Rodney J. Decker, *Temporal Deixis of the Greek Verb in the Gospel of Mark with Reference to Verbal Aspect* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 53.

discourse analysis through an examination of Mark 4:35-41. Before attending to this examination, a few contextual matters must be considered.

### *Context of Mark: Its Genre*

Today's reader has the difficult task of interpreting the biblical author's communication that originated in another language, time period, and culture; that is addressed to different recipients and unites two unique authors, the divine and human. Given these characteristics of the text, part of the reader's responsibility is to know how the author communicated to his original recipients. What basic framework was used? The author's style of writing typically represents the culture and history of his time period. In other words, the interpreter must know the genre that was used to communicate the text.

Genre is the basic framework in which communication occurs. Written communication, or literature, is not packaged in neutral containers but reflects the social and cultural conventions of the time in which the text is written. Literary genre therefore affects how writing is to be interpreted.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The interpreter is to keep in mind, however, that genre is simply a guide or framework for interpretation; never is it to impose a rigid set of requirements to one's exegetical study. For example, Paul's letters are often interpreted by scholars through the application of categories from classic rhetoric (see Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990]; James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996]; and F. F. Forrester Church, "Rhetorical Structure and Design in Paul's Letter to Philemon," *HTR* 71 [Jan-April 1978]: 17-33). The suppositions that underlie this interpretation are twofold; that is, the ancients themselves would have been familiar with and recognized these categories of rhetoric and Paul would have intended to use them. Porter's contention is "Thus, although categories of ancient rhetoric may have been 'in the air' of the Greco-Roman world, their use in the writing or analysis of letters cannot be substantiated. . . . The above conclusion does not preclude exegeting the Pauline letters in terms of the categories of ancient rhetoric, however, as long as it is kept in mind that these categories, especially those regarding the arrangement of the parts of the speech, probably did not consciously influence the writing of the letters

Literary genre of all kinds is interpreted differently (e.g., epistles versus Gospels), for each possesses genuinely unique features.

Sub-genre, on the other hand, is a sub-category of the larger genre framework in which the text is to be understood. In other words, a sub-genre facilitates a more distinct category that possesses similarities to the genre category yet does not possess all the defining characteristics of the larger category. Sub-genre is its own unique category. Therefore, the interpreter of literature must identify the literary genre and in the case of the Gospel accounts, the literary sub-genre, and analyze how the elements of both provide an understanding of the whole.<sup>16</sup>

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and almost assuredly did not figure significantly in their earliest interpretation (Stanley E. Porter, "Exegesis of the Pauline Letters, Including the Deutero-Pauline Letters," in *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter [Leiden: Brill, 2002], 542-43). Although this is an example of Pauline literature, it serves to demonstrate simply the value of genre in the interpretive process without imposing outside guidelines to determine meaning; rather genre provides help to discover meaning.

<sup>16</sup> Grant R. Osborne sees the significance of genre identification for interpretation because "all writers couch their messages in a certain genre in order to give the reader sufficient rules by which to decode that message. These hints guide the reader (or hearer) and provide clues for interpretation" (*The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, rev and exp. ed. [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006], 26). David E. Aune emphasizes that "the original significance that a literary text had for both author and reader is tied to the genre of that text, so that the meaning of the part is dependent upon the meaning of the whole" (*The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987], 13). Early E. D. Hirsch Jr. claims that "an understanding of all verbal meaning is necessarily genre-bound" (*Validity in Interpretation* [New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1967], 76). Richard A. Burridge, states, "We have seen that genre functions by providing a set of expectations as a sort of contract between author and reader. It is constituted and mediated through a variety of different generic features, none of which need be peculiar to the genre; however, when they are taken all together, they reveal a particular pattern, which enables us to recognize the genre" (*What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, SNTSMS 70 [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992], 109).

The genre of the Gospels is a matter that is widely discussed among evangelicals, and rightly so. Although there seems to be somewhat of a consensus as to the content of the Gospels (i.e., life, death, and resurrection of Christ, etc.), there does not seem to be an agreement on the overall classification of these writings (i.e., Are they biographies? Are they types of Greco-Roman literature? Are they narratives, stories, etc.?). William Arp proposes that due to the Gospels' content, "Gospels may be a unique type of Christian writing, not explainable to any other type of literature in the ancient world."<sup>17</sup> Stanton provides his understanding of how one can define the Gospel. He writes,

The Gospel writers give both the story [words and works] of Jesus and the significance of his story to their hearers AND readers. . . . Story and theology are intertwined. They tell the 'story' of Jesus in order to address the needs of the Christian communities to which they are writing. . . . The evangelists inform us both about the 'past' story of Jesus of Nazareth and also about the 'present' significance that they attach to Jesus who, they claim, is the Messiah—Christ, the Son of God.<sup>18</sup>

With many ways to consider, define or characterize a Gospel, a single characteristic, such as biography or theology, potentially leads to an incomplete picture of a Gospel as a sub-genre. Therefore, it is best to incorporate both characteristics. This article incorporates biography and theology, such that the definition also incorporates the genre, of which it is a part; that

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<sup>17</sup> Arp, course notes for NT8, 3. They possess a form and function that makes them unique. "Formally, a Gospel is a narrative account about the public life and teaching of Jesus which is composed of discrete tradition units which the writer placed in the context of Scriptures." This keeps the Gospels at the biography-level. "Functionally, a Gospel consists of the message that God was at work in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection affecting the promises found in the Scriptures." This makes them unique and unlike any other biography.

<sup>18</sup> Graham N. Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford U P, 2002), 3-6.

is, narrative. The sub-genre of the Gospels is theological narrative biography.<sup>19</sup>

The theological narrative biography is defined as a sub-genre of narrative that encompasses the Gospel accounts. The Gospels are theological narrative biographies written as stories, or narratives, that catalogue episodes centered around one unifying character, Jesus Christ. These episodes are written in such a way that they serve to awaken and subsequently strengthen the faith of the reader.

The Gospel accounts fit into the larger category of narrative. They do so based upon the possession of the common elements of narrative, for both the Gospel accounts and narratives have structure, plot, setting, characters, and point-of-view. The Gospel accounts, however, are a unique sub-genre. They possess more than a biographical characteristic. They also have a theological purpose. A description of the theological narrative biography follows.

First, the Gospels are constructed as stories. The literary medium, by which the Gospels are communicated, is narrative. They are constructed through unified communicative acts known as episodes or events. Theological narrative biography accounts for the literary medium, or *how* the author's intended message is communicated. The author is selective and purposeful in the writing and placement of each episode regarding those aspects of Jesus' life that help to communicate his message to his intended audience. The organization of episodes contributes to the whole and does so through narrative. Therefore, the definition incorporates *narrative* in its sub-genre category.

Second, the Gospels are illustrations of the public life, teachings, miracles, death, and resurrection of a unifying figure; the biography of Jesus Christ as it is set in a historical context. The historical context and the sayings and stories of Jesus are true, though they may not contain all the details of any one

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<sup>19</sup> For a more detailed explanation regarding the defining of the Gospel accounts see Wayne Slusser, "(Re)Defining the Gospels: Mark as a Test Case, Part One," *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 21, no. 2 [Fall 2017]: 42-76).

episode. Therefore, the definition incorporates *biography* in its sub-genre category.

Third, the Gospels have a theological purpose. The Gospels are not written to simply chronicle biographical information within a historical context. Rather their purpose is for the reader to learn who Jesus is and how to live in light of knowing Him. The Gospels are history and theology intertwined. They are written to awaken faith. They are disciplinal; that is, geared to be disciple-oriented. Therefore, the definition incorporates *theological* in its sub-genre category.

In sum, Mark is a theological narrative biography. The Gospel of Mark communicates a history and theological understanding of the person and work of Christ. Using discourse analysis, this article seeks to analyze Mark's theological rationale within Mark 4:35-41 to discover the meaning and significance of this passage as well as understand how this passage fits into the context of the whole story.

### ***Context of Mark: Its Theme and Purpose***

Mark's story contains a theological emphasis. It is more than a biography and history. The theological emphasis is the unique feature of the Gospel accounts that serves as the basis for its sub-genre category, theological narrative biography. Mark's story emphasizes two aspects. He declares, defines, and affirms the identity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God throughout his story. This is the formal aspect. Mark also emphasizes the role of the disciples, thus providing the significance and application of Jesus' identity to the reader. This is the functional aspect. In other words, Mark identifies who Jesus is and in light of this, what Jesus' disciples ought to do. Mark is concerned with the life of Jesus and his disciples' response to it. His narrative is a story that is put forth through three sections. They are Jesus' Galilean Ministry (1:14-8:21), "on the way" to Jerusalem (8:22-10:52), and Jerusalem (11:1-16:8) (see table below).

<b>Aspect of Mark's Story</b>	<b>Jesus' Galilean Ministry (1:14-8:21)</b>	<b>"On The Way" to Jerusalem (8:22-10:52)</b>	<b>Jerusalem (11:1-16:8)</b>
<p><b>Formal Aspect</b>                      "Who Is Jesus?"                      Ἰησοῦ                      Χριστοῦ                      υἱοῦ θεοῦ</p>	<p><i>Illustrates and Declares Jesus' Identity</i></p> <p>(Son of God)                      1:1, 11</p> <p>(Son of God)                      3:11; 5:7</p> <p>(Messiah, the Christ)                      8:29</p>	<p><i>Defines Jesus' Identity and Mission</i></p> <p>First passion prediction (8:31-33)</p> <p>Second passion prediction (9:31-34)</p> <p>Third passion prediction (10:32-34)</p>	<p><i>Affirms Jesus' Identity</i></p> <p>Jesus speaks to his identity (14:61-62)</p> <p>Jesus suffers and is killed (15:16-41)</p> <p>Jesus rises again, after three days (16:1-6)</p>
<p><b>Functional Aspect</b>                      "What Are His Disciples to Do?"</p>	<p><i>Actions of the Disciples</i></p> <p>Follow Jesus (1:16-20; 2:13-17)</p>	<p><i>Characteristics of the Disciples</i></p> <p>Loyalty to Jesus (8:34-9:1)</p> <p>Service to others</p>	<p><i>Failures of the Disciples</i></p> <p>Failure of obedience (14:32-42)</p>

	Service on behalf of Jesus (3:13-19)	(9:35-37) Humility and Self-sacrifice (10:41-45)	Failure of following (14:50-54)
	Obedience to Jesus (6:7-13)		Failure of loyalty (14:66-72)

The Gospel of Mark narrates the story of Jesus; thus expressing, through the episodes of Jesus’ life, the identity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. But the Gospel of Mark is not just about knowing Jesus; it is also about following Jesus, for the purpose of the theological narrative biography is to awaken and subsequently strengthen faith. This enables the reader/hearer to connect the “what’ and “why” of Mark’s intent. In other words, Mark writes his story not only with a Christological emphasis but also with a theological significance to the readers’/hearers’ life.

Mark answers “who is Jesus” through the opening Christological statement (1:1), the confirmation of God, the confession of Peter, the commentary of others, and through Jesus himself. All of this supports the declaration and confirmation that Jesus’ identity is the Son of God. Mark also answers “what are his disciples to do” through the actions of a disciple, the characteristics of a disciple, and the failures of a disciple. The connection between form (Jesus’ identity) and function (discipleship) enables the reader/hearer to see how Mark ties together the ‘what’ of his story with the ‘why.’ Thus, it seems clear that Mark utilizes the narrative structure (genre) of the story and more specifically the theological narrative biography (sub-genre) to communicate and connect the doctrinal emphasis of knowing (identity) Jesus with the practical emphasis of following (discipleship) him. Mark makes this connection throughout the whole story. One way is with scenes of authority (i.e., Jesus cleanses a leper, 1:40-45; forgives sins, 2:1-12; appoints twelve disciples, 3:13-19; etc.)

that further illustrate the claim of verse one, namely, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The story about Jesus is also seen through miracle stories (i.e., Jesus controls a legion of unclean spirits, 5:1-20; restores life, 5:21-43; feeds thousands, 8:1-9; etc.), one on which this article focuses, the controlling of the wind and the sea (4:35-41). Both the scenes of authority and the miracle stories provide information about the identity of Jesus. It is this identity that Mark wishes to communicate as the basis for the cost of discipleship.

### ***Context of Mark: 4:35-41***

The “stilling of the storm” episode is found within Mark’s presentation of the second part of Jesus’ Galilean ministry (3:7-6:13). Within this unit, Mark speaks of different events that serve to illustrate various aspects of Jesus’ ministry (i.e., Jesus’ teachings at the seaside, his choosing of the twelve, his parables regarding the kingdom of God, his use of power, etc.). This block, 4:35-5:43, forms the climax of 3:7-6:13 in which Mark shows Jesus’ use of power.<sup>20</sup>

The miracles in 4:35-5:43 serve as signs revealing the identity of Jesus as the Son of God. This block therefore fits into Mark’s overall intention. This article concludes that Mark 4:35-41 communicates the greatness and power of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Jesus’ actions in this episode serve to validate his words, namely, that he is the Son of God in whom the Father is well-pleased (1:9-11).

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<sup>20</sup> Carson and Moo state, “Each of them [four miracles] represent one of the characteristic types of Jesus’ miracles: the calming of the storm (a nature miracle, 4:35-41); the casting out of a ‘legion’ of demons from a man in the region of the Gerasenes (an exorcism, 5:1-20); the healing of a woman with a flow of blood (a healing, 5:25-34); and the raising of the daughter of Jairus from the dead (a resurrection, 5:21-24, 35-43)” (*Introduction to the New Testament*, 170).

Garland states, “We learn in these scenes that Jesus is not only sovereign over the demonic forces and debilitating and defiling illnesses, but he is also sovereign over the potent forces of nature and of death” (*Mark*, NIV Application Commentary, 189).

## DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF MARK 4:35-41

This article now analyzes the “stilling of the storm” episode using discourse analysis. Although this article does not apply every stage of discourse analysis, the selected stages are as follows: a translation, a verb analysis, a conjunction analysis, and a role analysis of the various words and phrases of the passage. It is not the purpose of this article to provide an interpretation of this episode, but simply to state the contributions that a discourse analysis offers toward an understanding of its meaning and significance.

### *Translation: Mark 4:35-41*

35. And He says to them in that day  
when the evening was come  
“Let us cross over<sup>21</sup> to the other side”
36. And They sent away the crowd  
they took him  
as he was in the ship  
but also, there were other little ships with him
37. And there arose a great furious storm  
and the waves were beating into the ship  
therefore, the ship was now filling up
38. And he [himself] was in the stern of the ship  
sleeping on a pillow [cushion]  
and they awake him

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<sup>21</sup> Daniel Wallace classifies *Διέλωμεν* as hortatory subjunctive. “The subjunctive is commonly used to exhort or command oneself and one’s associates. This function of the subjunctive is used ‘to urge some one to unite with the speaker in a course of action upon which he has already decided.’ This use of the subjunctive is an exhortation in the *first-person plural*. The typical translation, rather than *we should*, is *let us*. . .” *The Basics of New Testament Syntax: An Intermediate Greek Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 202.

and saying to him, “teacher, is it of no concern to you that<sup>22</sup> we are in the process of perishing”<sup>23</sup>

39. And after awaking  
 he rebuked the waves  
 and he said to the sea “be silent, be silenced and [keep it silenced/be muzzled]”<sup>24</sup>  
 and the wind ceased  
 and there became a great calm
40. And he said to them,  
 “why are you without courage,  
 how do you have no faith?”
41. And [the disciples] were terrified<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Wallace claims this is a substantival ὅτι clause. He states, “A ὅτι (+ indicative) frequently functions substantivally. It is known as a noun (or nominal) clause, content clause, or sometimes a declarative clause (though we prefer to use this last term for indirect discourse clauses). In such instances the translation of the ὅτι is usually ‘that’” (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 453).

<sup>23</sup> The use of ἀπολλύμεθα is probably progressive present. Wallace states, “The present tense may be used to describe a scene in progress, especially in narrative literature. . . . The progressive present normally involves *continuous* action” (*Greek Grammar*, 518-19). See also Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 75. They state, “Progressive pres. vividly describing the process.”

<sup>24</sup> Rogers and Rogers suggest that the present imperative Σιώπα is in contrast to the perfect imperative πεφίμωσο which denotes the command and the continuous action of the command (*The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key*, 75).

Lane notes that the muzzling of the sea is reminiscent to the muzzling of the demon in 1:25. Φιμώθητι is the aorist form of φιμώω, whereas the perfect imperative form πεφίμωσο is used in 4:39. (*The Gospel of Mark*, 176).

<sup>25</sup> “Feared a great fear,” or “greatly feared” translates ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν. Richard Young states, “The φόβον in Mark 4:41 is a cognate accusative of manner. . . . It is not that they feared a great fear, as if φόβον

and [they] said to one another,  
“who, therefore is this,  
that even the wind and the sea  
are obeying him?”

***Verb Analysis: Mark 4:35-41***

35. And He says to them in that day  
PRES act ind  
when the evening was come  
AOR mid part  
“Let us cross over to the other side”  
AOR act subj
36. And after They sent away the crowd  
AOR act part  
they took him  
PRES act ind  
as he was in the ship  
IMPF act ind  
but also there were other little ships with him  
IMPF act ind
37. And there arose a great furious storm  
PRES mid ind  
and the waves were beating into the ship  
IMPF act ind  
so that the ship was already filling up  
PRES pass inf
38. And he [himself] was in the stern of the ship  
IMPF act ind

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were the object, but they feared with awe and terror at the possibility of a divine visitation. It could be rendered ‘They were terrified.’ The cognate accusative is sometimes said to convey emphasis, but perhaps any emphasis comes from adjacent words, as in the above example” (*Intermediate New Testament Greek*, 17-18). See also Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 189-90.

sleeping on a pillow [cushion]

PRES act part

and they awoke him

PRES act ind

and said to him, “teacher, is it of no concern to you

PRES act ind

that we are in the process of perishing”

39. And

after awaking

AOR pass part

he rebuked the waves

AOR act ind

and he said to the sea

AOR act ind

“be silent,

PRES act impv

be silenced and [keep it silenced/be muzzled]”

PERF pas impv

and the wind ceased

AOR act ind

and there became a great calm

AOR mid ind

40. And

he said to them,

AOR act ind

“why are you without courage,  
how do you have no faith?”

41. And

[the disciples] were terrified

AOR pass ind

and [they] said to one another,

IMPF act ind

“what, therefore is this,

PRES act ind

that even the wind and the sea  
are obeying him?”

PRES act ind

The verb analysis indicates the prominence of clauses in relationship to the larger paragraph or discourse.<sup>26</sup> Each tense indicates a plane of discourse (i.e., aorist is the background tense, present and imperfect is the foreground tense, and perfect is the frontground tense).<sup>27</sup> These planes of discourse communicate the story to the reader. The planes of discourse involving the tense forms of verbs are accompanied by discourse aspects. Verbal aspect also contributes to the idea of prominence within a narrative.<sup>28</sup>

The analysis illustrates that the aorist tense-form is used ten times. Mark is using the aorist tense to present details/events. This “is the principal tense for structuring the narrative and sketching the background events which carry the storyline.”<sup>29</sup> This is important to note because details/events are essential for

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<sup>26</sup> Jeffrey T. Reed defines prominence as “emphasis, grounding, relevance, salience, i.e. by drawing the listener/reader’s attention to topics and motifs which are important to the speaker/author and by supporting those topics with other less significant material” (“Identifying Theme in the New Testament: Insights from Discourse Analysis,” *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson, JSNTS 113 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic P, 1995], 75).

<sup>27</sup> Porter explains the planes of discourse in this manner: “The aorist is the background tense, which forms the basis for the discourse; the present is the foreground tense, which introduces significant characters or makes appropriate climatic references to concrete situations; and the perfect is the frontground tense, which introduces elements in an even more discrete, defined, contoured and complex way” (*Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 23).

Young agrees, “The imperfect paints a picture of the unfolding, progressive nature of a past event. The aorist tells the simple story; the imperfect draws the picture. It helps you to see the course of the act. It passes before the eye the flowing stream of history” (*Intermediate New Testament Greek*, 113).

<sup>28</sup> Reed states, “Background prominence is often signaled by clauses using the aorist tense (perfective aspect). Thematic prominence may be signaled by the present and imperfect tenses (imperfective aspect), as well as sometimes the future tense. Focal prominence is signaled by the perfect and pluperfect tenses (stative aspect)” (“Identifying Theme in the New Testament,” 84-85).

<sup>29</sup> Arp, course notes for NT8, 15.

the storyline (i.e., initial setting, v. 35; and silencing of the sea, v. 39) but not necessarily used for prominence or emphasis. Mark's use of the aorist tense is simply to catalog events within an episode.

The analysis also points to two other tenses, present and imperfect, which Mark uses to indicate prominence.<sup>30</sup> He employs these tenses ten and five times respectively. The present, typically known as historical present in narrative, is used to draw added attention to the action to which it refers. Wallace states, "The *reason* for the use of the historical present is normally to portray an event *vividly*, as though the reader were in the midst of the scene as it unfolds."<sup>31</sup> Fanning claims that the historical present occurs with discourse-functions in Mark. They are to begin a paragraph, to introduce new participants, to show participants moving to a new location, and to begin a specific unit.<sup>32</sup>

Fanning's discourse-functions correspond to Mark's uses here. For example, ("he says to them," v. 35) begins a new paragraph; ("they took him," v. 36 and "there arose a great storm," v. 37) introduces new participants; ("therefore the ship was now filling up," v. 37 and "sleeping," "awake," and "saying," v. 38) draws attention to important events and highlights scenes or participants.

The other prominent tense, imperfect, is used to portray the unfolding, progressive nature of a past event. The imperfect is also used in narrative when an action is selected to dwell upon.<sup>33</sup> The change in tense from aorist to imperfect signals the author/speaker's emphasis. This writer suggests that Mark uses the imperfect in three different ways in order to signal emphasis to the reader. They are progressive or descriptive imperfect,

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<sup>30</sup> Porter states that although "the imperfect is similar in function to the historic use of the present [and] they share the same verbal aspect, the present is used to draw even more attention to an action" (*Idioms*, 34).

<sup>31</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 526. He goes on to say, "Such vividness might be *rhetorical* (to focus on some aspect of the narrative) or *literary* (to indicate a change in topic)" (526).

<sup>32</sup> Buist M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 232.

<sup>33</sup> Porter, *Idioms*, 34.

iterative imperfect, and instantaneous imperfect, also known as punctiliar imperfect. The progressive imperfect “is used to describe an action or state that it is in progress in past time from the viewpoint of the speaker.”<sup>34</sup> The iterative imperfect “is used for *repeated* action in past time.”<sup>35</sup> The instantaneous imperfect “is typically restricted to ἐλεγον in narrative literature.”<sup>36</sup>

The progressive, iterative, and instantaneous imperfects correspond to Mark’s uses of the imperfect here. For example, (“he was in the ship,” and “but also there were other . . .,” v. 36 and “he himself was in . . .,” v. 38) are progressive imperfects. These examples describe events from Mark’s viewpoint. They merely describe an action that is in the progress of happening. An example of the iterative imperfect is in verse 37 (“the waves were beating”). It is a continual or repeated action that ultimately results in “the ship filling up.” The last way Mark uses the imperfect is in verse 41. It is the instantaneous imperfect. Here the disciples use the phrase “said to one another,” which is the imperfect form ἐλεγον.<sup>37</sup>

The final verb tense Mark uses is the perfect tense. This tense-form indicates focal prominence. It characterizes the verb as being in the state of affairs or condition that exists. Mark reports that Jesus awoke and silenced the sea (v. 39), therefore, indicating the sea was in a state of calm.

In summary, the verb analysis suggests that Mark emphasizes three events within the episode. First, Mark describes a great furious storm (v. 37a). This storm is so great that the waves were beating into the ship resulting in the ship filling with water (v. 37b). It is here that Mark emphasizes the helplessness of the situation for the disciples. Second, he describes Jesus’ position as (“sleeping on a pillow,” v. 38a). He

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<sup>34</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 543. See also Porter, *Idioms*, 34.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 546.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 542.

<sup>37</sup> Steven E. Runge reports that the use of the imperfect of λεγω here could be used “to record the responses of multiple groups to one thing” (*Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010], 159).

is emphasizing Jesus' calm response to the great furious storm (v. 37a).<sup>38</sup> As a result, he describes the disciples' fear (v. 38b). They are concerned that their safety is not Jesus' priority. In fact, one could render Διδάσκαλε, οὐ μέλει σοι ὅτι ἀπολλύμεθα as "Teacher, are we to drown for all you care?"<sup>39</sup> Third, Jesus silences the sea (v. 39b) and it remains in a silenced state.

These three events, therefore, draw attention to Mark's emphasis. He is stressing the contrastive element between Jesus' calm composure with the disciples' fear in a helpless situation. The verb analysis, of which is one component within discourse analysis, assists the interpreter to bring together the micro-structure (4:35-41 episode) and the macro-structure (Mark's overall intent) in order to ultimately demonstrate and identify Jesus as the Son of God, for who else has the authority and power to keep the sea in a silenced state?

### ***Conjunction Analysis: Mark 4:35-41***

35. Καὶ<sup>40</sup> He says to them in that day  
when the evening was come  
"Let us cross over to the other side"
36. καὶ They sent away the crowd  
they took him  
as he was in the ship  
but also, there were other little ships with him
37. καὶ there arose a great furious storm  
and the waves were beating into the ship  
therefore, the ship was now filling up

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<sup>38</sup> Gundry makes a helpful comment here. He writes, "The emphatic αὐτὸς, 'he himself,' contrasts the calmness of his sleep with the raging of the sea. Since he will not call on God to still the storm but will still it himself, we would do wrong to interpret his sleep as one of trust in God. . . . He trusts in his own abilities as God's Son" (*Mark*, 239).

<sup>39</sup> Lane, *Gospel of Mark*, 176.

<sup>40</sup> Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 301-02. He states that καὶ is used with the historical present as a discourse boundary.

38. καὶ he [himself] was in the stern of the ship  
sleeping on a pillow [cushion]  
and they awake him  
and saying to him, “teacher, is it of no concern  
to you that we are in the process of perishing”
39. καὶ after awaking  
he rebuked the waves  
and he said to the sea “be silent, be silenced and  
[keep it silenced/be muzzled]”  
and the wind ceased  
and there became a great calm
40. καὶ he said to them,  
“why are you without courage,  
how do you have no faith?”
41. καὶ [the disciples] were terrified  
and [they] said to one another,  
“what, therefore is this,  
that even the wind and the sea  
are obeying him?”

The conjunction analysis indicates that καὶ is the predominant conjunction in this episode. Καὶ usually functions within a narrative episode to join elements that continue the main line of the plot.<sup>41</sup> καὶ is also typically used in discourse narratives as a joiner of clauses of equal grammatical rank.<sup>42</sup> Mark’s use of καὶ is simply to provide the reader with a plot

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<sup>41</sup> Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek*, 188. Wallace calls these connective conjunctions. He writes, “This use simply *connects an additional element* to a discussion or adds an additional idea to the train of thought” (*Greek Grammar*, 671). Young also sees καὶ; as a discourse boundary, one that “simply holds the narrative in place” (*Intermediate NT Greek*, 254).

<sup>42</sup> Kermit Titrud, “The Function of kai; in the Greek New Testament and an Application to 2 Peter,” in *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis*, ed. David Alan Black with Katharine Barnwell and Stephen Levinsohn (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 246-47. See also Porter, *Idioms*, 211-12.

line. It connects one event to another, therefore providing cohesion to the episode as a whole.<sup>43</sup>

To this point, the analysis of Mark 4:35-41 consists of understanding the parts of the episode. How is one to classify these discourse parts? What is the relationship between these parts? How does the relationship therefore contribute to the meaning and significance of the episode as a whole? These questions and others are considered in the role analysis of the discourse parts.

***Role Analysis: Mark 4:35-41***

35. And He says<sup>44</sup> to them in that day  
 BEGINS EPISODE  
 when the evening was come  
 SETTING  
 “Let us cross over to the other side”  
 SAYING-ACTIVITY
36. And They sent away the crowd  
 ACTIVITY  
 they took him  
 ACTIVITY  
 as he was in the ship  
 but also, there were other little ships with him
37. And there arose a great furious storm  
 EVENT-1  
 and the waves were beating into the ship  
 ACTIVITY  
 therefore, the ship was now filling up  
 RESULT

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<sup>43</sup> Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 26.

<sup>44</sup> The historical present of λέγει signals a new start, a new episode (Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*, 237). Guelich states, “‘And he said to them’ (Καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς) occurs as an introductory formula sixteen times in Mark” (*Mark 1-8:26*, Word Biblical Commentary, 263).

38. And he [himself] was in the stern of the ship  
sleeping on a pillow [cushion]  
EVENT-2  
and they awake him  
RESULT  
and saying to him, “teacher, is it of no concern  
to  
SAYING ACTIVITY  
you that we are in the process of perishing?”  
QUESTION
39. And after awaking  
RESPONSE INTRO-1  
he rebuked the waves  
ACTIVITY  
and he said to the sea “be silent, be silenced  
SAYING ACTIVITY  
and [keep it silenced/stay muzzled]”  
EVENT-3 (Focal Point)  
and the wind ceased  
and there became a great calm  
RESULT
40. And he said to them,  
SAYING ACTIVITY  
“why are you without courage?  
QUESTION  
how do you have no faith?”  
QUESTION
41. And [the disciples] were terrified  
RESPONSE INTRO-2  
and [they] said to one another,  
SAYING ACTIVITY  
“who, therefore is this,  
QUESTION  
that even the wind and the sea  
are obeying him?”

The role analysis suggests that this paragraph is a complete episode (4:35-41) beginning with Jesus talking to his disciples and ending with his disciples questioning his identity and authority, especially since the wind and the sea obey his voice.<sup>45</sup> The analysis also suggests that Mark emphasizes three events. He also wishes to highlight two responses corresponding to the events.

The analysis also points to a particular structure (i.e., setting, event, and response).<sup>46</sup> Mark begins with the setting of the episode (4:35) and the activity and characters involved (4:36). He moves to three events (4:37-39) drawing the reader's attention by highlighting crucial scenes within the episode. Mark then communicates two responses (4:39-41) that serve to provide answers/results to a helpless situation. It is in these responses that Mark is able to convey Jesus' role, namely, that he has both the power and the authority as the Son of God.

### ***Contribution to Meaning and Significance: Mark 4:35-41***

What then do these elements of discourse analysis contribute to understanding the meaning of Mark 4:35-41? How do these elements provide the significance to its readers and hearers? This analysis helps the reader to pay attention to selected details that emphasize Mark's intent within the episode.

The parts of discourse analysis contribute some helpful points for understanding this episode. First, the three events within the episode draw added attention to the helpless situation that has arisen for Jesus' disciples (4:37-39), as well as pointing to the event of focus, Jesus' power over nature. Mark highlights

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<sup>45</sup> Gundry states, "The question magnifies the figure of Jesus: he looms too large for the disciples' comprehension. The  $\delta\tau\iota$ -clause ("[seeing] that . . .") puts the emphasis on his authority rather than on their ignorance" (*Mark*, 241).

<sup>46</sup> See Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek*, 248-50. Although Young uses different terminology for genre structure (schema), the idea is similar. The divisions of discourse are still communicated but are done so in relationship to the episode as here. The author of this analysis chooses setting, event, and response.

these crucial events so that the reader can realize the seriousness of the disciples' situation (a great furious storm resulting in the ship filling with water). It is the seriousness of the situation that requires radical action. Jesus and his disciples respond to the helpless situation.

Second, the three events of emphasis relate to two distinct developments or responses. Jesus responds to both the great storm and the disciples' fear by silencing the wind and muzzling the sea (Response Intro-1). As a result, there is a great calm. The other development rests within the disciples' response to Jesus' power and authority (4:41). They were terrified (i.e., "feared a great fear"). As a result, to Jesus' radical action, the disciples are awe-struck (Response Intro-2) and they ask one another, "Who therefore is this?"

Third, the relationship between the events and responses emphasizes the greatness of the episode. The great storm (λαῖλαψ μεγάλη) is the reason for Jesus' response, thus creating a great calm (γαλήνη μεγάλη). The great storm and its quietness are the reason for the disciples' response, a great fear (φόβον μέγαν). They are terrified. Mark's intent is to demonstrate the greatness of the problem (a furious storm) solved by Jesus' authoritative and powerful response (the great calming of the storm) followed by the disciples' response (fearing a great fear). This relationship points to the greatness and power of Jesus as the Son of God. This is Mark's purpose for writing this episode. This episode also validates Mark's main purpose for writing his gospel, namely, to affirm that Jesus is the Son of God.

The relationship between the events and responses to the events has significance for the hearers and readers. Mark writes an episode that speaks of a helpless situation involving Jesus' followers. By no means is Mark communicating Jesus' response as an "I'll save you guys" attitude. Rather Mark is demonstrating the power, words, and deeds of the Son of God even in a helpless situation. Garland states, "The miracle of the storm does not teach us how to endure adversity patiently because Jesus immediately eliminates the problem. The emphasis in this story is the identity of Jesus, not on how he rescues fretful disciples from danger whenever they cry out to

him.”<sup>47</sup> Those who are followers of Jesus can be assured that he truly is the Son of God and it is this one Jesus whom they serve.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EXEGETE**

This study demonstrates the importance of discourse analysis. Although discourse analysis is not the only method of interpretation nor is it the final method the exegete is to use, it does provide the exegete with an understanding of the relationship between narrative structure and the grammar of the language used by the author. It helps the reader to view the episode as a coherent whole and not just its parts. Discourse analysis understands that language is not used in isolated words or sentences, but rather occurs in larger discourses; therefore, discourse must be analyzed in this manner.

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<sup>47</sup> Garland, *Mark*, 200.

# A New Year Prayer: When the New Year May not be Any Better than the Old Year

Mark McGinniss

**My remembrance of Dr. Bill Arp ZTz''L:**<sup>2</sup> Although Bill was not the most impassioned preacher, Bill's dry wit, consistent alliteration, and faithfulness to the argument of the author made every one of his NT and OT messages extremely beneficial. I remember one particular message in 2008. Bill had just been cut to part-time because of budget constraints. The following week he preached on Psalm 13, ending with complete confidence in God. Although no one except the faculty knew the backstory to his message, we recognized how personal this message was for him to live and preach. I offer my exposition of Ps 13 in honor of Bill.

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**A**s we stand on the brink of a new year, we are filled with hope that this year will be better than last. We hope the current year will not be filled with the frustrations, problems, sufferings and heartaches of the previous year. As we start the new year, we have hopes and dreams that this year will be better than the last. We hope we will not be followed by the same tribulations and concerns of the past year.

But what happens when the difficulties of the first year are not changed in the next year? What will you do when the calendar may have changed into a new work year, but your life situation has not?

Psalm 13 is a psalm that shows us how to respond to life when it does not look like the new year is going to change,

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<sup>2</sup> **ZTz''L** is a Jewish honorific. Generally, it is used for a deceased holy or righteous rabbi. It means, "May the memory of this righteous one be a blessing."

when a holiday as grand as New Years does not deliver on its promise to be better. We hope the change in calendar from December 31 to January 1 will put the question of “how long” to rest, but what if the question lingers into February, March and beyond? Let’s face it—we all have been there (or are there). We have all asked the question “how long?”

While the “how long” question is not unique to each of us, its exact wording is: How long must I put up with this problem? How long must I put up with his whining? How long must I put up with her? How long will life be hard? How long will I be without a job? How long must we live here? How long must I struggle to make financial ends meet? How long must I fight to fit one more needy person into an already too tight schedule? How long do I suffer the effects of his sin? How long must I deal with the stress at work? How long must I deal with the stress in the family? How long must I put up with yet another disappointment? How long must I deal with this physical or emotional pain? If you are over four you have dealt with the frustration of some part of life not changing.

How will you deal with life when the conflicts, problems, frustrations or disappointments of 2017 continue into 2018 or even beyond? How do you deal with life when this year does not look that much different than last? When life looks like it will never improve?

David’s lament in Psalm 13 is a model of prayer to be followed when believers face the unchangeable, unending, negative situations in life that seem determined to go on forever and may even threaten their lives.

### **Psalm 13: For the choir director. A Psalm of David**

The superscription of this psalm and the body of the psalm give no clear indication of the historical context for why David wrote this psalm. The readers are unsure what David was dealing with in his life to make him cry such a heart-wrenching prayer.

David may have mouthed this prayer as he was running from cave to cave, month after month from Saul who sought to kill him. Again, we are unsure. All that is known is that David

felt abandoned by all, even God and close to death. David was left to deal with his desperate, unending situation alone.

If the historical context of this psalm is vague, it is vague for a reason that it might reach across the centuries to speak afresh to readers today. This psalm gives voice to unspoken questions as we wait for God to deal with various nagging frustrations, unending sorrows and situations that seem destined to last forever.

This individual lament written by David for the choir director must have been a popular song even in ancient times because it captures succinctly the emotion of believers as they wait for God to put an end to their sorrows and disappointments that had gone on way too long.

### *Pattern of the Lament*

Although the pattern of the individual lament psalm is usually eight different elements, Psalm 13 has only three.

### **Three-fold Pattern for Prayer**

- I. David's Lament or Complaint to God (vs. 1-2)
- II. David's Petition for God to Answer (vs. 3-4)
- III. David's Confession of Trust (vs. 5-6)

### *David's Lament or Complaint (vs. 1-2)*

In his three-stanza psalm David had a threefold complaint: (1) He complained about the length of how long he had to endure God not remembering him (i.e., answering his prayer to end the uncertain distress). (2) He moaned about the length of how long he had to endure his sorrow. (3) He lamented the continuing exalted position of his enemy.

In the midst of what was for David unceasing suffering, he cried out four times within only two verses, "how long?" The repetition of the phrase "how long" drives home the emotion of seemingly divine abandonment and the struggle against unending suffering. Westermann explains, "The question is specifically the utterance of one who is experiencing a suffering

that seems determined to continue. Here, time, itself becomes the destructive force, wearing down a man's ability to hold out and intensifying the suffering to an inhuman level."<sup>3</sup>

David was not only battling against a seemingly unending trial that somehow involved an enemy but he was also battling against the feeling of being in the fight alone, without God. David's concern about being "forgotten" by God and God "hiding" his face meant the withholding of divine, practical help. The importance of God not hiding his face but "shining" his face on the individual is seen in Numbers 6:22-26:

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 23 "Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them: 24 The LORD bless you, and keep you; 25 The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; 26 The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.'"

Because David was suffering for so long, he felt God had turned his face from him and forgotten him by not providing practical relief from his continual sorrow. "The sufferer is alone, and suffering in loneliness aggravates the anguish."<sup>4</sup>

We are not always as honest as David. We feel it is impolite to be this honest in church. So we suck up the disappointment and swallow our questions. Or if we do voice what we are feeling, we complain to others (but not to God) "how long" will my job be so bad or my relationship so unhealthy, etc. But David shows us that it is okay to be completely honest in our questions and our uncertainty with God.

In verse 2 the presence of continued suffering and the lack of divine help caused David to look inside his own soul for much needed relief. When David looked into his soul, he found he had no resources to deal adequately with his pain and the length of his suffering. Instead of relief when David looked inside, he found sorrow in his heart all day long. David was at

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<sup>3</sup> Claus Westermann, *The Living Psalms*, trans J. R. Porter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 71.

<sup>4</sup> Willem A. VanGemeren, "Psalms," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1991), 5:140.

his wit's end emotionally and maybe even physically (v. 3). David could find no relief in himself nor was divine help on the horizon.

This continuing suffering, this continuing absence of God's help to relieve the suffering and the continuing exaltation of David's enemy over him, caused this man of God to cry and lament his suffering to God (vv. 1-2).

If you are in a situation this morning that seems destined to go on forever, David's lament in this song is yours. There are times or will be times that we will feel forgotten by God when our poor financial issues goes on week after week and month after month. When our prayers for healing go unanswered, day after day. There are times when we cannot see God's face or experience his blessing because life is simply tough.

At these times it is natural to look inside for answers to the question "how long" and we find nothing but more sorrow because we do not know how long we must put up with such a difficult situation. Additionally, we really believe that the situation will never cease, that God will never look on us with favor again. We believe we are destined to live life in a constant struggle without any resources. If we are honest before God, David's cry centuries ago is our cry today.

It is interesting that although David felt forsaken by God, he was moved to cry out to God. Think about this dynamic. He felt forgotten by God but he kept lamenting his situation to God by asking Him the question, "How long?" Why cry out to God who David did not believe was listening?! If God is truly not there, there is no sense to pray to him!

Although David felt he was left on his own to endure this seemingly ceaseless suffering, he knew God could hear his deep soulful cry. David did not confuse divine silence with divine absence. When my five children were toddlers, we used to play hide and seek in the house. Because the parsonage was a bit small, the only way to play the game well was to play it in the dark. So the kids would count to 10 and I would go and hide. Every time we played this game, the same dynamic took place. Even though my kids could not see me, even though they knew I would not answer, they knew I was there somewhere in the dark and they would always call very softly, "Daddy?"

“Daddy”? This illustrates the dynamic that David was experiencing. Although David saw no evidence of God’s working to eliminate his suffering (i.e., God hiding his face), David knew that God was there in the darkness. David did not confuse divine silence with divine absence. I think this is where believers stumble. They wrongly believe that divine silence equals divine absence and simply stop praying to God as though God does not care.

Nothing can be further from the truth. As a matter of fact, David’s lamenting to God is an act of faith. A lament such as this channels our heart-wrenching emotions to God and as such molds them into faithful expressions of our hearts. There is nothing wrong or unbiblical about voicing such raw emotions to God since they are voiced to him in faith. This knowledge that God was there in the dark moved David to the second section of his psalm.

### ***Your Petition for God to Answer (vs. 3-4)***

Keeping with the threefold complaint (vv. 1-2) David asked of God three petitions: (1) to “consider,” (2) to “answer,” and (3) to “enlighten my eyes.” David’s distress (whether it was physical or emotional) could only be lifted if God were to intervene on David’s behalf. No other resource was at David’s disposal to ease the unceasing burden that was weighing on him for so long and was so draining.

There is a sequence of events in this threefold plea to God. Once God considered or had regard for David’s burdensome state, God would then answer. With God’s answer, David’s eyes will be lightened with gladness because God had intervened on David’s behalf.<sup>5</sup> This reversal of God’s look (from hiddenness in verse 1 to looking at David in verse 3) was all that David needed to experience the gladness that had eluded him for so long (God’s face shining on him)

For David’s survival God must consider, must answer, and must enlighten soon because David felt death was very near. David was at the end of his proverbial rope!

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<sup>5</sup> Westermann, *Living Psalms*, 73.

Although the enemy was mentioned in verse four (4), readers are unsure what he or she did to David to cause a problem in the first place. What seems to be the current issue or an additional enemy for David was “time”—the seemingly certainty that this situation would last forever. But in the psalm, the enemy was one who would rejoice as long as this leader of God’s people was under such a weighty burden. The enemy of God’s people rejoiced whenever any turmoil (physical sickness, financial difficulties or emotional anguish) struck a leader and thus made him feel that God had left him alone to deal with life and ministry. David pleaded with God not to let death (the believer’s last enemy in 1 Corinthians 15:54-55) or the present enemy rejoice over him because then his trust in God would be shown to be unfounded.

David saw not only his own life at stake, but he also viewed God’s reputation and ability to deliver God’s own leader at stake as well. If David suffered much more, death and the enemy would win; God and David would have lost. I call this twisting of the divine arm.

### ***David’s Confession of Trust in God (vs. 5-6)***

It is important to realize there was a distinct change of mood between verses four (4) and five (5). Although the change of mood was quite evident, it is important to realize that David did not have his burden lifted. He was still in the midst of a significant and seemingly unending trouble in his own life. Nothing had actually changed in his situation from verse 4 to verse 5. David was still suffering greatly. Nothing had changed but his perspective! “The ‘but’ marks a step forward...it indicates a step forward into trust which the suppliant takes in face of his suffering and in spite of the persistent force of that suffering.”<sup>6</sup>

At this point David was willing to trust in God’s covenantal love (*hesed*) although his present circumstances seem to indicate otherwise. David was clinging to God’s promise to

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<sup>6</sup> Westermann, *Living Psalms*, 74.

love and be faithful to God's people (Deut 28-32). David was going to cling to God even when it seemed God was not there to cling to!

Folks, this shows the importance of God's word as a testimony of God's *hesed*. When I am lost waiting for God's face to shine upon me, for him to answer me, his Spirit drives me back to his word to demonstrate that he never forgets his own. Although he may be silent for a season (and I may feel forgotten), my feelings are not reality and divine silence never equals divine absence from my life. This is the importance of being in his word everyday. So God can use it in my life when the need arises.

But there is more. Not only has he chosen to trust in God's *hesed* (v. 5)—a one time completed action, he will sing (and ongoing action) because he has remembered the numerous past times that God had dealt bountifully with him.

Craigie summarizes this dynamic so well: "The present reality was of such a nature as to undermine the past experience of trust, but it is the nature of confidence to transform the present on the basis of past experiences and thus to create hope for the future."<sup>7</sup>

This is something that David had forgotten. If you look in verses 1-4: the first person (me, my, I) is used 15 times in the NASB. Pain is always self-centering. David had forgotten his past with God because of his present pain.

While it is not stated, there must have been a ministry of the Spirit in David's life. The Spirit must have reminded David "Oh, wait—God was with me in the past and in reality as I look back on my life he has dealt bountifully with me. If he has done that in the past and his *hesed* is still in force, then no matter what I am experiencing now, I can trust God and sing his praises."

This clinging to God's past activity in his life and his promise was the only resource that gave David a hope and a future. Clinging to this truth kept David from being overwhelmed with his unending situation. And this truth of God's faithfulness is the only thing that will keep us from being

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<sup>7</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, WBC 19 (Waco, Texas, 1983), 143.

overwhelmed as well. In times of difficulties (that seem to stretch on forever) we have the choice to either lower our view of God or to raise our faith based on his word and past experience and not our present experience. David chose to raise his faith based on God's *hesed* and past blessings.

The present individual lament turns to a promise of future individual praise as David held tightly to God's promise of salvation/deliverance. David who could only speak within his own heart at the beginning of the psalm (v. 2) now looked forward to sing publicly because he trusted in God (v. 6).

Even though David was in the throes of suffering (remember verses 5 and 6 are not from a position of deliverance but of present pain: his confidence is based on a change in belief not physical well being), his mindset was such that he believed God was going to deliver him from his present troubles. The question, "How long?" was not answered but he knew who would answer it! The present raging anguish of the soul of the leader was becalmed by the knowledge of God's love for his own.

How long, O Lord? How long must I suffer being misunderstood? How long must I suffer financially, emotionally, geographically? How long must I..... (you fill in the blank)?

Although the situations differ in each person's life, this question has haunted the sleepless nights of every person's soul. David in the midst of his pain of abandonment and distress lamented his helpless condition to God. In the midst of the complaint David recognized God's unconditional love for His people. With this promise David took his eyes off the present situation and looked to a God who is faithful and looked back on his own life which was full of God's activities on his behalf.

As an application I would like to offer a personal example of how this psalm can be used as a pattern for prayer.

**(My Complaint)** *O, God, how long, how long, how long, must I put up with constant disappointments? If it is not one thing, it is another. How long must we as a church take two steps forward in growth and excitement and take two steps back by having supposedly solid people leave for no good reason? I don't know*

*how much more I can take or want to take. It is tough enough to struggle with people. Now finances are a problem again. How long must we live this hand-to-mouth existence? When will we be able to stop thinking about money? How long must we just struggle to keep the ministry afloat or at least drifting forward? I don't want our ministry to die and Your reputation and mine become a laughing stock.*

**(My Petition)** *O, Lord, I need you to answer me. I feel like I am all-alone. No one understands, no one comes along side and no one even cares what I feel. Lord, you are the only one who can turn these situations around for me. But lately my prayers have bounced off the ceiling. They go nowhere. I need you to hear and be merciful and bless me.*

**(My Confidence)** *Lord, I know You are there in heaven and here beside me. Your word encourages me that I am not alone. You have delivered me in the past. Although this situation looks bleak and unending, I know you will work again on my behalf. I will praise you now for the work You will do in the future on my behalf. Please do it quickly!*

## Conclusion

I would encourage you today if you are facing a situation that seems determine to last forever, rewrite Psalm 13 in your own words and pray it back to God as I offered mine above. Share your complaint and offer your petition and as God enables through his word and your own past experiences with God, express your confidence to him.

Why is it important to for you to pray this lament back to God? The reason that lamenting to God is so vitally important is that as David proved in his lament, “The one who laments his suffering to God does not remain in his lament.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Westermann, *Living Psalms*, 69.

# The Forest and the Trees: A Method of Discourse Analysis and Application to the Epistle of Jude

Todd T. Bolton

**My remembrance of Dr. Bill Arp:** I will never forget my delightfully frustrating first class with Dr. Arp. It was my first class in the PhD program and it was on the book of Hebrews. I came in ready to unleash my many theological questions related to the believer's security. However, as Dr. Arp carefully worked through the context, I realized that most of my questions were not what the author was intending to answer. This was initially frustrating, but ultimately freeing, as it made me appreciate the message of Hebrews in a way that my theological questions had previously obscured. Along with his great sense of humor and heart for his students, I will always remember Dr. Arp's careful attention to tracing the author's argument through the course of the entire letter and the need to understand each part in light of the whole. His influence continues to be felt in both my personal life and the classes I teach.

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**E**xegetes love microscopes. Commentaries gush over word origins, verb tenses, and prepositions. This is good; the details of the text are important. However, if the exegete fails to relate how the details of words, phrases, and clauses impact the overall message of the text, he has lost the forest for the trees. And if that type of exegesis is transferred into the pulpit, the result is often a sermon of theological tidbits without a unifying theme or application. The people hearing the message leave agreeing with the points, but failing to see how those points come together in one coherent truth that will

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powerfully impact their lives. And worse, the voice of Christ becomes muddled (cf. John 10:27) and his shepherding ministry is obstructed.

Discourse analysis (DA) seeks to rectify the common problem of interpreting words and phrases apart from their larger context. Far from jettisoning the details of the text, it relates how the details of the text work together to form one cohesive message. Prominent NT scholar George H. Guthrie defines discourse analysis this way: “a process of investigation by which one examines the form and function of all the parts and levels of a written discourse, with the aim of better understanding both the parts and the whole of that discourse.”<sup>2</sup> Both the details of the text and the overall meaning are vital to proper interpretation.

Although the promise of discourse analysis is exciting, there remains a great need for a clear method if DA is to have any lasting results. Stanley Porter, who has authored several books and articles related to DA, states,

It is probably fair to say that for discourse analysis to continue to prove viable it will need not only to continue to look at texts in productive and creative ways, but to develop explicit and accessible theoretical models.... [T]hose approaching from the outside will need to be able to grasp the particulars of the methods.<sup>3</sup>

Promise without practice will not suffice. In the same way, too many methods will also impede the progress of DA as a useful NT tool. DA practitioner and commentary author Jeffrey Reed writes, “Idiosyncratic models and terminological confusion proliferate as more linguists, as well as nonlinguists,

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<sup>2</sup> George H. Guthrie, “Discourse Analysis,” *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 255.

<sup>3</sup> Stanley Porter, “Discourse Analysis and New Testament Studies,” in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, ed. Stanley Porter and D. A. Carson (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic P, 1995), 34.

adopt discourse analysis as a theoretical framework to read texts.”<sup>4</sup> The abundance of proposed methods led Porter to reference the book of Judges as he quipped, ““There was no agreed upon method of discourse analysis, and everyone did what was right in his own eyes.””<sup>5</sup> Clearly, DA needs a clear method in order to gain acceptance as a valuable tool in exegesis.

Moving forward, there are two key questions that DA proponents must answer according to Reed: “(1) What is it about [DA] that makes it unique with respect to traditional exegesis? (2) How can [DA] support, supplement, or advance the wealth of NT interpretation already available?”<sup>6</sup> What follows are answers to those two questions. In Part I, the foundations of what DA is will be outlined. In Part II, a clear step-by-step method will be proposed. Part III will then apply that method to the text of Jude to show how DA honors both the forest and the trees in providing a well-rounded tool for interpretation.

## I. Foundations of Discourse Analysis

The value of Discourse Analysis is its holistic approach to the text. DA endeavors to understand both the big picture and the smaller details, and the relationship between these two. Porter states, “Discourse analysis as a discipline within linguistics has emerged as a synthetic model, one designed to unite into a coherent and unifying framework various areas of linguistic investigation.”<sup>7</sup> Consequently, DA encompasses a broad range of interpretive components. The field is so broad

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<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey T. Reed, “Discourse Analysis as New Testament Hermeneutic: A Retrospective and Prospective Appraisal,” *JETS*, 39, no. 2 (June 1996): 224.

<sup>5</sup> Stanley Porter, “How Can Biblical Discourse Be Analyzed?: A Response to Several Attempts,” in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, ed. Stanley Porter and D. A. Carson (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic P, 1995), 107.

<sup>6</sup> Reed, “DA as NT Hermeneutic,” 240.

<sup>7</sup> Stanley Porter, “Discourse Analysis and New Testament Studies,” in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, 18.

that it caused NT linguist Moises Silva to exclaim, “My anxiety, however, was only aggravated to realize in a fresh way that discourse analysis is about ... everything! It is grammar and syntax, pragmatics and lexicology, exegesis and literary criticism. In short, fertile ground for undisciplined minds.”<sup>8</sup> The broad field is legitimate cause for concern, but there are several foundational principles of DA that serve as parameters for analysis.

### *Extension of Hermeneutics*

The first foundational principle is that when rightly understood, DA is simply an extension of sound hermeneutics. Guthrie states, “I hope to demonstrate that, rather than being a superfluous, exotic criticism destined to pass as a scholarly fad, discourse analysis, when properly understood, provides a natural, logical extension of traditional exegetical means of study.”<sup>9</sup> In that sense, DA is less an innovation and more an expansion or re-emphasis of something inherent to hermeneutics: context is king.<sup>10</sup>

Words and phrases cannot be understood apart from the role they play in a larger context. The English word “board” means very little without a full sentence, but place it in the context of the statement, “You must board the plane,” and its meaning becomes clear. Discourse analysis takes that fundamental hermeneutical principle and applies it to the text as a whole. Words, phrases, verses, paragraphs, and even chapters cannot be rightly understood apart from the place in the entire discourse. Guthrie speaks to the emphasis shift when he says,

Thus, discourse analysis shifts the focus of biblical exegesis from individual words, and even passages, and places it on whole

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<sup>8</sup> Moisés Silva, “Discourse Analysis and Philippians,” *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, ed. Stanley Porter and D. A. Carson (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic P, 1995), 102.

<sup>9</sup> Guthrie, “DA,” 255.

<sup>10</sup> Porter and Reed also take the same stance in seeing DA as an expansion of hermeneutics. See Porter, “How Can Biblical Discourse Be Analyzed?,” 113.

discourses. This does not mean that the individual words, sentences, and paragraphs are any less important than in traditional approaches to exegesis. Rather, discourse analysis moves the “text” or “discourse” from a place of ambiguity, and often obscurity, to a place of rigorous consideration and analysis.<sup>11</sup>

The discourse becomes framework from which to examine the smaller units. Context has always been important. However, context is an ambiguous term. Does it refer to the sentence, paragraph, chapter, or book? Discourse analysis keeps the focus on the whole book, reflecting a renewed explicit emphasis on one of the hallmarks of hermeneutics.

### ***Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approach***

The emphasis on the relationship between discourse and parts leads to a top-down and bottom-up approach to discourse analysis. Both forest and trees are significant in DA. Porter explains,

Thus the smallest meaningful units in the language (e.g. morphemes) and their composition into increasingly larger units (e.g. words, groups of words, clauses, sentences, paragraphs or pericopes and entire discourses) must be seen in terms of both their individual parts and their formation into the whole.<sup>12</sup>

Neither the parts nor the discourse is over-emphasized. Each plays a vital role in the interpretive process. The whole cannot be understood apart from the parts, and the parts cannot be understood apart from their relationship to the whole. The result of this emphasis yields more comprehensive analysis. Porter continues,

... the distinctiveness of discourse analysis and the concern of discourse analysts is to be able to provide as comprehensive a

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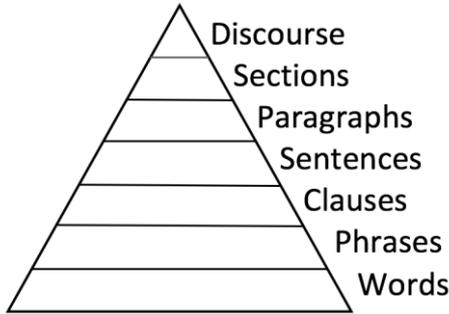
<sup>11</sup> Guthrie, “DA,” 256.

<sup>12</sup> Porter, “DA and NT Studies,” 19.

description as possible of the various components of a given discourse, including its meaning and structure, and the means by which these are created and conveyed.”<sup>13</sup>

Once again, meaning, structure, and development are all in view. Other writers compare discourse analysis to understanding the parts of a story<sup>14</sup> or using both a wide-angle and telephoto lens.<sup>15</sup> In the end, there is a fuller appreciation for both the discourse and its constituents.

One final illustration proves helpful. Porter uses the analogy of a pyramid where the pinnacle represents the meaning of the entire discourse and the subsequent layers smaller units of communication.<sup>16</sup> The pyramid can be pictured as follows:<sup>16</sup>



The strength of this analogy is that it shows the interdependence of discourse meaning and discourse constituents. Without the foundational layers, there would be no discourse. At the same time, the smaller building blocks do not exist in isolation, but as part of the larger discourse. Accordingly, Porter says, “In discourse analysis one can begin

<sup>13</sup> Porter, “DA and NT Studies,” 19.

<sup>14</sup> Guthrie, “DA,” 253.

<sup>15</sup> J. B. Green, “Discourse Analysis and New Testament Interpretation,” *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 187-88.

<sup>16</sup> Porter, “How Can Biblical Discourse Be Analyzed?,” 113.

<sup>16</sup> Diagram mine.

at the top (the pinnacle of the pyramid), or the bottom (the base), but one must work through all of the stages, from both directions, to provide full analysis.”<sup>17</sup> The great strength of DA is the full analysis Porter describes.

This strength also serves as a safeguard against the pitfalls of many commentaries and grammars that tend to be too narrowly focused. Many commentaries are stuck in the trees of individual words and phrases, while grammars treat language in isolation, rather than in context. Reed shows how DA is a way forward:

Discourse analysis of the New Testament should attempt to bring the grammarian and the commentator or exegete more in line with one another. Discourse analysis appraises the language of the text as a whole, keeping in perspective both the language of the text as a system and the individual message(s) of the text.<sup>18</sup>

In summary, DA’s emphasis on a top-down and bottom-up analysis of the text produces a thorough interpretive result.

### *Meaning Resides above the Sentence Level*

A correlated principle to the top-down, bottom-up approach is that discourse analysis recognizes that meaning resides above the sentence level. Just as words and phrases cannot be understood in isolation, the meaning of a discourse can only be discovered through analysis of larger portions of text. Reed calls this principle the trademark of DA.<sup>19</sup> Linguist Talmy Givón affirms, “It has become obvious to a growing number of linguists that the study of the syntax of isolated sentences, extracted, without natural context from the purposeful constructions of speakers is a methodology that has outlived its usefulness.”<sup>20</sup> Givón referred to spoken discourse, but his

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<sup>17</sup> Porter, “How Can Biblical Discourse Be Analyzed?,” 113.

<sup>18</sup> Reed, “Discourse Analysis,” *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (New York: Brill, 1997), 194.

<sup>19</sup> Reed, “Discourse Analysis,” 191.

<sup>20</sup> Talmy Givón, “Preface,” *Syntax and Semantics. XII. Discourse and Syntax* (New York: Academic P, 1979), xiii.

statement is even more true of written discourse.<sup>21</sup> Most writers drive toward one big-picture message. Therefore, each sentence and paragraph is serving a purpose related to the central message and cannot be interpreted apart from that message. Guthrie explains,

No discourse simply consists of a collection of words or sentences, so that if you added up the semantic content of all the individual words and all the individual sentences, you could make sense of the discourse. No, words and sentences only have meaning as they are grouped appropriately and given their places in context.<sup>22</sup>

The value of this principle is clear. It protects the interpreter from over-emphasizing details of the text at the expense of the larger context. This is the all-too-common drawback of many commentaries. Guthrie adds,

Commentaries move section by section through a book, treating each section in a verse-by-verse, clause-by-clause, and sometimes word-by-word manner. Yet often there is little attempt to demonstrate how the words, clauses, and sentences in a paragraph work together to accomplish the author's goal for that paragraph in relation to the whole book or section of the book.<sup>23</sup>

Traditional exegetical commentaries tend to be helpful at explaining the trees, but fail to see the forest. In an effort to honor the particulars of the text, the particulars become distorted as they are pressed for meanings isolated from the overarching intent of the author. DA's emphasis on meaning above the sentence level keeps all words, phrases, and sentences in their appropriate context.

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<sup>21</sup> Reed, "Discourse Analysis," 191.

<sup>22</sup> Guthrie, "DA," 254.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 256–57.

### *Cohesion*

Since a biblical writer seeks to communicate one united message, his text will exhibit cohesion. Cohesion refers to how a writer unifies his work through various literary devices. Cohesion can be created in a number of different ways, including repetition of key words or concepts, hook words, inclusio, conjunctions, rhetorical questions, and the use of the vocative case. Each sentence and paragraph has a part to play in the discourse and the principle of cohesion seeks to discover what that part is. Linguist William Labov sees identifying cohesion the central task of discourse analysis.<sup>24</sup>

Apart from cohesion, communication would be nearly unintelligible. Reed states, “That there is a relationship, both semantically and grammatically, between the various parts of a text (cohesive ties), and that there is some thematic element that flows through it (information flow), results in cohesive discourse rather than a jumble of unrelated words and sentences.”<sup>25</sup> While traditional commentaries and exegetical sermons are not a jumble of unrelated statements, they can often be a collection of only loosely connected theological truths with no unifying force. In his book, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, Bryan Chapell rightly points out, “Listeners quickly tire of chasing ideas and anecdotes across the theological landscape in an effort to discover where their pastor is going.”<sup>26</sup> Discourse analysis is not only valuable in interpretation; its fruit will also be seen in more coherent sermons that show how each verse relates to the central purpose of the writer.

### *Prominence*

In order to aid the reader in recognizing the cohesion of his work, the biblical writer will mark out words, phrases, and ideas as important. The highlighting of key features in

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<sup>24</sup> William Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania P, 1972), 252.

<sup>25</sup> Reed, “Discourse Analysis,” 205.

<sup>26</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ-centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 44.

discourse is called prominence. According to Reed, prominence involves, "... drawing the listener/reader's attention to important topics and motifs of the discourse and supporting those topics with other less prominent material."<sup>27</sup> Apart from prominence, the reader has no way of determining what details are important and what details merely support the main ideas. Missionary linguist Robert Longacre compared a lack of prominence with being handed a black sheet of paper and being told, "'This is a picture of black camels crossing black sands at midnight.'"<sup>28</sup> If nothing is prominent, or everything is prominent, the main point and key features are lost.

## Determining Prominence

Like cohesion, prominence is shown in a variety of ways. Repeated words, focusing phrases, word order, boundary markers, verb tenses, and conjunctions are all ways an author may show what is prominent in the discourse. Different authors may also show prominence in different ways. The genre of the book may also play a role in determining which literary features are prominent.

*Verbal Aspect.* One example of how prominence can be shown is through verbal aspect. The terms *background*, *foreground*, and *frontground* are often used with reference to verbal aspect. Reed serves as a good example:

Background prominence is often signalled by clauses using the aorist tense (perfective aspect). Thematic prominence may be signalled by the present and imperfect tenses (imperfective aspect), as well as sometimes the future tense... Focal

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<sup>27</sup> Reed, "DA as NT Hermeneutic," 239.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Longacre, "Discourse Peak as Zone of Turbulence," in *Beyond the Sentence: Discourse and Sentential Form*, ed. J. R. Wirth (Ann Arbor, MI: Karoma, 1985), 83, quoted in Reed, "DA as NT Hermeneutic," 239.

prominence is signalled by the perfect and pluperfect tenses (stative aspect).<sup>29</sup>

Other writers use the language of *mainline* and *offline* to describe how aspect is used to give prominence.<sup>30</sup> Mainline describes what carries the narrative along and is usually indicated by the aorist tense. Offline material gives additional information that is not necessary to move the story along but focuses the reader's attention on significant details which help show the author's purpose. Offline material is typically shown through the imperfect and present tenses.

These categories have traditionally been applied to narrative passages, but apply to epistolary and other literature as well in similar ways. Reed points out,

The perfective aspect lends itself to general descriptions of an event, whereas the imperfective aspect suggests that the author is focusing on the particulars of an event. The stative aspect is even more accented, since the attention is laid upon an event that has resulted from other circumstances (i.e. a stative event stands at the centre of activity).<sup>31</sup>

So, in the epistles verbal aspect can help differentiate between general (or background) events and particular (or foreground) events.

*Markedness.* Another useful tool in discovering prominence is the concept of markedness. *Markedness* refers to "the concept by which a particular quality is regarded as neutral or expected, i.e., 'unmarked,' whereas an alternative, more unusual quality is considered 'marked.'"<sup>32</sup> For example, if

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<sup>29</sup> Reed, "Identifying Theme in the New Testament: Insights from Discourse Analysis," in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, 84-85.

<sup>30</sup> See Constantine R Campbell, *Verbal Aspect, the Indicative Mood, and Narrative: Soundings in the Greek of the New Testament*. (New York: Lang, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> Reed, "Identifying Theme," 85.

<sup>32</sup> William Bright, *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics* (New York: Oxford U P, 1992), 2:390.

someone were to describe the afternoon meal, an unmarked expression would be, “I ate lunch.” A marked expression could be, “I devoured my lunch.” The verb “ate” is unmarked, whereas “devoured” is marked for the quality of intensity. To use another example, when linking two sentences there is a difference between *and* and *because*. Both conjunctions signal continuity, but *because* is marked for indicating a causal relationship.<sup>33</sup> Thinking through the biblical writer’s use of marked and unmarked expressions is helpful in discovering prominence.

## Domains of Prominence

Because discourse analysis encompasses all the levels of discourse from words and clauses to paragraphs and sections, it becomes necessary to identify domains of discourse. An entire paragraph may have a background function in the discourse, but within that background paragraph there may be foreground and frontground elements to show what is prominent about the background information. Reed develops the idea in the following:

Another factor to consider when analysing prominence is *the domain or extent to which a linguistic element has prominence in the discourse....* What was thematic in the previous paragraph may only be background in the next. For this reason, one must speak of the domain of prominence, that is the extent to which a linguistic element maintains its degree of prominence.... The domain of prominence in New Testament discourse may involve the phrase (e.g. headword of a prepositional phrase), clause (e.g. rheme), paragraph (e.g. verbal aspect) or the entire discourse (e.g. epistolary formulas). Thus it is possible to speak of the *background* of phrases, clauses, paragraphs and discourses, the

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<sup>33</sup> For a detailed analysis of several Greek conjunctions, see Steven E Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson, 2010), 17-57.

*theme* of phrases, clauses, paragraphs and discourses, and the *focus* of phrases, clauses, paragraphs and discourses.”<sup>34</sup>

Determining domains of prominence becomes a crucial task of discourse analysis. In order to understand the coherent purpose of the writer, the discourse analyst must be able to differentiate what is prominent to the discourse as a whole, and what is merely prominent in a sub-domain.

## II. A Method of Discourse Analysis

Having laid the foundation of guiding principles of discourse analysis, one must now turn to methodology. The theory must be applied to prove useful for NT exegesis. It is clear from the principles above that any method of DA must account for both the big picture and the individual parts of a text. As Porter suggested through his pyramid analogy, the process of DA must be top-down and bottom-up. In fact, because DA emphasizes the interrelatedness of parts and big picture, its method must weave back and forth between the two. This weaving between big picture and parts, or forest and trees, is the only way to ensure proper understanding of each. The forest cannot be comprehended apart from understanding the trees; and the trees cannot be understood apart from the forest. A cyclical process will keep these relationships in balance.

The proposed method that follows involves seven steps. The first step is to familiarize one’s self with the historical context and genre. Second, the book should be read in one sitting in English. Steps three through seven are adapted and expanded from a method proposed by Guthrie.<sup>35</sup> These steps involve translation, identification of boundaries, exegetical analysis, synthesis, and interpretation. The seven steps provide a comprehensive method for arriving at both the big picture of a text and how each detail plays a role in the bigger picture.

The reader will undoubtedly note that many of the steps outlined above and detailed below are not new. The reason for

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<sup>34</sup> Reed, “Identifying Theme,” 80-81.

<sup>35</sup> Guthrie, “DA,” 260.

this is that discourse analysis is not a completely new theory, but a reorienting of traditional hermeneutics to give more significance to the big picture. Guthrie agrees, stating,

How then does a general approach to discourse analysis work with a process of exegesis? I propose that the two already are integrated when each is rightly conceived. This is why much of what we have already discussed simply sounds like good, contextually-sensitive exegesis. These are not two separate processes but, rather, one process executed on various levels. Discourse analysis incorporates all of what we normally consider exegesis, and thorough exegesis presupposes aspects of discourse analysis.<sup>36</sup>

Discourse analysis expands traditional exegesis by incorporating many principles of modern linguistics that bring the exegete back to what is often forgotten: the forest. Rigorous exegesis of the trees is completely necessary, just not divorced from the forest.

### ***Step 1: Familiarize Yourself with the Historical Context and Genre***

Even before reading a text it is fundamental to understand such things as when the book is being written, who is writing, and whom is addressed. These key pieces of information will shape how the text is understood. Is it written shortly after Christ's death or after the destruction of Jerusalem? Does the writer know his recipients? Do they have a lot of shared information? Are the recipients new converts? Is the letter written during a time of persecution or stress? Many of these issues will be found in the text itself, but a general overview from a trusted source is often a good place to start.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>37</sup> For example, see D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids.: Zondervan, 1992); or Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville: Nelson, 1983).

An overview of the genre is also helpful to set one's expectations as they prepare to study a passage. Reading a gospel account is different than reading an epistle. Narrative uses characters, plot, and setting to show prominence, whereas an epistle is much more straight-forward in its application. In narrative, the reader must often figure out what is significant. In an epistle, the author often explicitly tells the reader what is significant. Therefore, understanding the type of literature is a good first step in discourse analysis.<sup>38</sup>

### ***Step 2: Read the Book in One Sitting in English (Forest)***

With the setting and genre in mind, one can set out to read the book in English in one sitting. This step is obviously shorter or longer, depending on the book. If an epistle, it is a good idea to read through the book a few times. Reading straight through is recommended even with a gospel or longer epistle.<sup>39</sup> Detailed analysis is not necessary at this stage; the reader is simply trying to gain some big picture observations. Are there key words or themes repeated throughout the letter? What can be discovered about the writer or recipients? What situation is being addressed? Are there many commands or more description? Once again, one must not get bogged down in the details or problem passages but keep moving to appreciate the forest.

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<sup>38</sup> Good straightforward genre resources include J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-on Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 251ff.; Richard John Erickson, *A Beginner's Guide to New Testament Exegesis: Taking the Fear Out of Critical Method* (Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity, 2005), 114ff.

<sup>39</sup> Even the longer gospel accounts can typically be read in about an hour.

### ***Step 3: Translate the Book (Trees)***<sup>40</sup>

Step three is where the process begins getting down to the details. This step involves translating the book while highlighting key features that will be helpful in the next steps of analysis such as verb tenses, conjunctions, rhetorical questions, and the vocative case. Depending on the size of the book, this step could take several days or even weeks depending on other responsibilities. To accomplish this step for larger books, a pastor will likely have to plan ahead several weeks or translate one book as he is preaching through another.

In addition to highlighting key features in the text, step three is also a good place to isolate all the sentences. Many translations will translate longer Greek sentences into two or three sentences in English. Although this may be helpful for the English reader, it will hinder the process of discovering prominence. Isolating the sentences will be helpful in the next step.

### ***Step 4: Identify the Boundaries/Paragraphs (Forest)***

Once the book has been translated and propositions have been identified, the next step is to identify the paragraphs and boundary markers. To accomplish this one must look for things such as summary statements, chiasm, inclusio, repetition, and changes in subject, time, tense, or space. Genre considerations also come into play here. If the work is a letter, is there a greeting? Is there a clear division between doctrine and application? If the work is a narrative, where does one pericope end and the next begin? Are there temporal or spatial transition words? These features will be helpful in determining the big pieces of the discourse.

The domains of prominence must also be taken into consideration at this step. The interpreter must differentiate between large boundary markers and small boundary markers.

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<sup>40</sup> If there is no background in Greek or Hebrew, this step could be modified to a more careful English read-through highlighting the features listed in this section. However, some of the verb tenses, conjunctions, and propositions may not be clear in English.

This task can be difficult as the same boundary markers may be used in both instances.

Adding to the difficulty, one of the unique challenges to discourse analysis is that boundary markers are not an explicit category, but a variety of literary devices that can mark boundaries. What is a boundary marker in one place may not be in another. Therefore, the interpreter must pay careful attention to a variety of features to ensure proper identification of discourse boundaries.

### ***Step 5: Analyze Each Section/Paragraph – Prominence (Trees)***

Having identified the large boundaries of a discourse, the interpreter returns to the trees of textual analysis to identify the prominence and theme of each section. Sentence-level discourse analysis is crucial here. The works of translators Steven Runge and Stephen Levinsohn are very helpful at this stage.<sup>41</sup> Runge and Levinsohn do an excellent job of showing how NT authors use a variety of devices draw attention to prominent features at the sentence-level. Runge's chapter on the conjunctions is particularly helpful.<sup>42</sup> Rather than talking about a variety of ways conjunctions can be used (the traditional approach of most Greek grammars), he concentrates on the markedness of each conjunction and what differentiates them from one another. He then gives numerous examples showing how NT authors use conjunctions to help the reader process information. Levinsohn, likewise, speaks not to *what* things are (historical presents, conjunctions, or vocative case), but *why* certain devices are

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<sup>41</sup> See Steven Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010); and Stephen H Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek* (Dallas: SIL International, 2000). Because these works are categorized based on how language functions and not on traditional grammatical categories like case, tense, and mood, it is best to read through these works. Once the contents are familiar, they can then be used as references.

<sup>42</sup> Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 17-57.

used. It is not enough to identify a verb is a historical present; the reason an author chooses a historical present is the key interpretive issue.<sup>43</sup>

## Diagramming

Diagramming is often helpful at this stage as well. A visual representation of the text often aids the interpreter in his ability to understand the flow of a passage.

*Block Diagram.* For larger portions of Scripture, block diagramming is a good tool. Because narrative passages are less concerned with detail and more concerned with the big picture, it is often helpful to map out dialogue and changes in scene or plot.<sup>44</sup>

*Line Diagram.* Line diagramming can be helpful in gaining an appreciation for the role each word plays in the section under analysis. To line diagram the interpreter must discover how each word is functioning. This can be painstaking, but often pays good dividends in highly detailed epistolary passages.<sup>45</sup>

## Summary Statements

After the each portion of the text has been analyzed it is helpful to craft summary statements for each paragraph/section. The summary statements will assist the interpreter in identifying how all the individual sections come together to form a cohesive discourse.

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<sup>43</sup> Levinsohn, *Discourse Features*, 197-214.

<sup>44</sup> For help with block diagramming, also called phrasing or semantic diagramming, see William D. Mounce, *A Graded Reader of Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), xv; and George H Guthrie and J. Scott Duvall, *Biblical Greek Exegesis: A Graded Approach to Learning Intermediate and Advanced Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 39-98.

<sup>45</sup> For help with line diagramming see Lee L. Kantenwein, *Diagrammatical Analysis* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1984); and Darrell L. Bock and Buist M. Fanning, eds., *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 73-134.

### ***Step 6: Analyze How Each Section Fits Together – Cohesion (Forest)***

With summary statements in hand, the interpreter begins the process of formulating the single point of the discourse. Having the letter or gospel broken down into manageable summary statements should enable the interpreter to see how all the pieces come together to form a cohesive whole.

Once the overall purpose of the discourse has been identified, the interpreter must reword the summary statements to reflect the development of that purpose, using keywords both from the passage itself and the purpose statement of the discourse. This will show cohesion between the forest and the trees.

### ***Step 7: Interpret Difficult Words/Phrases/Sentences Considering the Discourse (Trees)***

The last step is to interpret difficult words, phrases, sentences, and passages by considering the entire discourse. Frequently, isolated passages cause great difficulty in interpretation because their placement in the discourse is not understood. However, a precise understanding of the overall flow and purpose of the discourse clears up many difficult interpretive issues by showing exactly what the writer is trying to accomplish through his use of a word or phrase in the big picture. Interpreting difficult passages at this late stage enables the interpreter to know precisely what questions the author is trying to answer or information he is trying to provide, thus eliminating the danger of pressing a text beyond its intent.

## **III. A Method of Discourse Analysis Applied to Jude**

For discourse analysis to continue to be viable, a clear method must be devised that fulfills the promise of its theoretical benefits. The proposed method will now be tested on the Epistle of Jude. It must be shown that discourse analysis produces superior exegetical results to traditional hermeneutics.

### ***Step 1: Familiarize Yourself with the Historical Context***

The Epistle of Jude was most likely written between AD 65 and 70.<sup>46</sup> The author is Jude, the brother of James (Jude 1) and half-brother of Jesus. The recipients are clearly believers, being identified in verse 1 as “called,” “beloved,” and “kept.” Not much is known about the occasion, provenance, or destination of the letter, other than to say that there are certainly false teachers in their midst (3).<sup>47</sup>

Because Jude is a letter, one would expect to see the typical components of a letter including greeting, purpose, main argument, exhortation, and closing benediction or doxology.<sup>48</sup> Deviations from the expected components may indicate significance.

### ***Step 2: Read the Book in One Sitting in English (Forest)***

With the broad historical context and genre in mind, it is now time to read through the letter in one sitting. Because the book is so short, this should be done a few times. Note the following forest-level observations.

### **Repeated Words/Concepts<sup>49</sup>**

Several words are repeated throughout the letter:

- *Mercy, love, and faith* open and close the letter (2; 20-23). Interestingly, these words do not occur anywhere in between the opening and closing.
- The word *ungodly* is in verse 4 and repeated four times in verse 15 (three times in Greek<sup>50</sup>).

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<sup>46</sup> D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1992).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 693.

<sup>48</sup> Erickson, *Beginner's Guide*, 126.

<sup>49</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all English Scripture references are from the *New American Standard Bible*. (Anaheim; La Habra: Foundation Publications; The Lockman Foundation, 1997).

<sup>50</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Greek Scripture references are from Kurt Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament: Fourth revised edition edited by Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M.*

- The concept of *disobedience* is repeated throughout the main body of the letter: “licentiousness” (4), “did not believe” (5), “abandoned” (6), “gross immorality” (7), “defile” (8), “revile” (10), and several additional descriptions in verses 16 and 19.
- The concept of *punishment* is also repeated: “condemnation” (4), “destroyed” (5), “eternal bonds” (6), “punishment of eternal fire” (7), “perished in rebellion” (11), and “execute judgment” (15).

## Themes

In addition to repeated words and concepts, several themes are evident from a preliminary reading:

- With the concepts of disobedience and punishment repeated, Jude emphasizes the theme of judgment for sin. It is Christ who is shown as judging the ungodly (5-7; 14-15).
- False converts/teachers are also a theme. The people described throughout the letter are in the midst of the believers (3).
- There is historical theme to the letter. There are at least eight explicit OT references: Egypt (5), angels (6), Sodom and Gomorrah (7), Michael (9), Cain, Balaam, and Korah (11), and Enoch (14). Once again, these also share the theme of judgment for rebellion or disobedience.

## Situational Context

As stated in the historical background, it is clear from the text that the author is Jude (1). It is also clear that his audience is comprised of believers (1-3). Jude also alerts the reader to the purpose of his letter. He had originally intended to write to the recipients about their shared salvation, but had to modify his

purpose because of the false teachers' infiltration (3-4). The false teachers are then characterized as sharing many similar features to disobedient and judged OT unbelievers, including a contempt for God (4; 8) and desire to upset his people (16; 19).

### **Other Significant Observations**

The Epistle is clearly a letter. It contains many of the traditional components of a letter: a greeting (1-2), an occasion (3-4), an explanation of the problem faced (4-16), an exhortation in light of the problem faced (17-23), and a doxology (24-25). There do not appear to be any significant deviations from a typical letter.

#### ***Step 3: Translate the Book (Trees)***

After translating the book and highlighting the verbs, conjunctions, and vocatives, this author identified the following 16 sentences with main thoughts indicated:

Proposition 1. Verses 1-2: Mercy and peace to you.

Proposition 2. Verse 3: I had necessity to write to you.

Proposition 3. Verse 4: For some men have sneaked in

Proposition 4. Verse 5-7: I am desiring to remind you.

Proposition 5. Verse 8: These defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme glory.

Proposition 6. Verse 9: Michael said, "The LORD rebuke you."

Proposition 7. Verse 10: These know yet blaspheme and do not understand.

Proposition 8. Verse 11: Woe to them.

Proposition 9. Verses 12-13: These are [5 metaphors].

Proposition 10. Verses 14-15: Enoch prophesied.

Proposition 11. Verse 16: These are fault-finding grumblers and they speak boastfully.

Proposition 12. Verses 17-18: But you let the words be remembered.

Proposition 13. Verse 19: These are dividers, worldly, and ungodly goers.

Proposition 14. Verses 20-21: But you keep yourselves in the love of God.

Proposition 15. Verses 22-23: Have mercy, save, and have mercy with fear.

Proposition 16. Verses 24-25: Glory, majesty, power, and authority to the able One.

#### ***Step 4: Identify the Boundaries/Paragraphs (Forest)***

Now that the propositions have been identified it is time to determine boundary markers. In Jude, the boundary markers are clear. The main sections are:

- I. Opening (1-2)
- II. Main Body (3-23)
  - a. Occasion/Purpose of Writing (3-4)
  - b. Description of Opponents and Their End (5-16)
  - c. Response Exhorted to the Believers (17-23)
- III. Doxology (24-25)

The opening in verses 1-2 is clear. The sender and recipients are identified and greeted.<sup>51</sup> The use of the vocative address in verse 3 marks a transition. The occasion and purpose of the letter are then explained. Jude expresses his need to write (3) and gives the reason (4) with the use of the conjunction γάρ. The occasion and purpose also mark the transition into the main body of the letter. Verse 5 begins with the transitional formula, “I want to remind you...”<sup>52</sup> and verses 5-16 deal with the opponents, moving back and forth between OT examples and the present oppressors. The use of the vocative in verses 17 and 20 clearly mark out those propositions as forming the exhortation.<sup>53</sup> The doxology<sup>54</sup> in verses 24-25 is also clearly defined.

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<sup>51</sup> Bock and Fanning, *Interpreting the NT Text*, 230-31.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>53</sup> There is some scholarly discussion about whether verses 17-19 should be considered with the previous section or starting the exhortation. The use of the vocative and imperative lead this writer to include it with the exhortation, even though the structure of the exhortation is similar to verses 5-16, with both a scriptural reference and reference to the opponents

## *Step 5: Analyze Each Section/Paragraph – Prominence (Trees)*

### **I. Opening (1-2)**

*Main Idea.* The main idea of these opening verses is the desire for mercy and love to be multiplied to the recipients. This idea is expressed with the optative mood of *πληθυνθείη* as a wish or blessing.<sup>55</sup>

*Prominence.* As an opening, this is not the most prominent part of the whole letter, but there are prominent features of the opening itself. Jude highlights his standing as a slave of Jesus Christ by fronting *Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*. He also gives prominence to the identity of his recipients with two perfect participles: *ἡγαπημένοις* and *τετηρημένοις*. The most important thing about his readers is that they are beloved by the Father and protected by Jesus Christ.

*Summary Statement:* May mercy and grace be multiplied to the beloved of God and protected by Christ's called ones.

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as “these.” For more thoughts on this structure, see Carroll Osburn, “Discourse Analysis and Jewish Apocalyptic in the Epistle of Jude,” in *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis*, ed. David Alan Black et al. (Nashville.: Broadman, 1992), 287ff.; Jason Johnston, “The Multichiasmic Structure of Jude and Its Contribution to the Purpose of the Epistle” (Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2008); Paul Robert Snyder, “A Comparison of Discourse Analyses of 2 Peter and Jude” (Thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 2014). For an opposing viewpoint, see Clinton W. Bergman, “A Structural and Exegetical Analysis of Jude” (Baptist Bible Graduate School of Theology, 2008).

<sup>54</sup> Bock and Fanning, *Interpreting the NT Text*, 237.

<sup>55</sup> Andreas J Köstenberger, Benjamin L Merkle, and Robert L Plummer, *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2016), 207; and Daniel B Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament: with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 481-82.

## **IIa. Main Body: Occasion/Purpose of Writing (3-4)**

*Main Idea.* The main idea of verses 3-4 is Jude's necessity to write to his readers. He gives the reason for the necessity in verse 4: some men have snuck into their midst.

*Prominence.* The use of the vocative Ἀγαπητοί draws the readers' attention and connects back to their designation in the greeting. Regarding Jude's necessity to write, he includes his eagerness to write about their common salvation and an exhortation to contend for the faith. Jude gives significance to "once-delivered" aspect of the faith by fronting the description.

When Jude moves on to the reason for his writing in verse 4, he uses three participles to highlight characteristics of the opponents. They have been written about for judgment (προγεγραμμένοι); they are perverting the grace of God (μετατιθέντες); and they are denying Jesus Christ (ἀρνούμενοι). The first of the participles is given prominence, as it is in the perfect tense. These men are destined for judgment. The following two participles underscore the reason for their judgment: what they do and to whom they do it. The identification of Jesus Christ as the only master and Lord is fronted to emphasize the heinousness of their perversion.

*Summary Statement:* Jude has a great need to write because men have sneaked in who are destined for judgment because of their perversion of grace and denial of Christ.

## **IIb. Main Body: Description of Opponents and Their End (5-16)**

*Main Idea.* The main idea of 5-16 is twofold. Jude reminds his readers of how Christ has dealt with his opponents in the past and how his readers' opponents resemble the ungodly that Christ has dealt with in the past.

*Prominence.* The main idea is accomplished by an alternating pattern of OT examples (mainly aorist tense indicatives) and present description of the opponents (all present tense indicatives). Prominence is given to the present description of the opponents against the background of how

people like them have been dealt with in the past. There is repetition of the word οὔτοι to begin each sentence that deals with the present character of the opponents (vv. 8, 10, 12, 16). The alternating pattern is represented in the list below:

- Verses 5-7: The Lord *destroyed* unbelievers in Egypt and *has kept* rebellious angels for judgment, just as he *exposed* Sodom and Gomorrah for punishment.
  - Note: The three verbs from this section will be repeated throughout the rest of this section.
- Verse 8: “These” not only defile the flesh, but also reject authority and blaspheme the majestic one.
  - The μὲν-δέ; construction highlights the rejection and blaspheming.
- Verse 9: Michael does not dare rebuke Satan, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.”
  - The use of ἀλλά; emphasizes Michael’s appropriate response to Satan against a worse alternative.
- Verse 10: “These” not only blaspheme, but are destroyed.
  - Another μὲν-δέ; construction is used to emphasize the outcome of their blaspheming: their destruction. This also repeats the first verb of verse 5. The present opponents are destroyed just as the Lord’s enemies were destroyed in Egypt.
- Verse 11: Woe is pronounced on the opponents because they are following the pattern of Cain, Balaam, and the rebellion of Korah.
- Verses 12-13: “These” are described using five metaphors: hidden reefs, waterless clouds, fruitless trees, wild waves, and wandering stars.
  - The final description of “these” opponents is that the deep gloom of eternal darkness has been kept for them. This repeats the same verb used in verse 6.

- Verses 14-15: Enoch prophesied against judgment and exposure against similar people in the past.
  - The verb ἐλέγξει echoes the idea of πρόκεινται of verse 7. Both share the idea of exposure for shameful deeds.
- Verse 16: “These” are described as grumblers and pompous talkers.

The alternating structure with prominence given to the present-day opponents reminds the readers that Christ will deal with people like the ones they are facing. The inclusion of the verses about Michael also caution the readers not to take matters into their own hands when dealing with their opponents, but leave them to Christ.

*Summary Statement:* Remember Christ will deal with “these” opponents.

### **IIc. Main Body: Response Exhorted to the Believers (17-23)**

*Main Idea.* The main idea of the exhortation given to Jude’s readers is also twofold: specific and general.<sup>56</sup> There are two things they must do right away due to their circumstances, and three things they need to do in general whenever they encounter certain situations. Instead of pronouncing judgment on their opponents, Jude’s readers should allow Christ’s words to be remembered and keep themselves in the love of God. These two specific commands are then followed by three general commands.

*Prominence.* Jude draws the readers’ attention with the use of the vocative once again, echoing their description from the opening of the letter as “beloved.” The first specific exhortation to the readers mirrors the previous alternating structure. They

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<sup>56</sup> Specific commands are typically expressed with the aorist tense, while general, way-of-life commands are expressed with the present tense. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 719ff.; and Constantine R Campbell, *Verbal Aspect and Non-Indicative Verbs: Further Soundings in the Greek of the New Testament* (New York: P. Lang, 2009), 79ff.

are told to remember what the apostle of Christ spoke about the certainty of ungodly ones in the last days. It is significant here that Jude does not name which apostle said those words. By doing this he emphasizes that Christ is the ultimate source of the prophecy. Following the exhortation to remember, “these” are described once again as divisive, worldly, and not having the Spirit. Prominence is once again given to the present description.

The second specific command is to keep themselves in the love of God by building themselves up in the faith, praying in the Spirit, and looking forward to the mercy of Christ. The word “keep” also echoes their description in the opening as those kept by Christ. Mercy is also a repeat of something from the opening of the letter. The readers are not to judge and condemn their opponents, but remember that they too were undeserving of eternal life.

The general commands deal with how Jude’s readers should interact with those who have been influenced by the opponents. In addition to showing mercy on the doubters, they are to recognize the destructive nature of their opponents and seek to save others from fire and have mercy with fear.

The use of the vocative address gives prominence to the aorist tense commands of remember and keep yourselves in the love of God. These are the two things Jude’s readers must do.

*Summary Statement:* Remember the words of Christ, keep yourselves in the love of God, and show mercy.

### III. Doxology (24-25)

*Main Idea.* The main idea of the doxology is that the Father should receive glory, majesty, power, and authority.

*Prominence.* Prominence in the doxology is given to the description of the Father as the one who is able to protect and cause to stand. The participle φυλάξαι echoes the idea of the participle τετηρημένοις from the opening as well. The readers are protected by Christ and have as a Savior one able to protect.

*Summary Statement:* Praise God for His protection through Christ.

## ***Step 6: Analyze How Each Section Fits Together – Cohesion (Forest)***

### **Initial Summary Statements**

I. Opening (1-2): May mercy and grace be multiplied to the beloved of God and protected by Christ called ones.

II. Main Body:

- a. Occasion/Purpose of Writing (3-4): Jude has a great need to write because men have sneaked in who are destined for judgment because of their perversion of grace and their denial of Christ.
- b. Description of Opponents and Their End (5-16): Remember Christ will deal with “these” opponents.
- c. Response Exhorted to the Believers (17-23): Remember the words of Christ, keep yourselves in the love of God, and show mercy.

III: Doxology (24-25): Praise God for His protection through Christ.

### **Synthesis of Summary Statements**

The initial summary statements already exhibit a good amount of cohesion. The letter begins and ends by referring to God’s protection of the believer. Christ is central to the letter as well appearing in every summary statement. Remembering is also a key component of the letter. Synthesizing these components into one “big-picture” statement for the letter of Jude results in the following:

When faced with people that deny Christ, those beloved by God and protected by Christ must remember that Christ deals with his enemies, keep themselves in the love of God, and show mercy.

The synthesis of the letter of Jude condenses the main thrust of the work into one sentence, picking up components that run throughout the discourse.

### ***Step 7: Interpret Difficult Words/Phrases/Sentences in Light of the Discourse (Trees)***

This final stage allows the interpreter to work back through the discourse with the “big picture” in mind. Each section can now be analyzed taking the full discourse into account.

#### **I. Opening (1-2)**

The initial observations about the prominence of the believer’s beloved and protected status is corroborated by the repetition of these key identifiers throughout the discourse. Jude’s identification of himself as a slave of Jesus Christ is also noteworthy. He is not like the ones who deny their master and Lord (4), reject His authority and blaspheme His majesty (8).

#### **IIa. Occasion/Purpose of Writing (3-4)**

The occasion once again highlights the believer’s special status as beloved. The prominence of the unbeliever’s having been written about (προγεγραμμένοι) is corroborated through the numerous OT references throughout the remainder of the letter. Their disobedience is not new and will be dealt with by Christ. The unbeliever’s perversion of grace into licentiousness and denial of their master and Lord is also echoed throughout the main body of the discourse.

#### **IIb. Description of Opponents and Their End (5-16)**

Jude’s portrait of the present opponents against the backdrop of their OT counterparts is masterful. He describes the decisive way Christ has dealt with his enemies in the past and highlights the way the present opponents are behaving in the same way as those who were judged and destroyed. Jude does not overtly state the fate of the present-day opponents, but leaves it to the readers to draw their own conclusions. He essentially asks the reader the rhetorical question, “If this is how Christ has dealt with his enemies in the past, what will become of those exhibiting these same traits today?”

The point of this section is that the believer does not need to worry about executing judgment of those that deny Christ. In fact, like Michael, they should not dare to pronounce judgment, but leave that in the hands of their Lord (9). Christ's judgment of unbelievers is also a comfort to the believer. They indeed see that they have been shown mercy and love (1-2). They also need not fear judgment as they are and always will be protected (1; 24).

### **IIc. Response Exhorted to the Believers (17-23)**

The recipients having been freed from the need to combat their opponents, Jude now exhorts them to remember the words of Christ, keep themselves in the love of God, and show mercy. These commands flesh out what Jude had in mind when he told them to contend for the faith in verse 3. Contending for the faith does not mean fighting or judging those that deny Christ. Instead, contending for the faith is three-fold. First, it involves remembering Christ's words. Second, it means keeping one's self in the love of God by building one's self up in the faith, praying in the Spirit, and looking forward to Christ's mercy. And third, it means showing that same mercy to those under the influence of those that deny Christ.

An appreciation for the entire discourse allows the reader to see what Jude has in mind when he exhorts him to contend for the faith. Without considering the entire discourse, many may think contending for the faith involves battling and fighting for the truth or even battling with those that deny Christ. Although these ideas are not necessarily unbiblical, it is clear from the context that this is not what Jude has in mind.

### **III. Doxology (24-25)**

Often referred to as a benediction, the last verse of Jude is actually a doxology. A benediction pronounces a blessing on the reader, whereas a doxology ascribes praise to God. It is fitting that Jude should end his letter by reminding his readers once again of the blessedness of the God who protects them without stumbling and will cause them to stand before his

glory. They need not fear their opponents, for they are protected. They need not fear their own stumbling, for they are bolstered. They may focus their attention on praising God's work through Christ and showing His mercy to others.

### **Possible Sermon Outlines for Jude**

With a comprehensive understanding of the book as a whole and how each part is functioning, it is now possible to suggest several different sermon outlines for Jude. There is an outline presented for the whole letter, as well as a 4-part sermon series. Within the series, there are recommended cross references to alert the hearer to the cohesion of the discourse.

**Big Picture Idea for Jude:** When faced with people that deny Christ, those beloved by God and protected by Christ must remember that Christ deals with his enemies, keep themselves in the love of God, and show mercy.

#### *Single Sermon for the Whole Book*

Title: Live for Christ, Even When Others Don't

When faced with people who deny Christ:

1. Treasure your identity as beloved of God and protected by Christ (1-2; 24-25)
2. Remember Christ will deal decisively with his enemies (3-16)
3. Keep yourself in the love of God and show mercy (17-23)

#### *4-Part Sermon Series*

##### **Message 1: Jude 1-4**

Title: How to Deal with Christ's Enemies

1. Recognize there will always be enemies of Christ amidst his people (3-4; cf. 17-19)
2. Delight that Christ's enemies cannot affect your beloved and protected status (1-2; cf. 24-25)
3. Contend for the faith which extols the grace of God and mercy of Christ (3-4; cf. 20-23)

## **Message 2: Jude 5-16**

Title: What Will Happen to Those that Deny Christ?

1. Remember how Christ has dealt with his enemies throughout history (5-7; 9; 11; 14-15)
2. Consider what will become of those who presently resist Christ (8; 10; 12-13; 16)
3. Resist the urge to take matters into your own hands and respond rightly (9; cf. 17-23)

## **Message 3: Jude 17-23**

Title: Living for Christ amid Ungodliness

1. Don't be surprised by ungodliness (17-19; cf. 5-16)
2. Keep yourself in the love of God (20-21) by
  - a. Strengthening yourself in the faith (Past)
  - b. Praying in the Spirit (Present)
  - c. Looking forward to Christ's gift of eternal life (future)
3. Mercifully save as many as you can (22-23)

## **Message 4: Jude 24-25**

Title: A Life of Praise in Trying Times

1. Praise God for his protecting and sustaining care (24; cf. 1-2)
2. Praise God for his accomplishments through Christ (25a)
3. Eagerly anticipate praising God for all eternity (25b)

## **Conclusion**

Returning to the two key questions raised by Reed in the introduction, if discourse analysis is going to continue, it must be shown (1) how it is unique; and (2) how it can advance NT interpretation. Discourse analysis is unique because it irrevocably binds the forest and the trees. One cannot be examined apart from the other. Traditional exegesis has tended to emphasize the trees above the forest. It is rare to find a commentary that does an adequate job explaining how

individual passages are functioning within the discourse. When tree sermons are preached apart from the forest, it becomes difficult for the believer to hear the voice of his Shepherd as the passage is robbed of its intended meaning.

Discourse analysis can advance the field of NT interpretation by presenting a full-orbed method of exegesis that always considers both the forest and the trees. The method proposed in this paper accomplishes this by alternating between big picture and smaller details. This cyclical process ensures that the relationship between forest and trees is always in view. The big picture is never lost; and the details of smaller passages are understood within big picture. Thus, a more precise and powerful interpretation is found resulting in more precise and powerful sermons where the voice of Christ can be clearly heard and applied.

# Enter: The Dragon Exegesis of Revelation 12:1-6

Michael Dellaperute

**My remembrance of Dr. Bill Arp:** I had the privilege of studying Greek under Dr. Arp while pursuing my PhD. My first impression of Dr. Arp was that of soft-spoken, elderly gentleman who disdained technology and paused for an inordinately long time before answering a question. I came to respect him as a man of God with a brilliant mind who could not only understand and explain complicated linguistic theory, but also remember the names and hometowns of his students. Dr. Arp genuinely loved the Lord and his word, and he created a hunger in the minds of his students. Along with introducing me to NT Discourse Analysis, Dr. Arp impressed on all his students the importance of determining the author's intended meaning of a passage. This led to my exegetical work in determining the meaning of the Revelation 12:1-6 pericope and its place in the context of the book of Revelation as a whole.

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“The Bible may be said to begin and end with the story of a Serpent. In the book of Genesis, a serpent, more subtle than any beast of the field, tempted the woman in Paradise; in the Book of Revelation a dragon stood before the woman to devour her child,” observes Edward Ulback.<sup>2</sup> Although the contents of Revelation 12:1-6 have served to ignite the imagination of readers for generations, the meaning has befuddled the mind of many an interpreter. This cryptic vision includes complex symbolism such as a dazzling woman arrayed in celestial bodies

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<sup>2</sup> Edward Ulback, “The Serpent in Myth and Scripture.” *BibSac* 90, no. 360 (October 1933): 449.

who births a son; the mysterious removal of the man-child destined to rule the nations; and a multi-headed dragon with a ferocious appetite and a tail powerful enough to dislodge stars from their heavenly abode. Yet the author's single, intended meaning of the passage is both attainable and foundational for understanding the ensuing events of the Apocalypse.

### Textual Criticism

The passage that innocently begins with the clause Καὶ σημεῖον μέγα ὄφθη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ (Rev 12:1, UBS4) ends with the statement: καὶ ἐστάθη ἐπὶ τὴν ἄμμον τῆς θαλάσσης (Rev 12:18, UBS4).<sup>3</sup> The treatment of this final clause is a matter of contention among modern translations.<sup>4</sup> Several witnesses replace ἐστάθη with ἐστάθην, including the Majority Text and the Vulgate.<sup>5</sup> However, the presence of this variant can be explained by reasoned eclecticism.<sup>6</sup> Internally, the third person singular is initially given preference over the first person singular due to the shorter and more difficult reading axioms.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the inclusion of the first person singular ending can be explained as either an unintentional addition due to the

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<sup>3</sup> Revelation 12:1-13:18 is a literary unit that stands in apposition to Revelation 14:1-13. The opening of the temple in Revelation 11:19 serves to introduce the section, and the two visions of Revelation 14:14-20 draw it to a close.

<sup>4</sup> The ESV attaches the clause “And he stood on the sand of the sea” to the end of 12:17. The NET creates an additional verse and adds the referent “And the dragon stood ...” (12:18). The NASB also inserts the clarifier “The dragon,” but places the clause in 13:1. The NKJV also places the clause at the beginning of chapter 13, but interprets it according to the variant “Then I stood. ...” This sampling demonstrates the difficulty this passage has caused.

<sup>5</sup> *New English Translation Novum Testamentum Graece Greek text and critical apparatus Nestle-Aland* (Dallas, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft: 2004), 656.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Wallace, “Laying a Foundation: New Testament Textual Criticism,” in *Interpreting the New Testament Text*, ed. Darrell Bock and Buist Fanning (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006, 45). Reasoned eclecticism is a balanced approach that “treats external and internal evidence equally.”

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-47.

proximity of τὴν or as an intentional attempt by a copyist to force ἐστάθην to agree with εἶδον (Rev 13:1).<sup>8</sup> Externally, credible witnesses that support the third person singular reading include Papyrus 47, Aleph, A, and C.<sup>9</sup> Finally, a grammatical analysis of the passage would assign either ὁ δράκων as the antecedent of ἐστάθη or the author as the antecedent of ἐστάθην.<sup>10</sup> Contextually, the use of the coordinate conjunction καὶ in the subsequent clause grammatically links the events of Revelation 12 to the events of Revelation 13, indicating that the rise of the beast ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης is initiated by the one who stood ἐπὶ τὴν ἄμμον τῆς θαλάσσης. Accordingly, the contents of Revelation 12:1-6 serve to introduce the dragon as the primary antagonist of humanity, a theme that is continued in Revelation 13. This is the ancient serpent (Rev 12:9) who instigated the conflict in Genesis 3 and will ultimately be crushed by Jesus Christ when he returns (Rev 19:11ff). The sinister events that follow are set in motion by this ancient enemy of mankind, as revealed to John in epic form. Therefore, on to the scene of the apocalypse, enter: the dragon.

### Genre Analysis

No academic consensus exists regarding the literary form of Revelation. Because the author introduces his work with the term ἀποκάλυψις (Rev 1:1) and later describes it as προφητείας (Rev 1:3), the two most common genres assigned to Revelation are apocalyptic and prophecy. These labels are typically employed either independently or collectively, and they are normally implemented to defend the use of allegory or intertestamental literature as exegetical tools.<sup>11</sup> Collins provided

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<sup>8</sup> G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), p. 681.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> ὁ δράκων of 12:3ff is the central character of the narrative. The author plays a passive role in this passage.

<sup>11</sup> Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 284. Osborne identifies apocalyptic intertestamental literature as a major interpretative source. Walvoord explains the use of

the foundation for the classification of the apocalyptic genre by comparing the recurring characteristics of late antiquity eastern Mediterranean writings.<sup>12</sup> His seminal views on apocalyptic genre have been developed by recent scholarship. Bandy states, “The book of Revelation belongs to the apocalyptic/prophetic genre, and the apocalyptic genre by definition is highly symbolic. It is not intended to be interpreted in a literal manner.”<sup>13</sup> Beale concurs with Brandy, initially defining Revelation by “the three genres of apocalyptic, prophecy, and epistle”<sup>14</sup> before ultimately labeling the literary sub-genre dubbed “Apocalyptic-prophetic.”<sup>15</sup> In contrast, Thomas rejects both the apocalyptic label and the subsequent hermeneutics that accompany it, electing instead for a “Visional-prophetic” sub-genre.<sup>16</sup>

The concerted efforts of form critics to identify the literary form of Revelation with either ἀποκάλυψις or προφητείας have

allegory (*The Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary* [Chicago: Moody, 1966], 16).

<sup>12</sup> John Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia*, no.14 (1979): 5. Collins ultimately defines apocalyptic as “a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world” (9).

<sup>13</sup> Alan Bandy, “The Hermeneutics of Symbolism: How to Interpret the Symbols of John’s Apocalypse,” *SBJT* 14, no.1 (Spring 2010): 48. Although Bandy accurately identifies the symbols of Revelation as visual metaphors, his genre-driven hermeneutic forces him into to allegorical conclusions.

<sup>14</sup> Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 37. Beale rightly notes the “epistolary form” of Revelation stating, “This book both begins and concludes in typical epistolary manner” (38-39). Therefore, at minimum, the argument can be made that Revelation is a conglomerate of narrative, prophetic, apocalyptic, and epistolary genres. Beale finally appeals to Carson, Moo, and Morris’s identification of Revelation’s genre as “a prophecy cast in an apocalyptic mold and written down in letter form” (Ibid.).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Thomas, *Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 29.

resulted in anachronistic use of both words. Neither noun was originally implemented by the author of Revelation to identify the literary genre of his work. The nominative absolute phrase Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ actually introduces the author's subject.<sup>17</sup> This phrase serves as the title of the book, rather than a revelation of the author's literary form. And, as Collins ironically notes, "The title is not a reliable guide to the genre."<sup>18</sup> Stronger support for genre identification could be garnered from the phrase τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας, which is utilized by the author in order to appeal to divine authority.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, while recognizing that classifying Revelation as any genre is a highly speculative exegetical decision, this article will approach Revelation as a prophetic book of Scripture.

### Exegetical Method

The prophecy of Revelation was communicated through a series of visions that are introduced with the aorist verb ἐσήμανεν (Rev 1:1).<sup>20</sup> These visions contain highly symbolic language that is challenging to decipher. Fruchtenbaum identifies two extreme, errant approaches to interpreting the symbols of Revelation. The first, which assumes that the book cannot be understood, results in idealism; while the second, which ascribes the symbols to "unchecked speculation" results

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<sup>17</sup> Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 50, 120-21. Wallace identifies Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ as a plenary genitive, making the entire phrase the title, and Christ the theme.

<sup>18</sup> Collins, "Introduction," 2. If Collins's definition of apocalyptic genre is to be given credence in modern scholarship, then so should his method of application.

<sup>19</sup> BAGD, 722. BAGD identifies this term as "Utterances by Christian prophets." Wallace identifies this as a genitive of apposition, functioning exegetically (*Greek Grammar*, 95-99). To assign a literary form of either prophecy or apocalyptic to this text based on these words would be an anachronistic fallacy.

<sup>20</sup> Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 50-51. Beale stresses the "symbolic communication" nuance of the root.

in sensationalism.<sup>21</sup> Defining a consistent hermeneutic method to interpret the symbols of Revelation is essential for accurate exegesis.

There are six exegetical guidelines to interpreting the symbols of the Apocalypse. First, all symbols in Revelation will be treated as metaphors. Osborne asserts that meaning of these metaphors is, “Found ... in the use of that symbol in its ancient setting.”<sup>22</sup> This principle restricts the expositor to identifying the author’s intended meaning for each symbol, thereby preventing sensationalism. Second, Bandy affirms that “Symbols are intended to reveal meaning rather than conceal it.”<sup>23</sup> Not only does the author intend to convey a single message with each symbol in Revelation, but the meaning of each symbol is attainable. Application of this principle satisfactorily addresses the idealistic fringe of interpretation. Third, Thomas notes that a normal, grammatical historical method of interpretation must be applied to all Scripture. However, Thomas argues that this method must retain “a distinction between symbols and figurative language.”<sup>24</sup> Such a literal approach will recognize that the symbols in Revelation 12:1-6 are intended to communicate a message while maintaining that the author is conveying the contents of an actual vision. Fourth, when the author of Revelation assigns a meaning to a symbol anywhere in Revelation, that symbol must be consistently interpreted by the author’s guidelines everywhere in Revelation. For example, in Revelation 12:1-6, ὁ δράκων is identified as ὁ Σατανᾶς (Rev 12:9) and τῶν ἀστέρων τοῦ οὐρανοῦ are identified as οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ (Rev 12:9).<sup>25</sup> These symbols must be consistently interpreted throughout the Apocalypse. Fifth, when the author of Revelation does not

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<sup>21</sup> Arnold Fruchtenbaum, “The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation,” *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 28.

<sup>22</sup> Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 283.

<sup>23</sup> Bandy, “Hermeneutics of Symbolism,” 49.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 35-38.

<sup>25</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1966), 29. Also, Bandy, “Hermeneutics of Symbolism,” 49-51.

explain the meaning of a symbol, Scripture must interpret that symbol. Although scholars disagree on the exact number of OT allusions in Revelation, most acknowledge that the OT is referenced hundreds of times throughout the book.<sup>26</sup> The author's consistent appeal to the OT coupled with his theme of Christ's return makes the OT and the gospels the primary tools for interpreting the symbols of Revelation. Finally, the reader may only search beyond the bounds of Scripture for the meaning of a symbol when instructed to do so by the author (Rev 13:18; 17:9). This final principle precludes the dependence on zodiac charts, intertestamental apocalyptic literature, or even current events to interpret Revelation.<sup>27</sup>

### Theological Approach

There are several competing theological approaches that influence the interpretation of Revelation. These include the preteristic, idealistic, historicist, futurist, and eclectic viewpoints.<sup>28</sup> Preterism approaches Revelation with the presupposition that the text describes events that have been fulfilled in the first century.<sup>29</sup> Adherents to the idealistic school view Revelation as a "symbolic portrayal of the conflict between good and evil."<sup>30</sup> Both methods consider Revelation "a highly figurative book that we cannot approach with straightforward literalism."<sup>31</sup> Historicism perceives Revelation

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<sup>26</sup> Fruchtenbaum, "Use of the OT," 28. Fruchtenbaum identifies about 550 allusions. Thomas notes, "Of the 404 verses in the Apocalypse, 278 allude to the OT Scripture" (*Revelation 1-7*, 40).

<sup>27</sup> Walvoord, *Revelation*, 27.

<sup>28</sup> Charles Ryrie, *Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1966), 8-10. Although this list is not exhaustive, these first four approaches are representative of the major theological views of Revelation. See also Beale who combines elements of several traditional viewpoints into an "eclectic approach" (*Book of Revelation*, 44-50).

<sup>29</sup> Kenneth Gentry, "A Preterist View of Revelation," in *Four Views on Revelation*, ed. Stanley Gundry and Marvin Pate (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 37.

<sup>30</sup> Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 48.

<sup>31</sup> Gentry, "Preterist View," 38.

as “a panorama of church history from John’s time until the second advent.”<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, the futurist interprets Revelation “very literally and generally sees the order of the vision as representing the historical order of future events.”<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, futurists interpret the body of Revelation (Rev 4:1-19:10) as describing the events of the tribulation. The tribulation is a future seven-year period of judgment on earth directly pertaining to Israel, immediately preceding the return of Jesus Christ, and developed from Daniel 9:24-27. Finally, eclectic modes, albeit Pate’s, “Progressive Dispensationalism,”<sup>34</sup> or Beale’s “Redemptive-Historical Form of Modified Idealism,”<sup>35</sup> attempt to blend elements of the first four approaches into one theological system. Following Thomas as a result of “sufficient recognition to the prophetic style of the book and a normal hermeneutical pattern of interpretation based on that style,”<sup>36</sup> this paper will approach Revelation from a futuristic perspective. The theological approach of the expositor will have profound implications on the outline and interpretation of the book.

## Outline

Due to conflicting theological approaches and genre assignments, the structure of Revelation has suffered from exegetical ailments of chias-o-mania and hept-o-mania in contemporary scholarship. Both of these fallacies appeal to form criticism and theological presuppositions for their structural support. *Chias-o-mania* describes the growing trend in contemporary scholarship to redact a verse, passage, chapter, or even book into a chiastic outline. Lee’s twenty-point outline

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<sup>32</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 30.

<sup>33</sup> Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 47. Beale ascribes this term to dispensational futurism and notes the section of Revelation 4:1-22:5.

<sup>34</sup> Marvin Pate, “A Progressive Dispensational View of Revelation,” in *Four Views on Revelation*, 140.

<sup>35</sup> Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 48.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 32.

of Revelation typifies this practice.<sup>37</sup> Lee utilizes an eclectic theological approach to construct her chiasm, combining futurist, idealist and feminist theology in order to create a parallel between the events of Revelation 13 and the events of Revelation 14 at the center of her model.<sup>38</sup> Lee is then forced to pair Revelation 12:1-6 with Revelation 17:1-6. Lee is able to justify her exegetical decisions by identifying the woman as the primary character of Revelation 12:1-6.<sup>39</sup> However, as a result of her structural approach, the dragon gets lost in Lee's chiasm.

Akin to Chias-o-mania is propensity of hept-o-mania. *Hept-o-mania* is an academic fallacy that forces the structure of Revelation into an unnatural series of seven. Painter's outline of Revelation as four series of sevens set between a prologue and an epilogue is a prime example of hept-o-mania in modern scholarship.<sup>40</sup> In order to validate his outline, Painter incorporates an eclectic theological approach, implementing both historicist and idealistic elements into his exegetical decisions. Painter places the co-text Revelation 12:1-6 within the context of the seven trumpet judgments, thereby grammatically linking these judgments to the churches of Pergamum and Laodicea.<sup>41</sup> As a result of Painter's heptomological outline, the dragon gets buried in history.

The preceding critiques of chias-o-mania and hept-o-mania neither intended to deny the fact that chiasms exist in Scripture

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<sup>37</sup> Michelle Lee, "A Call to Martyrdom: Function as Method and Message in Revelation." *NovT* 40, no. 2 (April 1998): 174. Lee and Painter are intended to be representative of a trend in modern exegesis.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 178. This represents the heart of Lee's outline for Revelation, "the moment of decision."

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 178-79. Not only is the woman elevated to the position of main character of the narrative, but the dragon is absent from Lee's outline. By redacting the dragon and placing the woman of Revelation 12:1-6 in apposition with the prostitute of Revelation 17:16, Lee sacrifices meaning on the altar of form. This author asserts that the prostitute of Revelation 17:1ff actually stands in apposition with the bride of Revelation 19:7ff.

<sup>40</sup> John Painter, "The Johannine Literature," in *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament*, ed. Stanley Porter (Boston: Brill, 2002), 559-62.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

nor to encourage expositors to ignore the thematic use of the number seven in Revelation. Instead, they illustrate the fallacy of imposing a preconceived structure onto the text. In contrast to these contrived outlines, Walvoord develops his outline from the text of Revelation 1:19, explaining that, “The advantage of this outline is that it deals in a natural way with the material rather than seizing on incidentals.”<sup>42</sup> Beale and Thomas also note the significance of Revelation 1:19 when constructing an outline of the book. Beale utilizes an eclectic theological approach and genre criticism to apply this verse to Daniel 2:28.<sup>43</sup> Conversely, Thomas implements a futuristic approach in order to capture the “telescopic arrangement” of the judgments as they unfold in a linear pattern.<sup>44</sup> Due to its simplistic structure, this paper will develop an outline based on Revelation 1:19, utilizing a futuristic approach first developed by Ryrie as follows:<sup>45</sup>

- I. The things that you have seen (1:1-20)
  - A. Prologue (1:1-11)
  - B. Vision of Christ (1:12-18)
  - C. Command to write (1:19-20)
- II. Those that are (2-3)
- III. Those that are to take place after this (4-22).
  - A. Heavenly interlude (4-5)
  - B. The tribulation (6:1-19:10)
  - C. The return and reign of Christ (19:11-20:15)
  - D. The eternal kingdom (21:1-22:5)
  - E. Epilogue (22:6-21)

### **Author and Date**

The author identifies himself as Ἰωάννη four times in the book of Revelation (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8), leaving consistent expositors such as Robertson to conclude that “the traditional

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<sup>42</sup> Walvoord, *Revelation*, 48.

<sup>43</sup> Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 152ff.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 43.

<sup>45</sup> Ryrie, *Revelation*, 11.

and obvious way to understand the name is the Apostle John.”<sup>46</sup> Early church writers including Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, and Origen support this view.<sup>47</sup> Irenaeus testified that the apostle John wrote Revelation while banished on Patmos during Domitian’s reign, which is consistent with the author’s testimony in Revelation 1:9.<sup>48</sup> Dionysius of Alexandria issued the first recorded challenge to the identity of the author in the middle of the third century AD, and speculations have since abounded.<sup>49</sup> Due to the pseudonymous nature of intertestamental apocalyptic literature, contemporary scholarship tends to follow Dionysius’ lead and attribute the authorship of Revelation to someone other than the apostle John.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, preterism rejects a late date of writing on theological grounds, requiring an early date as a foundation for its theological system.<sup>51</sup> However, if the text of Revelation and the historical church witness is to be given any credence, then all evidence supports the apostle John authoring the book of Revelation circa AD 90-95.<sup>52</sup>

### Literary Context

Revelation 12:1-6 contains the first two of seven signs in the book of Revelation.<sup>53</sup> This pericope is set within the context of the future, seven-year period of tribulation. From the onset of the tribulation, events that are initiated in heaven (Rev 4-5) transpire on earth (Rev 6). John uses οὐρανῶ seven times and

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<sup>46</sup> Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1933), 272.

<sup>47</sup> Alan Johnson, *Revelation*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 404.

<sup>48</sup> Ryrie, *Revelation*, 8-9.

<sup>49</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 2-11. This author recognizes the contemporary debate between BC/AD and BCE/CE and deliberately chooses to implement the Anno Domini system over the Common Era system.

<sup>50</sup> Painter, “Johannine Literature,” 557.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 30.

<sup>52</sup> Walvoord, *Revelation*, 12-14.

<sup>53</sup> Ryrie, *Revelation*, 89.

γῆν six times in Revelation 12 to emphasize the interplay between heaven and earth. At the conclusion of Revelation 11:15-19, the final trumpet judgment sounds, commencing the final seven bowl judgments of Revelation 16. These bowl judgments culminate with the return of Christ in Revelation 19:11ff. However, before these judgments are unleashed, John is shown a vision that contributes valuable background information to the events that are about to transpire. Revelation 12:1-6 introduces the primary antagonist of the tribulation, briefly recounting his nefarious activity in history (Rev 12:1-5) before revealing his violent plans for the future (Rev 12:6ff). The dragon of Revelation 12 is unveiled as the ancient enemy of the human race. The same serpent that once tempted the woman in Eden will one day persecute the “woman” in the future. The dragon that attempted to usurp Christ will ultimately cause the rise of the antichrist. The events of Revelation 12:1-6 serve to recount the dragon’s movements throughout history and into the future as he briefly experiences limited authority upon the earth.

### **Original Translation**

And then an incredible sign appeared in heaven: A woman was wearing the sun, and the moon was beneath her feet, and a wreath of twelve stars was upon her head! And being very pregnant, she cried out in agony with contractions, indicating that she was about to give birth. And then another sign appeared in heaven: First behold, a great, fiery red dragon with seven heads, and with ten horns, and with seven crowns upon his heads! Then his tail dragged away one third of the stars of heaven and cast them down to the earth. Next, the dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, because he intended to devour her child as soon as she gave birth to him. Then she gave birth to a man-child, the one who is destined to shepherd all nations with an iron staff. Next, her child was suddenly snatched away to God and to his throne. And finally the woman fled into the wilderness where a place has been prepared for her by God in order that they might sustain her for 1260 days.

## Grammatical Analysis

John introduces Revelation 12 with the clause: Καὶ σημεῖον μέγα ὄφθη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ. The use of καὶ as a coordinate conjunction grammatically links this statement to the preceding clause as the author continues to narrate events with a linear thought process. John had just witnessed the temple of God being opened ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ where several signs were ὄφθη to him, including the ark, lightning, a voice, thunder, an earthquake, and hail (Rev 11:19). These signs are reminiscent of John's initial throne-room vision that initiated the Tribulation (Rev 4:5). The perfective aspect of the aorist ὄφθη provides the background for the narrative. Furthermore, the use of ὄφθη, as opposed to John's standard introductory phrases Μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον (Rev 4:1) or καὶ εἶδον (Rev 13:1), is emphatic.<sup>54</sup>

John summarizes the symbols of Revelation 12 as σημεῖον μέγα, further underscoring the magnitude of the vision that is about to transpire with an emphatic adjective.<sup>55</sup> This event is the first heavenly sign in Revelation to be modified with μέγα, indicating its unique status (Rev 13:3, 15:1).<sup>56</sup> The incredible sign that appeared in heaven is part a scene that unfolds before John's eyes, beginning with a γυνή. This γυνή is the second of four women in the book of Revelation, all of which are symbolic.<sup>57</sup> Theologians have long debated the identity of the woman of Revelation 12. As early as the third century, Hippolytus identified the woman as "the church," a label that many modern theologians have embraced.<sup>58</sup> Oecumenius, who

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<sup>54</sup> Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 387.

<sup>55</sup> BAGD 497. μέγα stresses the intensity and importance of the subject, not just the size.

<sup>56</sup> Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 387. Considering all the signs and symbols John has witnessed up to this point in the Apocalypse, the significance of this adjective is accentuated by translating it as "incredible."

<sup>57</sup> Ryrie, *Revelation*, 89. The three other symbolic women are Jezebel (Rev 2), the harlot (Rev 17), and the bride (Rev 19).

<sup>58</sup> William Weinrich and Thomas Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament, XII, Revelation* (Downer's

represents the dominant theological mindset of the medieval era, maintained that the woman symbolized “the mother of our Savior.”<sup>59</sup> Contemporary scholarship has further complicated the issue by attempting to interpret apocalyptic symbols with pagan mythology like Apollo and the Python; or by utilizing the zodiac to relate the woman to the constellation Virgo and the dragon to the constellation Hydra.<sup>60</sup> Finally, throughout history, expositors of the Apocalypse have also maintained that the woman represents Israel.<sup>61</sup>

Applying a consistent hermeneutic method to the symbol of the pregnant woman will result in identifying her as Israel. Since the text of Revelation does not reveal the identity of the woman, interpreting this vision is dependent upon comparing her description with Scripture. First, the symbol of a pregnant woman is used throughout the OT to refer to Israel (Isa 66:7-8; Jer 4:31; Mic 4:9-10).<sup>62</sup> Second, the threefold symbols associated with the woman include τὸν ἥλιον... ἡ σελήνη..., and στέφανος ἀστέρων δώδεκα. These symbols refer the reader back to Genesis 37:9-11, where Beale observes, “The sun, moon, and eleven stars are metaphorical respectively for Jacob, his wife, and the... tribes of Israel.”<sup>63</sup> Finally, the symbolic activities associated with the woman include ἔτεκεν υἱὸν ἄρσεν ... and ἔφυγεν εἰς τὴν ἔρημον. The fact that the woman begets the child precludes the woman from being identified as the church, since Fruchtenbaum rightly maintains, “It would be an anachronism: the church would have to give birth to the Messiah, when in fact the opposite is true.”<sup>64</sup> The action of the woman fleeing alone into the wilderness for a specific time

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Grove: IVP, 2005), 173. For a contemporary example, see Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 631.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>60</sup> Ulback, “Serpent,” 450-55. See also Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 626-27.

<sup>61</sup> Johnson, *Revelation*, 513-14.

<sup>62</sup> Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 288.

<sup>63</sup> G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary of the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 1123.

<sup>64</sup> Fruchtenbaum, “Use of the OT,” 34. See also Matthew 16:18.

period precludes her from being identified as Mary, since Mary was never persecuted in this manner.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, the application of a consistent hermeneutic approach that utilizes Scripture to interpret symbols of Revelation restricts the identification of the woman as a metaphor for Israel.<sup>66</sup>

After describing the woman, John continues his linear thought process with the phrase καὶ ὄφθη... σημεῖον ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, connecting the subsequent vision with the preceding one.<sup>67</sup> However, instead of describing a σημεῖον μέγα, John describes a δράκων μέγας. A general consensus exists concerning the identity of the dragon as Satan due to John's declarative statement in Revelation 12:9. The description of the dragon also bears a similarity to Daniel's fourth beast (Dan 7:7-8) and a striking resemblance to the θηρίον that later rises out of the sea (Rev 13:1). The dragon's color is described as πυρρός, indicating his warlike nature.<sup>68</sup> The threefold symbols associated the dragon are antithetically parallel to those of the woman. In place of the sun, the dragon has κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ. In place of the moon, the dragon has κέρατα δέκα. And, in place of a wreath of twelve stars, the dragon wears ἑπτὰ διαδήματα. While the woman wears her στέφανος for identification purposes, the dragon dons his διαδήματα as a symbol of authority.<sup>69</sup> Multiple διαδήματα are worn by two other characters in the book of Revelation; the θηρίον in Revelation 13:1ff and the King of Kings who defeats both the δράκων and the θηρίον in Revelation 19:11ff.<sup>70</sup>

As the main character of Revelation 12, the dragon has two distinct movements in this initial vision. With his first

<sup>65</sup> Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 287. See also Ryrie, *Revelation*, 89-90.

<sup>66</sup> Robert Thomas, *Revelation 8-22 An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 120-21.

<sup>67</sup> Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 388.

<sup>68</sup> This "fiery red," or "redder than scarlet" (BADG, 731) is twice depicted in the Apocalypse. Here, it is used to describe the creature that initiates πόλεμος ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ. In Revelation 6:4 it describes the color of the horse whose rider λαβεῖν τὴν εἰρήνην ἐκ τῆς γῆς. In both visions, πυρρός is associated with war.

<sup>69</sup> Ryrie, *Revelation*, 90.

<sup>70</sup> Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 389.

movement, ἡ οὐρὰ αὐτοῦ σύρει τὸ τρίτον τῶν ἀστέρων τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἔβαλεν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν γῆν. Based on John's identification of the stars as fallen angels (Rev 12:9), Fruchtenbaum notes the theological significance of this statement: "This is the only verse revealing how many angels fell with Satan in his original revolt."<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, Fruchtenbaum explains that identifying the dragon's stars as a metaphor for angels while maintaining that the stars in the woman's wreath is a metaphor for Israel can be reconciled as follows: "When a star is used symbolically for an angel, no actual star is seen. Rather, an angel is seen but called a star, as in Revelation 8:11-12 and 9:1"<sup>72</sup> Robertson notes the judgmental language associated with John's use of ἔβαλεν.<sup>73</sup> This language of judgment spills over into the subsequent pericope when the dragon shares in the fate of his followers and is himself ἐβλήθη from heaven.<sup>74</sup> The dragon's violent demeanor escalates as he moves throughout the narrative, seamlessly navigating between history and future, heaven and earth.

The second movement of the dragon in the narrative demonstrates his intent to devour τὸ τέκνον. Interpreting this symbolic gesture through the gospel record allows the expositor to conclude that this action metaphorically refers to Satan's multiple attempts to destroy the Messiah as prophesied in Genesis 3:15; from Herod's slaughter (Matt 2:16-18), through the temptation (Matt 4:1-10), and ultimately to the crucifixion (Luke 22:3).<sup>75</sup> These symbolic movements set the scene for the events to follow in the Apocalypse, explaining why the fury of the dragon will be unleashed upon the woman in the tribulation.

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<sup>71</sup> Fruchtenbaum, "Use of the OT," 35. A consistent hermeneutic approach identifies this as a past event.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

<sup>73</sup> Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 358. Compare John's use here with Revelation 12:9, 13; 14:19.

<sup>74</sup> The force of the judgmental language in Revelation 12:9 is emphasized by use of the aorist passive. The dragon's actions are returned onto him. This judgment motif is directly stated later in Revelation 13:10.

<sup>75</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 125.

The third symbolic character revealed to John in Revelation 12:1-6 is the υἰὸν ἄρσεν. It is this man-child, and not the woman, who is the primary focus of the dragon's ire. The imagery John employs to describe this man-child is that of a shepherd-king with an iron staff. John's use of ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ here (Rev 12:5) and in Revelation 19:15 is identical to Psalm 2:9 in the LXX.<sup>76</sup> Although some expositors have attempted to identify the man-child as the church and explain the symbol of his removal as a metaphorical description of the rapture, the Messianic overtones of Psalm 2 coupled with the gospel record of the ascension (Luke 24:51) require that this incident be interpreted as a metaphor for the ascension of Christ.<sup>77</sup>

The scene of Revelation 12:1-5 functions as a recapitulation of Israel's role in God's plan to redeem mankind and judge evil. These two signs provide the necessary backdrop for the eschatological events that unfold in Revelation 12:6-13:18. Once this soteriological summary is complete, an indefinite period of time lapses between Revelation 12:5 and Revelation 12:6. This prophetic gap directly correlates to the gap between Daniel's sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks (Dan 9:24-27).<sup>78</sup> Two futuristic events are recorded at the conclusion of the pericope, beginning with the clause: ἡ γυνὴ ἔφυγεν εἰς τὴν ἔρημον. Preterist theologians attempt to apply this event to the historical flight of Christians to Pella prior to the Roman siege of Jerusalem. However, Thomas aptly notes that such an interpretation "would be meaningless to John's readers in Asia Minor."<sup>79</sup> A more accurate hermeneutic method relies on Christ's predictive prophecy in the Olivet discourse to interpret this section (Matt 24:15-21). Therefore, this final clause in Revelation 12:6 foretells a future flight of Israel at the mid-point of the coming Tribulation.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 126.

<sup>77</sup> Walvoord, *Revelation*, 189-90.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 127.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

John concludes this pericope with the statement: ὅπου ἔχει ἐκεῖ τόπον ἡτοιμασμένον ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα ἐκεῖ τρέφωσιν αὐτὴν ἡμέρας χιλίας διακοσίας ἐξήκοντα. Robinson notes that the ἵνα purpose clause coupled with the present tense verb indicates that provision for Israel will be a continued action for the duration of the allotted time of 1260 days.<sup>81</sup> This period directly relates to Israel's future period of tribulation prophesied in Daniel 9:27 as *מלכות יצחק*. Hoehner notes that Daniel's use of a 360-day lunar calendar would equate to exactly 1260 days.<sup>82</sup> During this future time of persecution Israel will require divine protection. Ryrie notes, "Since Satan failed to kill Christ, he turns his attention to the woman—Israel—to pour out his vengeance on her. The details of the persecution for the last three and a half years of the Tribulation are recorded in verses 13-17."<sup>83</sup> John utilizes a third-person plural verb in order to indicate that multiple parties will provide protection for Israel during this crisis. Although Robertson identifies this as an "indefinite plural ... indicating that others will see to immediate administration of her needed nourishment,"<sup>84</sup> nothing grammatically precludes the expositor from applying the nearest antecedents of τὸ τέκνον and τὸν θεὸν to it (Rev 12:5). This final statement indicates the distinct roles both God and Christ will perform regarding the future preservation of Israel during the tribulation.

## Conclusion

The highly symbolic introductory vision of Revelation 12:1-5 serves to lay the foundation for the eschatological action of Revelation 12:6-13:18. Satan's intense, displaced fury toward Israel and Israel's subsequent need for divine protection can only be understood in light of the entire sequence of historical

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<sup>81</sup> Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 391.

<sup>82</sup> Harold Hoehner, "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, Part VI: Daniel's Seventy Weeks and New Testament Chronology," *BibSac* 132, no 525 (1975): 62-63

<sup>83</sup> Ryrie, *Revelation*, 90-91.

<sup>84</sup> Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 391. See also Thomas, *Revelation* 8-22, 127.

events that are summarized in Revelation 12:1-5. The author's intended meaning of this text can be ascertained by utilizing a hermeneutic method that relies on Scripture to interpret the symbols God revealed to John. Furthermore, due to its foundational nature, a careful exegesis of Revelation 12:1-6 is essential in order to understand the events that immediately follow it. These events include the intense persecution of Israel during the future period of tribulation and the rise of the antichrist. Both of these events are the direct result of the actions of the primary antagonist of the human race whose grand entrance into history, foiled plot to destroy the Messiah, future failure to annihilate Israel, and his coming demise are all visually portrayed across the heavens for John to witness and record.

# How Prophetic is Biblical Prophecy? An Evaluation of Sandy's View of Prophecy as Described in *Plowshares & Pruning Hooks*

Joseph Parle

**My remembrance of Dr. Bill Arp:** I am thankful for Dr. Arp and his influence on my life. I am particularly thankful that he arranged for my wife to be mentored by his wife during our visits to Baptist Bible Seminary. That was especially helpful as we were newly married and trying to navigate PhD studies and marriage. I really appreciate what he taught me about illumination having less to do with identifying the meaning of the text but instead welcoming how to apply the text. His emphasis on the importance of singularity of meaning and authorial intent impacted my studies of the Scripture and is addressed in my evaluation of *Plowshares and Pruninghooks* by D. Brent Sandy.

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**R**ecent attempts by advocates of the open view of God to reconsider God's ability to accurately predict the future led to a reevaluation of the nature of prophetic language. D. Brent Sandy offers an alternative to what he considers to be two extremes in the arena of prophetic interpretation. On one hand, he writes to counter the liberal assertion that minimizes the divine inspiration of prophecy, while disagreeing with any approach that reads all prophecy in what Vanhoozer calls a literalistic way. Sandy's mediating position focuses on the performative nature of language and argues that most prophecies in the Bible are metaphorical and should not be interpreted at face value. He bases his arguments on speech act theory, examples of allegedly unfulfilled prophecies in the

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Bible and genre analysis that overemphasize the apocalyptic nature of many prophecies. This article will describe and evaluate Sandy's arguments as expressed in his book *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic*.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this article is to evaluate Sandy's arguments on prophetic communication, literal versus figurative communication, his use of speech act theory, his view of implicitly conditional prophecy, his arguments on fulfillment of prophecy, his arguments regarding apocalyptic literature, and his hermeneutical method for prophetic interpretation. This study will demonstrate that Sandy's view is a departure from traditional dispensationalism and his arguments are not convincing enough to change the hermeneutic for interpreting prophecy.

### Description of Sandy's View

This section will endeavor to describe the view of D. Brent Sandy, a professor of Biblical Studies at Grace College in Winona Lake, Indiana. He wrote *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic* in order to "understand prophecy and apocalyptic biblically [emphasis his]."<sup>3</sup> He is writing in response to concerns about individuals who see the fulfillment of prophecy in recent and anticipated events such as the Y2K bug and events in the Middle East.<sup>4</sup> Although he was trained in dispensational

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<sup>2</sup> D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares & Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic* (Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity, 2002). Sandy has written some additional works on this topic, but this article will primarily focus on *Plowshares & Pruning Hooks*. For some of his other works on the topic, please consult D. Brent Sandy, "What Does God Want Us to Know About the Future? The Function and Focus of Biblical Prophecy," in *Eastern Regional Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society* (Myerstown, PA: 1999); and D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, *Cracking Old Testament Codes: A Guide to Interpreting the Literary Genres of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Sandy, *Plowshares & Pruning Hooks*, 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

thought and has been associated with dispensational denominations and institutions, the goal of his book is not to defend premillennial dispensationalism.<sup>5</sup> His main goal, as he describes it, is to go beyond the theological jargon and debates in order to investigate prophecy objectively and biblically.

### ***The Goal of Prophetic Communication According to Sandy***

Sandy begins by attempting a linguistic analysis of prophecy. He writes, “For another perspective on the power of prophecy, we need to slow down and think more philosophically. Language originates in humankind’s fundamental need to communicate. It is a way to express what humans experience and need to voice. In rudimentary form, words are symbols for things we want to talk about.”<sup>6</sup> According to Sandy, this symbolic nature of language creates a dilemma for God on how to communicate to humans in different languages and cultures. This challenge is compounded by God’s desire to communicate heavenly concepts in ways that human beings can understand. Since language is imperfect, the description of concepts such as the Trinity and the agenda of eternity are challenging for God in Sandy’s view. According to Sandy, God solves this problem through “the creative use of

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<sup>5</sup> Proof that Sandy achieved this goal was the favorable review he received in James Bibza, “Review of *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic* by D. Brent Sandy,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 33 (Spring 2004): 391-93. In this review, Bibza wrote, “Although Sandy indicates that he has been schooled in dispensationalism, and he claims not to be theologically motivated, it is clear that some schools of interpretation will have a much easier time agreeing with Sandy’s analysis. If Sandy is correct, all eschatological approaches will have to rethink how they have interpreted various passages. However, those, such as amillennialists, who already acknowledge that figurative language abounds in the eschatological writings, will concur with much that Sandy says. It is very difficult to see how a dispensational approach would agree with much of the main thrust of Sandy’s book.”

<sup>6</sup> Sandy, *Plowshares & Pruning Hooks*, 25.

language.”<sup>7</sup> Sandy expresses concerns that a literal interpretation of some symbols of prophecy such as “streets of gold” will lead to a lowered view of the heavenly state. He writes, “Will we walk streets of gold? We can be sure heavenly existence is something like what they describe, but if we think it is exactly what they describe we will have lowered the spirit world of God and heaven to the physical world we have experienced.”<sup>8</sup> This may also explain why he considers the 144,000 people in the book of Revelation to represent martyred saints.<sup>9</sup>

Sandy also questions traditional dispensational teaching about rewards when he writes,

The concept of rewards—an important form of motivation in Jewish and Greco-Roman society—runs through the whole of Scripture (from Gen 15:1 to Rev 22:12). Though rewards for Christians were generally spiritual rather than tangible, in some instances the reward offered was a crown: of righteousness, of life, of glory (2 Tim 4:8; Jas 1:12; 1 Pet 5:4; cf. Is 61:3. But even there the genitive case (“of”) may designate apposition, suggesting that these rewards also were spiritual: not actual crowns but a crowning with spiritual blessings of righteousness, life and glory. Whatever the intent of crowns, the opportunity to receive rewards and, conversely, the fear of not receiving them were effective means of encouragement for holy and faithful living.<sup>10</sup>

Sandy justifies his view by arguing, “Prophetic language freely uses a variety of images to refer to the same thing.”<sup>11</sup> After attempting to justify his conclusions exegetically, he states,

This proposal for understanding the rewards for overcomers may seem helpful, but it is deficient. The approach has been cerebral almost to the exclusion of the emotional. If we think that by

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 29.

objectifying and exegeting every aspect of prophecy we can grasp the intent, we will have ignored one of the most important features of prophecy. The variety of expressions of future rewards allow us to *preexperience* [emphasis his] a small part of being in God's presence will be like. As an old hymn puts it, "O that will be glory for me!"<sup>12</sup>

The discussion has demonstrated that Sandy focuses primarily on the symbolic nature of language. He believes that God chooses to communicate in a language that is consistent with human experience so that humans can best understand him. His functional view of language argues that the ends are what are most important in prophetic language and not the means. In other words, God primarily speaks in prophecy to generate a response from humans and the details of the prophecy are not critical, and often should not be taken literally. Images like crowns of righteousness exist merely to motivate individuals to service by advocating spiritual rewards clothed in physical language. As opposed to dragging down the spiritual conceptions of heaven by emphasizing a literal fulfillment of physical promises, one should use the physical language to pre-experience what being in God's presence might be like (although one cannot truly understand because he or she has not experienced God's presence). Thus far, Sandy's approach has emphasized the reader's experiential response to prophecy as being the main goal of prophecy. For Sandy, prophecy is primarily a tool to communicate concepts that are beyond the normal comprehension of human beings.

### ***Literal versus Figurative Communication***

This section will endeavor to describe how Sandy views literal interpretation of prophecy. He writes, "Literal may be used to designate the opposite of figurative. In a very different sense, it may designate the opposite of historical (or actual)."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 39.

He claims that the debates over literal interpretation date back to the Enlightenment:

Since the Enlightenment and the resulting tendency of some scholars to challenge the literalness of the Bible in a historical sense, many Christians have defended the literal meaning of Scripture. The intent is not to deny that Scripture may be figurative but to affirm that *where it intends to be* [emphasis original], it is historically true. Parables, for example, are not intended to be historically true. Unfortunately, the uses of the word literal becomes confusing, in the minds of both those who make pronouncements and those who hear the pronouncements. For the purposes of this book, it is not a matter of literal opposite the historical sense but literal opposite the figurative sense and the degrees away from the surface meaning. However, because literal continues to be a misleading term, substitute terms will be preferred.<sup>14</sup>

As opposed to viewing prophecy as being primarily literal or figurative, Sandy argues for degrees of literalness. He believes that any prophecy may be interpreted in a strictly literal sense, or to such a degree that the figurative meaning is predominant, but not all literal meaning is lost. He concludes, “Only when we reach the point of denying that anything will happen as a result of those words have we moved completely away from literal meaning. At that point to be nonliteral would mean to be nonhistorical (non actual). In other words, the literal or figurative interpretation is not a simple black-or-white issue.”<sup>15</sup> He also supports individuals like Vanhoozer who argue for a literal interpretation of Scripture, but against a literalistic interpretation of Scripture.<sup>16</sup>

In a related matter, Sandy claims that one must make a distinction as to whether the prophecy should be interpreted exactly or hyperbolically in light of emotive undertones. He writes,

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 237.

Most prophecy is full of emotion, because the prophets are addressing a desperate situation. . . . The hyperbole gets the point across better. . . . Of course sometimes an emotional statement can be exact, but the pattern is that the stronger the emotion, the more likelihood of the inexactness. Hyperboles, in effect, stretch the truth in order to increase the impact of words.<sup>17</sup>

Although one must question Sandy's argument that hyperbole is stretching the truth (especially in light of the fact that God cannot lie as per Titus 1:2 and Hebrews 6:18), his primary point is that surface meanings may not always be the correct meanings. Sandy cites examples of judgment and the use of the word "forever" to underscore his point that the prophets often take poetic license to shock their listeners.

Sandy then makes an argument that prophecy is primarily metaphorical: "Prophecy is powerful and problematic for one tall reason: the creative use of language, poetic expression, arresting and emotive metaphors. If figures of speech were sequoias on the landscape of prophecy, prophecy would be densely forested, and the most common tree in the woods is metaphor."<sup>18</sup> He argues this from a philosophical view of language,

This new understanding of metaphor charted the course for the research of more recent decades. The reasoning went like this: if language is essentially a medium for expressing reality, then language itself is metaphorical. And if language is in essence the making of metaphors, then metaphors not only express what we perceive but influence what we perceive.<sup>19</sup>

As a result, Sandy believes that the readers in the current age are too far removed to understand some of the metaphors used in the original language and culture.

As a natural consequence of his view of the metaphorical nature of prophecy, Sandy asserts that many of the discussions

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 60.

of blessing and cursing in the Bible are primarily metaphorical. He considers each description of God in each chapter of the Bible to be one piece of a puzzle that contributes to the overall understanding of God.<sup>20</sup> As a result, he urges a reconsideration of the premillennial and amillennial views of prophecy:

Central to amillennialism is the belief that many Old Testament prophecies regarding Israel will be fulfilled in the church. Central to premillennialism is the belief that many Old Testament prophecies will be fulfilled in a future nation of Israel. In both cases there may be a limited understanding of how prophecy speaks. When it seems improbable that Old Testament prophecies will be literally fulfilled in the future Israel, amillennialists assume they were meant to be spiritualized and fulfilled in the church. When certain Old Testament prophecies seem not to have been literally fulfilled before the first advent, premillennialists assume that they will be fulfilled in a future Israel. For the chosen people, especially messianic Jews, descriptions of a regathering in Jerusalem are assumed to predict a great day when everywhere will recognize their Messiah. However, in light of how the language of destruction and blessing works—illocution, visualization, conditionality, stereotypical features and the like (see pp. 83-97)—these viewpoints need to be reevaluated carefully.<sup>21</sup>

In other words, Sandy argues that the actual fulfillment in a spiritualized or literal sense should not always be expected since much of prophecy is metaphorical and should not be taken in this vein. In fact, Sandy considers prophecy to be a very divisive issue:

Though not the *raison d'être* for this book, if improving our understanding of prophecy can help us be obedient to the Word of God, then something really valuable may be accomplished. Unfortunately we are heirs of a fractured Christianity. Theological posturing and pontificating about various issues—prophecy being near the top of the list—distracts us from a high

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

calling. Jesus gave us the priority to promote and preserve unity. We are to be a community united on all fronts. My prayer is that we can achieve a sense of common hope and less division regarding prophecy.<sup>22</sup>

### ***The Role of Speech Act Theory in Sandy's View***

This section will describe the relationship between speech act theory and Sandy's view of prophecy. The previous section described his metaphorical view of language and his belief that the blessings and curses of the Bible are not necessarily to be taken at face value. The way in which he defends this view is by utilizing speech act theory to show that the function of prophetic language often prevails over the form.

For instance, while referring to Vanhoozer, he writes, "What a speaker intends to communicate is known as illocution or speech acts. Because a word may have meaning that transcends its dictionary definition, illocution must be carefully considered. Only when the function of what is said is clear can the language be understood."<sup>23</sup> As a result, Sandy argues for three ways in which an illocution can be analyzed: "Illocution can be analyzed from three perspectives: what speakers intend to express based on their perspective on the subject, how the communication is expressed and what impact the communication has on its hearers."<sup>24</sup> Consequently, Sandy says that prophetic communication is often performative because it intends to produce some action on the part of the hearer. Therefore, he writes,

The *function* of the statements in the Bible can be as important for understanding their meaning as the *content* of the statements. But if the illocution of a communication is not shared by the author and the hearer, then the hearer will not recognize the author's intended meaning. Ignorance of illocution leads to

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 208-9.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 81.

exegetical fallacies. Awareness of illocution will help guide interpreters to correct understandings of Scripture.<sup>25</sup>

This statement demonstrates Sandy's belief that speech act theory must be integrated into the process of prophetic interpretation. Without a strong understanding of speech act theory, a correct exegetical interpretation is not possible.

In light of this understanding, Sandy describes how the blessing and cursing language of the OT cannot be taken at face value. He shows how other cultures and literature of a similar time period used illocutions:

The illocution of these threats is obvious. By imagining the worst possible consequences, kings sought to strike fear in the hearts of potential violators. Of course the chance that things this bad could happen was remote. Yet respect for the gods meant that these things could not be discounted completely. The gods, after all, were called in as witnesses.<sup>26</sup>

After evaluating the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 28, Sandy gives the following keys to understanding the language of judgment: (1) hyperboles of harsh language were common to the ancient world; (2) human language is inadequate to describe God's wrath; (3) God's wrath was visualized in extreme language; (4) fixed phases of judgment were applied to varying situations, and (5) words may function beyond dictionary definitions.<sup>27</sup> He then concludes,

This visualized language of judgment is actually a form of metaphor. It is describing the whole of God's judgment, but it refers to it by its parts. Technically it is a synecdoche. It is a painting portraying condemnation, and each specific is a brush stroke on the larger canvas. It is the language of hyperbolic metaphor. . . . What has been stated regarding the language of judgment applies in similar fashion to the language of blessing. Though the latter receives much less press, the blessings of

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 89.

obedience are just as real. This discussion of how God's wrath and love are expressed, particularly in the Pentateuch, provides essential background for the language of the prophets. The prophets will say many of the same things in the same ways.<sup>28</sup>

Sandy concludes that speech act theory is useful for interpreting the highly metaphorical language of the prophets who based their prophecies on the metaphorical language in Deuteronomy 28-30. Since this language was designed to evoke a certain response in the readers who lived in an agrarian society, one should be cautious not to read too much into the details. Only with this insight can anyone understand the prophets and the threats that they prophesy.

### *Implicitly Conditional Prophecy*

This section will review Sandy's view on implicitly conditional prophecy. Sandy considers most prophecies to be implicitly conditional. He cites verses such as Jeremiah 18:7-10 in order to defend his view. Sandy perceives a tension between the perpetual possession of the land in the Abrahamic covenant along with the perpetual rulership of a king from the line of David on the Davidic throne and the prophecies of Jeremiah. He argues based on Jeremiah 4:10 that Jeremiah felt as though God had deceived the people with unconditional promises which He later retracted. However, the New English Translation of the Bible offers this alternative translation, "You have surely let this people be deceived by some who are saying, 'You will be safe.'" <sup>29</sup> This is more likely because the words "you will be safe" were consistently expressed by the false prophets and not necessarily by God (cf., Jer 6:14; 8:11; 14:13; 23:16-17).<sup>30</sup> Sandy also questions whether God may have changed his mind about some of these covenants. He believes that the only way to know if a prophecy is conditional is by viewing it after

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>29</sup> Biblical Studies Press, *Net Bible: New English Translation*, Second Beta Edition, (Spokane, WA.: Biblical Studies Ps, 2003), 1297.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

fulfillment, and that would be of no value to the original recipients of the prophecy.

While discussing the conditional nature of prophecy Sandy writes, “Unfortunately it is not always clear even in retrospect what parts of the covenant were unconditional, what parts were conditional, and what parts will hyperbolic. At least from the surface level of the text, God can appear to change his mind, but conditionality is not always stated.”<sup>31</sup> He even raises the question of whether all prophecy may be considered conditional. Rather than answering the question, he simply concludes, “Actually it [prophecy] would be less of a problem if we could determine when promises of blessing were subject to being conditional, if we knew when prophecies were given in hyperbole, if we knew when to take the words at face value.”<sup>32</sup> Not only that, but Sandy is unwilling to make a strong statement on the open view of God: “The issue of God changing his mind brings up the openness of God debate; here I make no attempt to take sides.”<sup>33</sup> He answers the question with a question, “Unexpressed conditions are common in human communication. Is that true for divine communication as well?”<sup>34</sup>

### *Sandy’s View of Fulfillment of Prophecy*

Sandy’s belief in the metaphorical nature of prophecy affects how he views the fulfillment of prophecy. He considers prediction to be only one type of prophecy, and the most important function of a prophet was to enforce the covenant between God and the Israelites. He writes,

If the primary point of prophecy is that God’s patience has a breaking point and his wrath has a beginning point, how much of prophecy is really predictive? Though the ferocity of God’s wrath is incomprehensible, the prophets sketched ways in which the teeth of his wrath would take savage bites out of the disobedient.

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<sup>31</sup> Sandy, *Plowshares & Pruning Hooks*, 47.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

Since the intent of the sketches was striking prosecution rather than interesting information, perhaps the lead in prophets' pencils was too thick to spell out details about the future.<sup>35</sup>

For Sandy, the urge to control and know the future is the result of a culture that emphasizes science fiction movies and palm readers. Because Christians realize that they cannot control the future, many of them try to know the future by feverishly attempting to interpret the details of prophecy. He even noticed this trend in his students: "Their tendency toward complete literalism underscores an important point: reading prophecy superficially may quickly lead to false conclusions about meaning."<sup>36</sup> Thus, Sandy considers a literal reading of prophecy to be overly superficial at times.

While researching prophecy that has already been fulfilled, Sandy concludes,

The already fulfilled prophecies demonstrate a pattern of translucence rather than transparency. The intent was apparently not to give specific information about the future. Rather than predict with precision, the prophets sought to prosecute with power. In some cases pronouncements were fulfilled explicitly. But even then it had not been possible to know before fulfillment what would be fulfilled transparently.<sup>37</sup>

For this reason, Sandy argues that prophecies such as Joel 2:28-32 were fulfilled at Pentecost by reading it in light of Acts 2.<sup>38</sup> According to Sandy, since biblical prophecies were not understood until their fulfillment, one should not expect prophecy to reveal details of the future.

### ***Sandy's Argument from Apocalyptic Literature***

This section will describe the implications of Sandy's view of apocalyptic literature for his analysis of prophecy. Sandy

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 152.

categorizes the genre of prophecy under three headings: oracles of salvation, announcements of judgment, and apocalyptic.<sup>39</sup> He considers apocalyptic literature to be significantly different from the other two headings.

For instance, Sandy writes,

Apocalyptic, however, can be a message unto itself and tends to have a message different from prophecy...Though the typical characteristics of apocalyptic are not difficult to grasp, its striking differences in technique leave many readers bewildered. While prophecy is figurative and poetic, apocalyptic is visionary and fantastic. While prophecy proclaims God's acts of judgment and blessing, apocalyptic pictures a completely different world of never-seen-before examples of good and evil...As a result, readers are often left puzzled by what they encounter...<sup>40</sup>

Sandy argues that apocalyptic literature often presents its message in visions and symbols and the message itself is often shrouded in mystery. Prophecy, on the other hand, is often direct speech from God that predicts both immediate and distant judgment and salvation.<sup>41</sup> In Sandy's opinion, the message of apocalyptic literature is difficult to determine and deeply symbolic.

It is this symbolic view of apocalyptic literature that causes Sandy to assert that apocalyptic should be looked at through a soft focus lens. He writes, "Allusion and symbolism seem to characterize these aspects of the vision. No kingdom is specified. No person is specified, no heavenly creatures are specified. Generally, the images lack precision."<sup>42</sup> Especially troubling of this analysis of Daniel 8 is the fact that Daniel 8:21 specifies that the kingdom being spoken of is Greece, and the large horn is the first king. A similar deduction is made while interpreting Revelation 12 and 13: "With a vision of such enigmatic and symbolic proportions, any chance of correct

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

interpretation may seem remote. However, since vivid scenes like this are typical of apocalyptic, we can draw on similar examples to make our way through the maze.”<sup>43</sup> He concludes that moving from the general to the specific brings uncertainty with respect to the details of apocalyptic that should not be surprising considering the nature of apocalyptic literature. Thus, Sandy summarizes the method for interpreting apocalyptic as follows:

From the surface vision in Daniel 8 we learned that while apocalyptic may seem on the surface to describe the future in detail, in point of fact it does not. Some details may in the end match up with a precise event, but it would have been impossible to see that in advance. . . . Reading apocalyptic, then, is best done from a distance. Like ancient hearers, we need to take in the sweep of the narrative. Apocalyptic uses allusions and symbols that may be peculiar but in the larger context combine to depict scenes of unusual vividness and emotion...How does the language of apocalyptic work? It tends to be more allusive than precise, more impressionistic than realistic, more fantastic than literal. Consequently we will not understand the parts of the story until we have read the last page.<sup>44</sup>

Sandy believes that understanding apocalyptic literature will lead one to understand Revelation and other apocalyptic writings in a more symbolic way. Rather than trying to identify the fulfillment in specific detail, one should simply understand how the prophet communicates the overall message to the people.

### *Summary*

The description of Sandy’s view thus far has demonstrated that his dependence on the philosophy of communication causes him to argue that the function of prophecy is more critical than the content of prophecy. Based on speech act theory, he asserts

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 128.

that prophetic illocutions are more performative than instructive in nature. As a result, he believes that the blessings and cursing in the OT and NT should not be taken literally but metaphorically. Therefore, Sandy considers much of prophecy to be implicitly conditional. Sandy's metaphorical view of prophecy in apocalyptic literature leads him to emphasize understanding the overall message of apocalyptic and not concerning oneself too much with the specific identification of details. Sandy concludes that one cannot specifically determine whether a prophecy has been fulfilled or is unfulfilled, is conditional or unconditional, or is intended to be taken literally or figuratively until after it has been fulfilled. Therefore, one should simply obey the message that the prophet was intending to communicate and not pay too much attention to how the details will be worked out.

### **Evaluation of Sandy's View**

This section will endeavor to evaluate Sandy's view of prophetic language. First, this section will demonstrate that Sandy's arguments are primarily directed against interpreters that sensationalize current events and are not utilizing the consistent grammatical-historical hermeneutics. Second, this section will show that Sandy deemphasizes the apologetic nature of prophecy and overemphasizes language theory that promotes an experiential response to prophecy. Third, attention will be given to Sandy's contrast between literal and figurative interpretation of prophecy. Fourth, this paper will argue that Sandy's use of speech act theory should not be used in interpretation but hermeneutics. Fifth, Sandy's view of implicitly conditional prophecy and fulfillment of prophecy will be shown to be an inadequate representation of the Biblical record. Finally, Sandy's theological method will be contrasted to that of traditional dispensationalists, and the traditional dispensational view of prophecy will be shown to be superior to Sandy's method.

### ***Straw Man Argument***

As previously mentioned, Sandy directs his arguments against individuals who see the fulfillment of prophecy in recent and anticipated events such as the Y2K bug and events in the Middle East.<sup>45</sup> While some prominent individuals like John Hagee, Jack Van Impe, and, to a lesser extent, Hal Lindsay might advocate this view, they are not representative of the large majority of futurist premillennial dispensationalists who employ a grammatical-historical hermeneutic. In fact, if they were interpreting many of these prophecies literally, they would not consider current events to fulfill many of the prophecies that they quote. Stallard writes,

Actually, the problem with sensationalists is not precisely a focus on Bible prophecy. It is a mapping of biblical prophecy to current events. In other words, it is the wrong use of Bible prophecy that comes to the surface. Dispensational premillennialists are futurists because of their literal interpretation. They actually abandon this futurism when they act like historicists and place fulfillment of end-time prophecy in the present (usually involving events related to the coming tribulation). At best, the present time is the possible set up for the end-time days.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, the problem with these individuals is not their attention to prophecy but their inappropriate use of it.

### ***The Apologetic Nature of Prophecy***

One aspect of prophecy that is underemphasized in Sandy's work is the apologetic value of prophecy. In fact, the fact that God can make predictions and bring them to pass is one of the

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<sup>45</sup> Ironically, some dispensationalists were the primary advocates of not overreacting to the Y2K crisis. See Mike Stallard, "Y2k: Mass Hysteria or Prophetic Event?" (Faculty Forum, Baptist Bible Seminary, Clarks Summit, PA), Spring 1999), 1-15.

<sup>46</sup> Mike Stallard, "Why Are Dispensationalists So Interested in Prophecy?," (Conservative Theological Society, Fort Worth, TX, August 2005), 2.

things that makes Him greater than all false gods. Isaiah 46:9-11 says,

Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it (NASB).

Note in this passage, that God will bring everything that he has predicted to pass. He does this by his authority, and it is not conditioned on man's response.

Another aspect of the apologetic nature of prophecy is that God will bring his plans for the national future for Israel to pass. Stallard comments on this aspect of prophecy while refuting some arguments of the open view of God,

But the vast majority of the prophecies flow from the biblical covenants, which relate to the nation of Israel. The fact that the Bible's prophecies with respect to Israel have found fulfillment throughout history time and time again has great apologetic value since it points toward the divine origin of Scripture. Therefore, open theism destroys the apologetic value of most of the Bible while at the same time leaving future fulfillment as an open question.<sup>47</sup>

By making most, if not all, prophecy implicitly conditional it should be no surprise that some reviewers like Bibza consider Sandy's statements to be more in line with covenant theology than dispensationalism. As previously mentioned, Sandy views the 144,000 Jews in Revelation 7 as representing the martyred saints when the text clearly states that they come from national Israel, and Revelation 14 places them as having survived the tribulation without being martyred.

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<sup>47</sup> Mike Stallard, "The Open View of God and Prophecy," (Conservative Theological Society, Fort Worth, TX, August 2001), 14.

Second, one must question whether Sandy is overemphasizing language theory in his description of how God communicates. Nowhere does Scripture report this dilemma God was allegedly faced with in communicating with mankind. One must remember that God created mankind and that he created means to communicate with him. God is fully capable of communicating in a language that is completely understandable and accurately portrays reality. From the very beginning, God communicated clearly with Adam without using metaphorical language in every statement.<sup>48</sup>

Third, one must question Sandy's inherent assumption that God primarily communicates in prophetic language that is relatable to the human experience. As previously mentioned, God clearly communicated to Adam the consequence of sin as death, even though Adam had not experienced death as of yet. God additionally tells Isaiah that his thoughts and ways are not consistent with those of humanity in Isaiah 55:8-9 and he proceeds to tell Isaiah that his word will accomplish the purpose that it was set to accomplish in Isaiah 55:11. In fact, Sandy's caution against an approach that is cerebral almost to the exclusion of the emotional and his argument that the purpose of prophecy is to pre-experience the heavenly future is consistent with a Gadamerian view of interpretation in which the reader interprets and provides meaning to the text through the lens of experience. A traditional dispensationalist understanding would put the experience in the realm of application under the rubric of systematic theology and not place it in the process of interpretation.

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<sup>48</sup> Sandy argues that God's statement in Genesis 2:17 was a translucent one and not fulfilled as expected on page 248 of his book. However, if one applies Sandy's own logic of God only speaking of language that reflects the human experience, how would Adam have been able to conceive of any death whether physical or spiritual?

### ***Evaluation of Sandy's View of Literal Interpretation of Prophecy***

As previously mentioned, Sandy argues that a reevaluation should be made of a consistent historical-grammatical approach to prophecy. Sandy argues that more examination should be made of the intent of the prophecy than the content of the prophecy. If the intention of the prophecy was to evoke a response on the part of the reader, then the primary way of doing so was through symbolic language. As a result, Sandy argues that much of prophecy is metaphorical in nature and should not be read in a clear, plain, and normal way.

Traditional dispensationalism considers prophecy to be the key to determining how literal one's hermeneutic is. Amillennialists and dispensationalists have both often argued that they possess a literal interpretation of the Bible. For instance, John Calvin wrote,

Origen, and many others along with him, have seized the occasion of torturing Scripture, in every possible manner, away from the true sense. They concluded that the literal sense is too mean and poor, and that, under the bark of the letter, there lurk deeper mysteries, which cannot be extracted but by beating out allegories.... Scripture, they say, is fertile, and thus produces a variety of meanings. I acknowledge that Scripture is a most rich and inexhaustible fountain of all wisdom; but I deny that its fertility consists in the various meanings which any man, at his pleasure, may assign. Let us know, then, that the true meaning of Scripture is the natural and obvious meaning; and let us embrace and abide by it resolutely.<sup>49</sup>

However, the source of disagreement has consistently revolved around prophecy. Puckett writes regarding Calvin, "Old Testament texts that, if taken literally, promise a time of great earthly blessing for God's people, are usually given a spiritual (or allegorical) interpretation by Calvin. He usually demonstrates the validity of his spiritual exegesis by pointing

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<sup>49</sup> Jean Calvin and Calvin Translation Society, *Calvin's Commentaries*, 22 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 21:135.

out that the prophecy in question has not had literal fulfillment.”<sup>50</sup> Puckett defends this assertion by referring to Calvin’s interpretation of Jeremiah 31:38:

The meaning is that God would again care for that city, as the Temple would become as it were his royal throne and earthly sanctuary. At the same time when the Prophet affirms that the extent of the city would not be less than it had been, we see that this prophecy must necessarily be referred to the kingdom of Christ: for though Jerusalem before Christ’s coming was eminent and surrounded by a triple wall, and though it was celebrated through all the East, as even heathen writers say that it excelled every other city, yet it was never accomplished, that the city flourished as under David and Solomon. We must then necessarily come to the spiritual state of the city, and explain the promise as the grace which came through Christ.<sup>51</sup>

From this example one can note a methodological difference between Calvin and a dispensational understanding of prophecy. When Calvin could not find a literal fulfillment of the prophecy, he assumed a spiritual fulfillment in the church.

This contrasts with a dispensational understanding of prophecy. Stallard summarizes the dispensational approach:

An interpreter cannot pick and choose what he wants to be literal and what is figurative when there is no evidence of a figure of speech or extended metaphor.... To do so is inconsistency at its best. One of the reasons that dispensationalists focus on prophecy is that its interpretation almost becomes a barometer by which one’s overall approach to the text can be stabilized.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, in a dispensational hermeneutic, prophecy should not be interpreted metaphorically unless the text clearly indicates so.

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<sup>50</sup> David Lee Puckett, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament*, 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 110.

<sup>51</sup> Jean Calvin and Calvin Translation Society, *Calvin's Commentaries*, 22 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 10:150.

<sup>52</sup> Stallard, “Why Are Dispensationalists So Interested in Prophecy?,” 4.

Sandy argues that both schools of thought should reexamine their hermeneutic. He argues that one should not expect literal fulfillment of prophecy that was intended to provoke a response on the part of the audience. He does so by arguing that most prophecy is metaphorical and should be taken metaphorically. In the amillennial system, the prophecy was taken literally, but the fulfillment was taken allegorically in light of the New Testament. In the dispensational system, the prophecy is taken literally and the kind and extent of the fulfillment is to be expected. In Sandy's system, neither the prophecy nor its fulfillment should be interpreted in a historical-grammatical way because much of prophecy is metaphorical.

This view of prophecy is problematic for many reasons. Sandy often speaks of how prophecy is problematic for the current audience to interpret, yet at the same time, his approach undercuts the importance of prophecy for the original audience. How could the original audience hope in fulfillment or expect judgment for disobedience if the prophecy is only metaphorical? A literal interpretation of prophecy gave both the early church and the present church hope. A metaphorical view of prophecy eliminates part of this motivation for holy living. Stallard says,

Now this is not to say that Peter and Paul do not address other concerns even in these epistles. However, it is to show that, at least for Christians who were being oppressed for who they were, the first point of the sermon is the Second Coming of Christ. This focus has been common in traditional dispensationalism. If such emphasis leaves a theological loophole for social disengagement in the present age, then so does the teaching of Peter and Paul. As we discuss the issue of how best to express the character of the present age and any empowerment available to us to better the lot of those around us, we must do so without demeaning the great hope we have in the Second Coming of Christ. In fact, it is safe to say that prophetic hope for the Christian is perhaps the primary basis for present endurance and optimism.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

Thus, Peter encourages believers in 2 Peter 3:11-16 to look for “the coming of the day of God” and to believe in a promise of a “new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.” He argues that this expectation will result in believers being “found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless.” However, if all of this is metaphorical and conditional, one will have difficult time applying this command. Furthermore, if one cannot be certain of the fulfillment of prophecy until after it is fulfilled, how can anyone truly place hope in the fulfillment of the prophecy if it may be implicitly conditional?

Sandy’s argument that the promised rewards must be spiritual and not physical harkens back to a similar argument made by Calvin and Augustine. Augustine taught regarding premillennialists, “As they assert that those who then rise again shall enjoy the leisure of immoderate carnal banquets, furnished with an amount of meat and drink such as not only to shock the feeling of the temperate, but even to surpass the measure of credulity itself, such assertions can be believed only by the carnal. They who do believe them are called by the spiritual Chiliasts, which we may literally reproduce by the name Millenarians.”<sup>54</sup> Regarding this same group Calvin said, “Those who assign only a thousand years to the children of God to enjoy the inheritance of future life, observe not how great an insult they offer to Christ and his kingdom. If they are not to be clothed with immortality, then Christ himself, into whose glory they shall be transformed, has not been received into immortal glory; if their blessedness is to have an end, the kingdom of Christ, on whose solid structure it rests, is temporary.”<sup>55</sup> One must note here that their objection to a physical kingdom and a physical reward was not based on anything indicated in the text. Instead, they based their decision on the incompatibility of the physical reward with their spiritual system. In a similar vein, Sandy’s view of language as indicating a deeper spiritual truth

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<sup>54</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, electronic ed., 8 vols. (Grand Rapids: Galaxie Software, 2000), 20.7, page 427.

<sup>55</sup> Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols., ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia,: Westminster P, 1960), 2:995-96.

(which has much in common with allegory) precludes him from arguing for physical rewards or crowns based on his belief that the crowns were something that would have motivated a first century Christian. As Bibza notes, Sandy's arguments on points such as this fit much more in line with a covenant theologian's view of prophecy than a dispensational one.<sup>56</sup>

The disagreement on these matters is not as minor of a point as Sandy's plea for unity portrays it to be. He writes, "If improving our prophecy can help us be obedient to the Word of God, something really valuable may be accomplished."<sup>57</sup> Peter's precise argument was that having faith in the future fulfillment of the more certain prophetic word will lead to holy living. In fact, in the last days mockers will question the validity of prophecies (2 Pet 3:3). Therefore, describing how prophecy will be fulfilled in the future is not mere pontificating and posturing, but it significantly affects lives. If Sandy honestly believes that one should "achieve a sense of common hope and less division regarding prophecy,"<sup>58</sup> then one must question why he wrote a book that seeks to reexamine how amillennial and premillennial theologians have traditionally interpreted prophecy. Surely he did so because seeking the truth is a higher commitment than preserving unity. However, if that is his reason for introducing a book that will cause considerable debate, surely he should not reprimand individuals who are honestly dealing with the text for the specific purpose of giving futuristic interpretations that bring hope to the church. Perhaps the words of Chafer best describe why truth should be valued as much, if not more, than unity on this matter:

The plea that the prophetic portions of the Bible present problems over which men disagree is not a worthy release from their claims. There are no more problems in *Eschatology* than in *Soteriology*. It happens that owing to the central place accorded

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<sup>56</sup> James Bibza, "Review of *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic* by D. Brent Sandy," *Christian Scholar's Review* 33 (Spring 2004): 391-93.

<sup>57</sup> Sandy, *Plowshares & Pruning Hooks*, 208.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

*Soteriology* by the Reformers, and in subsequent theological writings, it has had a measure of consideration not given to prophetic truth. Disagreements as divergent as Calvinism and Arminianism have never been urged as a reason for the neglect of *Soteriology*, but disunity of the slightest degree among teachers respecting *Eschatology* has been seized as a reason for its neglect.”<sup>59</sup>

One should also question Sandy’s support of Vanhoozer’s distinction between a literal and a literalistic view of prophecy. Sandy defines the *sine qua non* of prophetic interpretation to be regarding the nature of prophetic language as poetic, metaphoric, rhetorical, urgent, hyperbolic, and fantastic.<sup>60</sup> He contends that illocution, hyperbole, and stereotypical language are often used to express the unspecified realities of judgment so the normal dictionary meaning of words will often not be the intended meaning of words.<sup>61</sup> Whereas traditional dispensationalism assumes the clear, plain, and normal interpretation of prophecy, Sandy assumes a metaphorical interpretation that depends largely on speech act theory. However, Vanhoozer and Sandy oversimplify their case in arguing that dispensationalism can be literalistic. The traditional historical-grammatical form of interpretation allows for metaphors, hyperbole, and other figures of speech, but it does not assume them as Sandy does.

Additionally, dispensationalists do not believe that words have to fit the normal dictionary definition of the word. This is an overly simplistic characterization of literal interpretation. Advocates of the historical-grammatical interpretation argue that context and authorial intent determines the meaning of the word. Thus, a dispensationalist normally will not say that the interpretation of a verse must be exactly as the dictionary definition would suggest. A dispensationalist will also leave room for language that would be specific to that culture that are

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<sup>59</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, “An Introduction to the Study of Prophecy,” *BSac* 100, no. 397 (January 1943): 102-3.

<sup>60</sup> Sandy, *Plowshares & Pruning Hooks*, 197.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

similar to the list of English and French metaphors found on Sandy's book on pages 211-13. Unlike Sandy, dispensationalists consider this type of language to be the exception of biblical prophecy and not the rule.

Some of Sandy's arguments that most of language is metaphorical must also be evaluated. For instance he writes,

This new understanding of metaphor charted the course for the research of more recent decades. The reasoning went like this: if language is essentially a medium for expressing a reality, then language is itself metaphorical. And if language is in essence the making of metaphors, then metaphors not only express what we perceive but influence what we perceive.<sup>62</sup>

In his footnote to this quotation Sandy refers to Ricoeur's, Vanhoozer's, and Gill's work on *Wittgenstein and Metaphor*.<sup>63</sup> Traditional dispensationalists would not consider the works of these individuals as primary research on which to build a hermeneutic of prophecy.

However, even if these individuals did appropriately provide a basis for constructing a hermeneutic for prophecy, one must question whether they and Sandy overgeneralize the role of metaphor in language. One must wonder whether Sandy and they would want their books to be read literally or metaphorically. Even if one analyzes Sandy's quotation in which he argues for the metaphorical nature of language, one must also notice he only uses one metaphor which is "charting the course." The rest of his statement could be easily taken at face value.

### ***Evaluation of Sandy's Use of Speech Act Theory***

Earlier it was demonstrated that Sandy considers the use of the principles of speech act theory to be essential to interpretation. As previously mentioned, he considers the nature of language to be performative. As a result, he believes that

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 239.

ignorance of illocution leads to exegetical fallacies and awareness of illocution will help bring about a correct understanding of Scripture.<sup>64</sup> Consequently, Sandy considers the function of prophetic statements to be more important than the content because prophecy was not written to simply inform but to evoke a response on the part of the hearers.

Sandy's view undermines the apologetic nature of prophecy because it does not account for the numerous times that a prophecy was given and the result of the prophecy could not be changed. For instance, when Samuel prophesied to Saul that the kingdom would be taken out of his hand and Saul begged for mercy, Samuel responded, in 1 Samuel 15:28-29, "So Samuel said to him, 'The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor, who is better than you. Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind.'" If Samuel's prophecy were just to get a response from Saul, then one would imagine that Saul's response would be all that was necessary to undo the original prophecy. However that is not what happened.

Nathan reported God's judgment to David in 2 Samuel 12:10-12 by saying "Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes and give *them* to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. 'Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.'" David's response to Nathan was, "I have sinned against the LORD." According to Sandy's model this would have been all that God desired. However, God used Nathan say to David in verses 13-14, "The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die." David's response was to pray for more mercy, but God had already determined what He would do.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 82.

The greatest challenge with Sandy's view is his integration of speech act theory in the hermeneutical process. Although speech act theory may contribute to systematic theology, it should not be integrated into the interpretive process. Even worse, it should not be considered to be essential to the interpretive process and used to overturn the historical-grammatical method of interpreting the prophetic texts.

### *Evaluation of Sandy's View of Implicitly Conditional Prophecy*

Sandy's emphasis of the performative nature of language leads him to argue that the majority of prophecies in the Bible are implicitly conditional. Sandy believes statements in human language are often implicitly conditional, so one should not be surprised that God makes similar statements. Furthermore, he considers there to be tension between some of the covenantal promises and some of the prophets' declarations of judgment.

Sandy's main argument for implicitly conditional prophecy comes from his position that the Abrahamic covenant promised that the Israelites would be in the land forever and that the Davidic covenant promised everlasting reign in the Davidic dynasty. Sandy asserts that Jeremiah believed that God was deceiving them in making these promises. Sandy resolves this by arguing that some aspects of the covenant were conditional and that God could change His mind.<sup>65</sup> Stallard powerfully addresses the fulfillment of the covenant promises of the Old Testament:

In other words, God is saying that his prior unconditional and absolute promise to David could not be changed, altered, or annulled by the later free actions of the various Davidic kings. God knew ahead of time that many of them would fail, but asserted that He was not open to the cancellation of the entire covenant package. Only the individual's participation in the experience of blessing under the covenant would be cancelled. The significance of this truth for the present debate is no small

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 46.

matter in light of the fact that the covenant promises (especially Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants) are interconnected and that the vast majority of prophetic details in the Old Testament text relate to these same covenant promises.<sup>66</sup>

The interconnectedness of the promises is critical for anticipating a future fulfillment for national Israel. Sandy treats individual prophecies as though they were divorced from the unconditional royal grant covenants they were based on. Within those covenants were conditions for the individual enjoyment of the blessings, yet the promises of those covenant were repeatedly reaffirmed (cf. Jer 32:37-44; Isa 55:3; Ezek 16:60-63; 37:26-28; Ps 89:3-4, etc.).

One aspect that may be closely tied with Sandy's view of implicitly conditional prophecy is his resistance to speak about the open view of God. Although this article does not want to interpret his silence as a tacit admission of supporting the view (a more likely reason is his attempt at preserving unity in doctrinal discussions about prophecy), it must be noted that many of Sandy's arguments parallel those that free will theists use to defend their position. For instance, like Sandy, Boyd considers Jeremiah 18:1-12 to be a key passage in the debate. He writes,

If the Lord exhaustively foreknows what will definitely transpire in the future, it is impossible for him to genuinely intend to curse or bless a nation and then later genuinely reverse his plan. In other words, it's difficult to avoid denying the premise of this entire passage, and all passages like it. If the classical understanding of God's foreknowledge is correct, God eternally knows exactly what he will and will not do and what every nation will and will not do. There can be no authentic reversal. Only when we accept this, I submit, can passages like Jeremiah 18:7-

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<sup>66</sup> Stallard, "Open View of God and Prophecy," 46-47.

11 be cleared of any hint of disingenuousness. The verse speaks about God as he truly is: He plans, He responds, He changes.<sup>67</sup>

Boyd's arguments contain a similarity on the relativity of the cursing and blessing prophecies as well as a belief that God can change His mind.

Boyd, like Sandy, also argues that most prophecies are conditional. Stallard writes,

*First, he affirms that many (if not most) prophecies are conditional* [emphasis original]. The impression he gives with his use of the words *many* and *if not most* is that this category covers most of the biblical prophecies. The idea of conditionality means that there is no absolute one-to-one relationship between prediction and fulfillment. Furthermore, Boyd believes that such an absolute view of prophetic passages is often inadequate even when the text says that God has stated the prophecy in a 'settled' way.<sup>68</sup>

As Stallard notes, if this be the case, then one must question how any person can derive any hope in the fulfillment of any prophecies that have yet to be fulfilled.

### ***Evaluation of Sandy's Arguments for Fulfillment***

Regarding the nature of fulfillment Sandy writes,

How will prophecies be fulfilled? Are the detailed theories of the twentieth century (of premillennial dispensationalism in particular) valid interpretations of prophecy and apocalyptic? While many have assumed that prophecy reveals specific scenarios of future events, we may need to rethink those approaches. Futurespeak is rich in poetic imagery. Its function transcends the surface meaning of its words. Reading and hearing

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<sup>67</sup> Gregory Boyd, "Passages That Reflect a Partly Open Future," Christ Victor Ministries, accessed August 5, 2005, <http://www.gregboyd.org/gbfront/index.asp?PageID=429>.

<sup>68</sup> Stallard, "Open View of God and Prophecy," 2.

the words of prophecy and apocalyptic should thrill every faithful follower with a hope focused on the Christ of prophecy.<sup>69</sup>

However, once again, Sandy misses the overall connectedness of the dispensational system. It is not that everything is postponed to the future in dispensationalism. Dispensationalism sees unity in God's overall prophetic plan as Stallard says,

Admittedly, this great volume of prophetic teaching is not all about end-time events such as the tribulation, Second Coming, and the eschatological kingdom. However, the interconnectedness of areas of theology show that prophetic passages relative to the end-time days fit within a larger scheme of God's overall plan. In the history of dispensationalism, this has been called the panorama of the ages or the picture of the biblical purposes of God in history. Oftentimes it is presented through the lens of the various dispensations. These dispensations culminate in the final kingdom age and demonstrate that history is going somewhere. Thus, the eschatological kingdom age is seen from this angle as a part within a whole. Dispensationalists have not ignored the other parts, but they have exercised some excitement about their place within the flow of God's work leading up to the final stages of the divine plan: 'One of the distinctives of biblical Christianity is that God knows and reveals the future (Isaiah 46:8-11). Only God can do that. Thus, the future is settled, and not open to change.... We can have confidence that God will continue to carry out His plan for the ages, and we who are Christians have a significant part in that plan.'<sup>70</sup>

Stallard's analysis is critical for understanding the overarching dispensational framework. It is not that dispensationalists are solely focused on charting the future, but they are interested in connecting God's inerrant and inspired Word in the past, present and future to see his ultimate plan. Not only does

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<sup>69</sup> Sandy, *Plowshares & Pruning Hooks*, 188.

<sup>70</sup> Stallard, "Why Are Dispensationalists So Interested in Prophecy?," 3. The quotation within Dr. Stallard's quotation comes from Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice, *Charting the End Times* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2001), 25.

dispensationalism have a hope focused on the Christ of prophecy, but it also encourages a hope in God's faithfulness to fulfilling his promises.

One area where many traditional dispensationalists will have a difference of opinion is with Sandy's analysis of the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32 in Acts 2. Sandy unequivocally states that the unexpected fulfillment of this prophecy comes on the day of Pentecost with little or no discussion of the difficulties of this interpretation.<sup>71</sup> He only writes, "Some argue that only part of Joel's prophecy was fulfilled on Pentecost, but that is begging the question."<sup>72</sup> Stallard's evaluation of Sanders's use of this passage can also be applied to Sandy:

Dispensationalists have offered more than one proposal concerning Acts 2:16-21. Many dispensationalists have recognized that there is no fulfillment of the details of the Joel 2 passage in Acts 2:16-21 such as the universality of the outpouring of the Spirit, the cosmic signs, and the presence of the day of the Lord tribulation. Furthermore, the context of the restoration of Israel to its land, which is part of the presentation of Joel does not seem to be clearly spelled out in Acts 2. Therefore, many dispensationalists have argued for analogous fulfillment<sup>73</sup> or for a view of openness to the soon fulfillment of Joel's prophecy if Israel nationally repents.<sup>74</sup> Sanders' terse presentation on this passage does not do justice to the wide-ranging debates about the use of the Old Testament in the New, especially in such crucial passages. He just assumes, without exegetical comment, that the passage is a Day-of-Pentecost fulfillment in a way not expected at all and apparently disconnected with the actual Old Testament

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>73</sup> [Stallard cites the following] For example, see Arno C. Gaebelein, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Exposition* (New York: Publication Office "Our Hope," 1912; reprint, Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1961), 52-53.

<sup>74</sup> [Stallard cites the following] For example, see Zane Hodges, "A Dispensational Understanding of Acts 2" in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, ed. John R. Master and Wesley R. Willis (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 167-80.

promise in its own context. Such an approach emasculates the Old Testament text.<sup>75</sup>

Unfortunately, Sandy uses a passage that has the unique labeling of ἀλλὰ τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ εἰρημένον διὰ τοῦ προφήτου to demonstrate a model for fulfillment with little or no clarification for those readers who are unaware of the issues involving that text.

Another area where many dispensationalists will disagree with Sandy is on the lack of attention he gives to any fulfillment of prophecies that were directed to national Israel. One key quotation by Sandy in this regard is

When certain Old Testament prophecies seem not to have been literally fulfilled before the first advent, premillennialists assume that they will be fulfilled in a future Israel. For the chosen people, especially messianic Jews, descriptions of a regathering in Jerusalem are assumed to predict a great day when Jews everywhere will recognize their Messiah. However, in light of how the language of destruction and blessing works—illocution, visualization, conditionality, stereotypical features and the like (see pp.83-97)—these viewpoints need to be reevaluated carefully.<sup>76</sup>

What Sandy fails to mention is that the promised restoration for Israel is not only mentioned in the prophetic language of the OT, but it is also mentioned in the canonical language of the major covenants (Abrahamic, Davidic, Palestinian, etc) as well as the NT epistolary language. For instance, since Sandy is prone to interpret the OT prophecy in light of its view in the N T (as that is his next point of discussion on page 206 after mentioning the premillennial dispensational view of prophecy), it is important to mention Romans 11:25-29 which says in the NASB,

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—

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<sup>75</sup> Stallard, “Open View of God and Prophecy,” 11.

<sup>76</sup> Sandy, *Plowshares & Pruning Hooks*, 206.

that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, ‘The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. This is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.’ From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Here Paul clearly associates the OT prophecy in Isaiah 59:20 with the nation of Israel (as distinguished from the Gentiles) and looks for a literal fulfillment of this promise in the future by national Israel. The traditional dispensational view is that the church should interpret it the same way.

Finally, Sandy does little to address how the existence of implicitly conditional prophecy would be possible in light of the test of accuracy for a true prophet. Deuteronomy 18:22 says in the NASB, “When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.” This text very clearly states that the primary test of a true prophet would be the accuracy of his predictions. Although Sandy acknowledges that this test validated a true prophet,<sup>77</sup> he does little to explain how this could be possible if most of all prophecy is implicitly conditional. In other words, if that were the case, any prophet who was accused of being false could simply declare that the prophesied judgment or blessing was implicitly conditional and the response of the people failed to bring it about. However, Deuteronomy 18 does not provide a basis for this exception. In fact, this test also applied during the exile. Ezekiel 13:9-11 says in the NASB,

So My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. They will have no place in the council of My people, nor will they be written down in the register of the house of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel, that you

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

may know that I am the Lord GOD. It is definitely because they have misled My people by saying, 'Peace!' when there is no peace. And when anyone builds a wall, behold, they plaster it over with whitewash; so tell those who plaster it over with whitewash, that it will fall. A flooding rain will come, and you, O hailstones, will fall; and a violent wind will break out.

Thus, since God inspired and led the true prophets, one would assume He had the foresight to bring their prophecies to pass.

### ***Evaluation of Sandy's Overemphasis of the Apocalyptic Genre***

Another challenge of Sandy's view is his overemphasis of the apocalyptic genre. Sandy argues that both prophecy and apocalyptic are distinct forms, and there is enough similarity between Revelation and Jewish apocalyptic writings to label Revelation as apocalyptic. As previously mentioned, Sandy argues that apocalyptic should be read from a distance without interpreting too much about the future. Sandy commits the error of genre override<sup>78</sup> in his arguments from the basis of the apocalyptic genre.

Thomas powerfully argues that the analysis of literary genre is a fairly recent phenomenon and that the classification of Revelation as an apocalyptic work contradicts the clear statements within Revelation that classify it as a prophetic work (see Rev 1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, and 19). He argues that unlike much apocalyptic literature, Revelation is not pseudonymous nor pessimistic about the future and that the Messiah has already come and laid the groundwork for his future victory through his redemptive death. Furthermore, Revelation has some epistolary features in Chapters 2 and 3 that are uncharacteristic of typical Jewish apocalyptic literature.<sup>79</sup> Additionally, Sandy asserts that it was the result of the prophetic gift of the Holy Spirit that

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<sup>78</sup> For a definition of genre override see Robert L. Thomas, *Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 323-48.

<sup>79</sup> Mal Couch, ed., *The Gathering Storm: Understanding Prophecy in Future Times* (Fort Worth, TX: 21st Century P, 2005), 33.

would distinguish it from non-inspired apocalyptic works like that of the Shepherd of Hermas. As a result, Thomas believes that the prophetic nature of Revelation will only allow for a literal interpretation.<sup>80</sup> He writes,

If Revelation is a prophecy, it must be treated as other prophecy. Its details must be objectively meaningful and historical...The preferred approach to the Apocalypse is to interpret according to the normal principles of grammar and facts of history, remembering the peculiar nature of predictive prophecy throughout the Bible. This is usually referred to as 'literal' interpretation. One may wonder how a book of symbols and visions such as Revelation can be interpreted literally. This is not so difficult to understand if one keeps in mind that the symbols and visions were the means of communicating the message to the prophet, but they have a literal meaning unless otherwise indicated in the text. They do not furnish the grounds for interpreting the text in a nonliteral fashion.<sup>81</sup>

Thomas makes an important distinction. The existence of symbolism in Revelation does not justify interpreting the book figuratively. John gives clues when the symbols are to be interpreted in a nonliteral fashion (cf. Rev 11:8).

In addition, Sandy labels many statements as apocalyptic when they are not. For instance, he argues that John's statement that Christ will "burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" in Matthew 3:12 is apocalyptic when it is a statement that is made in a narrative portion of Matthew.<sup>82</sup> He labels 2 Thessalonians, 2 Peter 2:3, James 1:12, 1 Peter 5:4, and many others as apocalyptic when they are clear statements made in epistles.<sup>83</sup> He categorizes Matthew 13:43 as apocalyptic even though it is a description of a parable.<sup>84</sup> In other words, when statements in narrative, prophetic, epistolary, or parabolic material have sensational language about the future, Sandy labels them as

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<sup>80</sup> Thomas, *Evangelical Hermeneutics*, 323-25.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 334.

<sup>82</sup> Sandy, *Plowshares & Pruning Hooks*, 175.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 175-83.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

apocalyptic and then states that they should be interpreted metaphorically. However, the fact that these statements occur outside of what many would consider apocalyptic genre shows that Sandy should take more care in advocating a metaphorical hermeneutic for any sensational language.

### ***Sandy's Hermeneutical Method for Interpreting Prophecy***

While Sandy tries to base his view on a linguistic, objective analysis of prophecy, it is primarily a result of a distinction in theological method from traditional dispensationalism. Sandy makes speech act theory essential to exegesis instead of placing it within the category of systematic theology. He interprets OT prophecy in light of this assumption. Furthermore, Sandy interprets prophetic fulfillment in light of the NT statements that trump the literal meaning of the OT prophecy. However, the issue of a literal hermeneutic is more a matter of theological method than simply linguistic analysis, as Sandy supposes. Sandy summarizes his hermeneutical method for interpreting prophecy as the following:

1. Since prophecy is powerful language that is designed for dramatic impact on its hearers, one should listen with the heart and not just the head;
2. Since the prophets were prosecuting attorneys pronouncing God's wrath on guilty sinners, look for evidence in the prophetic and historical books for the condition of the people at that time;
3. Since prophecy promises incredible rewards for overcomers, explore the full range of what heaven on earth will be like;
4. Since prophecy is poetic, seek to understand what a prophet meant by taking into account literary features like metaphors and hyperbole, rhetorical techniques, unexpressed conditions, stereotypical language, and rich symbolism. Do not take the nature of the words superficially, but focus on the function of the language. Since biblical prophecies were not understood until they

- were fulfilled, do not act expect prophecy to provide a blueprint for the future;
5. Since prophecy may describe the same idea with a variety of images, look for overarching themes. If you do not understand the intent of the prophetic expression, it may be time to step back and take in the big picture. Not understanding some things does not imply not understanding everything;
  6. Since prophecy draws on present and earthly language to describe future and heavenly scenes, expect the future reality to exceed your wildest imagination;
  7. Since prophecy has been subjected to many different interpretations, focus on what we can agree on by being humble and considerate of other views of prophetic fulfillment.<sup>85</sup>

One can note from Sandy's method that systematic theological assumptions actually precede the exegetical process of interpreting the prophecy. Very little of Sandy's recommendations is hermeneutical per se, but it is primarily theological. Cultural considerations are not performed at the level of systematic theology but at the level of interpretation. Sandy argues that the individual circumstances should be considered, yet there is no emphasis on the promises that are made specifically to Israel. Speech act theory has a high priority in how prophecy is interpreted. Consequently, he introduces the process of interpreting prophecy with the emotions of the heart at a hermeneutical level which would incorporate the reader's response in the interpretive process. He also says that if one does not understand the details of the prophecy, one should focus on the big picture of the prophecy itself. Even the process of interacting with contrary views is placed under the rubric of hermeneutics and not systematic theology.

In Sandy's description, Sandy left out some of the methodological steps that he actually utilizes in his method for interpreting prophecy. First, he interprets both the Old and New Testament prophecy in light of the performative function of

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<sup>85</sup> Sandy, *Plowshares & Pruning Hooks*, 199-200.

language as espoused by speech act theory.<sup>86</sup> Second, he merely mentions that metaphor is a literary feature of language, but his book argues that most prophecy is metaphorical. Third, he interprets the fulfillment of OT prophecy in light of the pattern espoused in the NT of prophecies that were said to be fulfilled. Thus, he advocates interpreting the OT in light of the NT.

### ***Contrast of Sandy's Method with Stallard's Method***

In contrast to Sandy, Stallard proposes a theological method that summarizes the methodology of many traditional dispensationalists. Since dispensationalists interpret prophecy with the same historical-grammatical method as the rest of Scripture, this method will be a helpful contrast to Sandy's. Following is the logical order of priority that Stallard proposes:

1. The recognition of one's own preunderstanding
2. The formulation of a biblical theology from the Old Testament based upon literal interpretation (grammatical-historical method of interpretation) of the Old Testament text
3. The formulation of a biblical theology from the New Testament based upon literal interpretation (the grammatical-historical method of interpretation) of the New Testament text, which method includes the backgrounds arrived at via point 2 above
4. The production of a systematic theology by harmonizing all inputs to theology including points 2 and 3 above<sup>87</sup>

This contrast lies at the heart of the difference between Sandy's method and the traditional dispensational one. Stallard writes,

The proper sequence of theological method based upon a correct understanding of the progress of revelation prohibits the reading of the New Testament into the Old, although expansion and

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>87</sup> Mike Stallard, "Literal Interpretation, Theological Method, and the Essence of Dispensationalism," *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 35.

enhancements are allowed. This is not literal interpretation of the Bible in general, but *the guaranteeing of literal interpretation of the Old Testament through the use of a correct theological method*. Thus, literal interpretation tied to correct theological method is a distinctive of dispensationalism.<sup>88</sup>

Stallard's argument is helpful in demonstrating that Sandy's method has little in common with traditional dispensationalism and that his arguments are less about linguistic analysis and more about theological method.

### ***Contrast of Sandy's Method with Other Traditional Dispensationalists***

Although Sandy specifically states that he did not write his book to advocate premillennial dispensationalism, his views will be contrasted with traditional dispensationalist views. The purpose of this exercise is to show that although he has been trained in dispensationalism and has worked for dispensationalist institutions, his views are completely contrary to dispensationalism and should not be advocated by proponents of dispensationalism. Secondly, this section will argue that the dispensationalist historical-grammatical interpretation of prophecy is superior to the model Sandy proposes.

Walvoord's article entitled "Interpreting Prophecy Today Part 1: Basic Considerations in Interpreting Prophecy" gives several principles for interpreting prophecy:

1. Words are to be understood in their normal, natural sense unless there is firm evidence in the context that the word is used in some other sense.
2. Each statement of Scripture should be interpreted in its context. This usually means that a word should be interpreted in its immediate context, although sometimes usage in other passages is also relevant. A common fallacy, however, is to read into a passage something that is found elsewhere in the Bible instead

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

- of allowing the immediate context to have primary weight.
3. A text of Scripture must always be seen in its historical and cultural contexts, and the intended meaning of the author is important. Conservative scholars, however, recognize that the Bible is not only a work by human authors, but is also inspired by the Holy Spirit, and in some cases even the human author did not understand entirely what he was writing.
  4. Scripture should be interpreted in the light of grammatical considerations including such important matters as tense and emphasis.
  5. If the language of Scripture is figurative as is sometimes the case, this should be clearly established by the context itself and not by a priori considerations.<sup>89</sup>

From the beginning, one can see some distinctions between Walvoord and Sandy. Walvoord argues that the natural sense is to be preferred unless there is firm evidence to the contrary. He also says that the context alone and not a priori considerations determine whether the language is figurative. In contrast, Sandy asserts on the basis of speech act theory that prophecies are generally metaphorical and one cannot be certain whether or not they were to be taken literally until after their fulfillment (which once again would be difficult for the original audience to be certain of). In contrast to Sandy's straw man presentation of the dispensational way of interpreting prophecy, Walvoord's interpretation does not leave everything completely to the future (in fact, he argues that one half of prophecies have already been fulfilled),<sup>90</sup> but allows for the divine inspiration of Scripture and grammatical considerations to determine the nature of the fulfillment.

Walvoord argues that prophecy is not a special case of biblical interpretation and it should be taken literally as many of

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<sup>89</sup> John F. Walvoord, "Interpreting Prophecy Today Part 1: Basic Considerations in Interpreting Prophecy," *BSac* 139, no. 553 (January 1982): 7-8.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

the prophecies regarding the first coming of Christ were fulfilled in their normal sense. In fact, Stallard recounts a discussion he had with Walvoord on interpreting prophecy literally:

In our discussion I finally asked him this question: ‘What is the greatest issue facing dispensationalism today?’ His answer, without hesitation was the following: ‘It is what it has always been, the inerrancy of the Bible.’ What he meant was the literal hermeneutic followed by dispensationalists was the only approach which allows the Bible to be harmonized properly so that its inerrancy could be fully established. This fit well with earlier statements by Walvoord to the effect that one can be a liberal and be an amillennialist and perhaps a postmillennialist. However, it is impossible to be a liberal and at the same time a dispensational premillennialist.... At least part of Walvoord’s view stems from dispensationalism’s attempt to let distinctions stand throughout the Bible so as not to produce a false and forced unity.<sup>91</sup>

Sandy goes to almost the opposite extreme by questioning a literal interpretation of prophecy but advocating a forced unity.

Chafer also argues that prophecy should be interpreted in its “reasonable and grammatical meaning.”<sup>92</sup> He states,

The Bible terminology is always the simplest of any literature. Where symbolism is employed in the text, it will, almost without exception, be so indicated. Whatever the prophetic message may be, it is dependent upon language-simple terms known to all-for its conveyance, and he who tampers with or distorts those terms cannot but reap confusion. The plan of God respecting future things has broken upon the mind of many worthy scholars when they have determined to let the Bible’s simple prophetic terminology bear the message that it naturally conveys. At once the entire story of the future becomes clear and free from complications. It is not implied that there are not difficult situations to be confronted; but it is asserted that humble

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<sup>91</sup>Stallard, “Why Are Dispensationalists So Interested in Prophecy?,” 9.

<sup>92</sup>Chafer, “Introduction to the Study of Prophecy,” 104.

acceptance of the declarations in the natural meaning of them will yield a right understanding of the all but complete prophetic message.<sup>93</sup>

Once again, there are some clear distinctions between Chafer's view of prophecy and Sandy's. Chafer argues that prophecy should be interpreted literally and the natural meaning of prophecy will bring a true understanding of the prophetic message. Furthermore, he argues that prophecy should be interpreted symbolically only when the text warrants it.

Ryrie writes regarding the role of literal hermeneutics in prophetic interpretation: "The hermeneutical principle is basic to the entire dispensational system including its eschatology ... dispensationalism is the only system that practices the literal principle consistently. Other systems practice literalism but not in every area of theology or on all parts of the Bible.... Consistent literalism is at the heart of dispensational theology."<sup>94</sup> Ryrie's point is that all conservative Christian systems interpret the Bible literally to some degree. What differentiates dispensationalism from others is that dispensationalists try to interpret the entire Bible as literally as possible. In contrast to Ryrie's definition of literalism as clear, plain, and normal interpretation, Sandy argues for degrees of literalness. By advocating that prophecy should not be interpreted literally most of the time since it is primarily metaphorical, Sandy takes away one of the true marks of dispensationalism and shows on the hermeneutical barometer Stallard mentioned earlier that his approach is not dispensational.

Whereas Sandy argues of the dilemma God faced in communicating with man, Ryrie affirms God's sovereign ability to communicate with man: "If God be the originator of language and if the chief purpose of originating it was to convey His message to man, then it must follow that He, being all-wise and all loving, originated sufficient language to convey

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 8th ed. (Chicago,: Moody, 1973), 158.

all that was in His heart to tell man.”<sup>95</sup> Sandy argues that language begins with man’s need to communicate, and Ryrie argues that language begins with God’s desire to communicate. Sandy’s philosophy of language is primarily man-centered and Ryrie’s is God-centered. Ryrie believes that God does not want to communicate in a way that is confusing to man, but Sandy consistently views prophecy as problematic. Ryrie asserts that God communicates in the way that is most comprehensible to man and can be interpreted in a clear, plain, and normal way. If even his invisible attributes can be clearly seen in the natural world (cf. Rom 1:20), would it not make sense that He can communicate those attributes in words as well?

Ryrie also refers to the apologetic value of the OT prophecies about Christ that were fulfilled literally. According to Ryrie, only the clear, plain, and normal interpretation of prophecy preserves objectivity. He says, “To try to see meaning other than the normal one would result in as many interpretations as there are people interpreting. Literalism is a logical rationale.”<sup>96</sup>

Finally, Ryrie argues that the dispensationalist hermeneutic is the most consistent. He writes,

In other words, the nondispensationist position is simply that the literal principle is sufficient except for the interpretation of prophecy. In this area, the spiritualizing principle of interpretation must be introduced. The amillennialist uses it in the entire area of prophetic truth: the covenant premillennialist uses it only partially. This is why the dispensationalist claims he is the only one who uses literalism consistently.<sup>97</sup>

However, much of Sandy’s book describes how difficult it is to be consistent with interpretation because of the performative nature of language. As a result, he leaves his readers with more questions than answers.

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-89.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

Since it has been demonstrated that Sandy's position is not in any way consistent with traditional dispensationalism, one must still answer the question as to whether his model is better than the traditional dispensationalist hermeneutic. In terms of the portrayal of divinity, the traditional dispensational model preserves the glory of God as the Divine Communicator who is completely capable of communicating to humanity in plain language. Sandy paints a picture of a perplexed God who is limited to communicate in human experience. With respect to the Scriptures, the traditional dispensational model is the most consistent with the promissory nature of the royal grant covenants made to Israel and the clear statements in Deuteronomy 18 that establish a test of a true prophet. Sandy's model is based largely on questionable texts that were carefully chosen to indicate a metaphorical use of language.

The dispensational system is also the most logical way of interpreting prophecy. Wolfe gives four criteria for validating epistemological systems: consistency, coherence, comprehensiveness, and congruity.<sup>98</sup> As Ryrie has shown, traditional dispensationalism is the only system that offers a consistent approach to prophecy with clear guidelines for interpretation. Traditional dispensationalism is the only system that comprehensively applies a hermeneutic to all aspects of Scripture. Traditional dispensationalism is also the only system that offers an appropriate explanation for the vast majority of prophecy that has already been fulfilled (especially Messianic prophecies that were fulfilled in literal fashion). Finally, the dispensational framework is the only system that is able to coherently explain how the Bible fits together in the past, present, and future. As a result, there is no warrant for a change in the hermeneutical approach to prophecy of traditional dispensationalism.

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<sup>98</sup> David L. Wolfe, *Epistemology: The Justification of Belief*, Contours of Christian Philosophy (Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity, 1982), 55.

## Conclusion

This review of Sandy's hermeneutical method for prophetic interpretation as expressed in *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic* has evaluated Sandy's arguments on the goal of prophetic communication, literal versus figurative communication, his use of speech act theory, his view of implicitly conditional prophecy, his arguments on fulfillment of prophecy, his arguments regarding apocalyptic literature, and his hermeneutical method for prophetic interpretation. This article demonstrated that Sandy's arguments are not consistent with a traditional dispensational hermeneutical method for prophetic interpretation. For most traditional dispensationalists, prophecy is interpreted with the same literal historical-grammatical approach that is applied throughout the Bible. When contrasted with the dispensational method for interpreting prophecy, Sandy's method was found to be inconsistent with the Biblical view of prophecy and less consistent, coherent, comprehensive, and congruous than the dispensational approach. Additionally, his approach minimizes the glory of God as a capable Divine Communicator. For this reason, this writer sees no need to change the traditional dispensational hermeneutical approach to prophecy, but instead would consider the traditional dispensational interpretive method to be the best approach to interpreting prophecy.

# Repent and Believe the Gospel

A. Moises Zumaeta

**My remembrance of Dr. Bill Arp:** My very first class with Dr. Arp was Greek Exegetical Methods, or as he would prefer to call it, “GEM.” GEM was a very suitable nickname for the class, because it described, not only the relevance of its content, but also the passion of the dispenser of the content. Like a precious and cherished jewel, so were the Holy Scriptures for Dr. William Arp. He had a passion for the text of Scripture, a passion for its thoughtful reading, precise interpretation, and bold proclamation. Such a passion for the living words of Scripture was the result of an even greater passion—the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am inclined to think that Dr. Arp nicknamed the class GEM as a result of the vivid, penetrating, and life-giving words of our Lord, who said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it” (Matt 13:45-46). Dr. Arp was that merchant who found the precious GEM of the kingdom of heaven—the gospel of salvation—in the pages of Scripture. Transformed by this GEM, he made it his life ambition to help others find, behold, and treasure the precious GEM. I am one of the fortunate ones whom Dr. Arp helped in this quest, and for that I will be eternally thankful. Dr. Arp is no longer with us. He is with his greatest treasure, his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. His legacy will continue to be felt for many years through the lives of those he impacted.

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**T**he debate between what is called “the free grace salvation view” and the “lordship salvation view” has been in the evangelical radar for quite a few years. This debate deals mainly with the doctrine of conversion, and it is the result of the different ways in which the terms “repentance”

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and "faith" are understood and interpreted in relationship to a person's response to the gospel. How should we understand these terms? "Must a person who seeks salvation repent or turn away from every known sin in his life?"<sup>2</sup> or "Does insistence upon repentance involve the penitent in a form of works-righteousness?"<sup>3</sup> How about faith? "Is faith primarily intellectual assent to revealed truths, trust in a person, or a certain mode of existence?"<sup>4</sup>

In this article these questions will be discussed in light of what the Scripture teaches about them.<sup>5</sup> The meaning of these words (repent and believe) will be defined as they are used in Scripture in relationship to the doctrine of salvation; and a theological assessment of the relationship these two words have when it comes to conversion will be provided. Practical consequences, in the ministry of preaching, that could result from a proper understanding (or a lack thereof) of this doctrine will also be considered.

## Defining the Terms

### *Repentance*

Many scholars have defined the word *μετάνοια* (repentance) as only a "change of mind." This definition is usually extracted from the etymology of the word. It is explained that since *μετα* means "after" and *νοέω* "to think" the meaning of the word should be "after-thought" or a "change of mind." Charles Ryrie, for example, defines this word in this manner. He argues, as he talks about Peter's sermon in Acts 2, that when Peter challenged his audience to "repent," he was asking them to change their

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<sup>2</sup> Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 235.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> I do not pretend to solve the debate in a short paper such as this, especially when one considers that very able and conservative scholars are divided on the topic. I am well aware that both camps have good strong arguments, and each one of them is trying to be faithful to the precious Word of God.

minds "about Jesus of Nazareth."<sup>6</sup> What Ryrie means with this is that, in repentance, they had to change whatever they thought about Jesus and "*that* repentance saves."<sup>7</sup> Though it is true that "repentance" means a change of mind, that is not everything it means every time it is used, especially in the Judeo-Christian literature. In fact, one of the definitions provided in BDAG is "turning about, conversion as a turning away."<sup>8</sup>

Words must be defined in light of the context in which they are used not just in the components of their etymology. D. A. Carson in his little book *Exegetical Fallacies* quotes an example from Dr. Louw, using the word ὑπέρτης, which illustrates the dangers of defining a word in this way. He writes, "As Louw remarks, to derive the meaning of ὑπέρτης from ὑπό and ἐρέτης is no more intrinsically realistic than deriving the meaning of 'butterfly' from 'butter' and 'fly' or the meaning of 'pineapple' from 'pine' and 'apple.'"<sup>9</sup> As silly as this example sounds, the truth it conveys is undeniable. We do not communicate on the basis of etymology.

If μετάνοια does not only mean "change of mind" what else does it mean? This author will answer this question by examining a few passages in the gospels in light of their own contexts.<sup>10</sup> Μετάνοια appears 22 times in the NT, the first time occurring in Matthew 3:8 where John the Baptist is preaching at the Jordan River. Many Pharisees and Sadducees were aware that the people of Israel regarded John as a true prophet of God (Matt 21:26) and probably some of them also recognized this fact. When some Pharisees and Sadducees saw John baptizing, they came to him to perform the ritual. John, somehow identifying their hypocrisy, told them that their baptism was not

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<sup>6</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation: What it Means to Believe in Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1997), 86.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Original emphasis

<sup>8</sup> BDAG, 640.

<sup>9</sup> D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 29-30.

<sup>10</sup> Due to the vastness of the Scriptural data, and the briefness of this paper, I will be selective in my treatment of the verses that contain the words. I will study only a few biblical examples where these words are used in the context of the doctrine of salvation.

going to free them from the coming wrath. They had "to produce fruit that proved their repentance." In light of the context of Matthew, John is clearly teaching that repentance is, first of all, necessary for salvation ("deliverance from coming wrath") and, secondly, it entails a change of action. It must involve a changed life.

True repentance is not a matter of words and ritual, but of a real changed life. The imagery of bearing fruit will also be deployed in Jesus' teaching (7:16-20; 12:33-37; 13:8, 22-23) until it reaches its climax in the condemnation of Jerusalem as the tenants who have failed to deliver the produce of God's vineyard (21:43), a situation which has been vividly illustrated by the destruction of the fruitless fig tree outside Jerusalem (21:18-19).<sup>11</sup>

In fact, another commentator notes that this verse is key in the development of Matthew's crucial themes, especially that of godly righteousness. He writes,

Verse 8 provides the key to one of Matthew's crucial themes--righteousness by good deeds. But Matthew does not contradict Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. Rather, true faith or repentance will produce a life-style and behavior that demonstrate the reality of a changed heart.<sup>12</sup>

The next verse I would like to consider is Mark 1:4. In this text the gospel writer tells us that John was preaching a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." No Markan scholar I have come across denies that John's calling to repentance was a calling to salvation. That the eternal destiny of John's audience is in view is evident by verse 8 where he says, "I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." Although the identity of the "one more powerful" that comes after John is not revealed, the baptism he is going to

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<sup>11</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse and others (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 111.

<sup>12</sup> Craig Blomberg, *Matthew: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, NAC, ed. E. Ray Clendenen and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 78.

perform is described as a baptism “with the Holy Spirit.” Describing the Messiah’s baptism in this fashion is of great importance because John is not merely describing a future Christian water ritual, but the giving of the salvation and restoration the Messiah was going to accomplish. The mention of the Holy Spirit would undoubtedly elicit in the mind of John’s audience the prophetic promise of deliverance Yahweh was going to accomplish when he “pours out” his Spirit on his people (Isa 3:15; 44:3; 63:10-14; Ezek 39:29; Joel 2:28).<sup>13</sup>

Certainly some might argue that though John is calling people to repent, this does not mean that he is challenging them to change their lives. However, to say this completely misses the point of the passage. William Lane, commenting on this verse, notes, “The biblical concept of repentance, however, is deeply rooted in the wilderness tradition. In the earliest stratum of OT prophecy, the summons to ‘turn’ basically connotes a return to the original relationship with the Lord.”<sup>14</sup> James Edwards points out, “Repentance was the message of the Baptizer reduced to a word. It entailed, according to Mark’s brief report in v. 4, a turning away from sin, and also, according to Matt 3:8 and Luke 3:8, a sign or ‘fruit,’ perhaps water baptism, but more likely *moral transformation*.”<sup>15</sup>

Another clear example is found in Acts 20:21, where the apostle makes it clear that the message he preached to both Jews and Greeks was that “they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.” It is important to stress that the apostle qualifies repentance as a turning to God. This

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<sup>13</sup> The contrast between water and Holy Spirit is also important because if John were simply contrasting two different modes of the ritual (John’s water baptism and Christian water baptism) he would have not contrasted water versus Holy Spirit. In the gospel of John when the Lord speaks of water and Spirit (3:5) he is clearly differentiating natural birth with the spiritual second birth (v, 7), which is the sovereign work of the Spirit of God who “blows wherever it pleases” (v. 8).

<sup>14</sup> William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 49.

<sup>15</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, ed. D. A Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 31; emphasis added.

clearly describes a change in one's course of life. This is not a mere intellectual change in regards to who God is, but a change in sinful practice because of a right understanding of who God is. Certainly, the apostle himself demonstrates this in his address to the people of Lystra. Paul expected that they, as they believed the gospel, would turn from the worthless idols "to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them" (Acts 14:15). Paul expects that anyone who responds to the gospel, must also literally abandon the sinful practice of idolatry, and be devoted solely to the worship of the one and true God. And this is not only true of the sin of idolatry, but of every sinful pattern in our unregenerate lives. In repentance we are called not only to change our mind about God, but to change our ways from everything that displeases him (Rom 2:4; 2 Cor 7:9–10; 12:21; 2 Tim 2:25–26).

These are only a few examples in which the word "repentance" is used in relationship to salvation. There are many other examples in which the Lord and his apostles also challenged their hearers to repent and believe the gospel, and every time they did this, the nuance of repentance included not only a change of mind but also a change of purpose, action, and direction (Mark 1:15; Luke 5:32; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 26:18).

Therefore, in light of the biblical evidence, though repentance at times means a change of mind, when it comes to the doctrine of conversion it also involves a change of life. As Bruce Demarest notes,

Metanoia, however, is "not just a change of inward disposition but a complete turn-about of one's life, with all that such a re-direction implies of the need for God's help on the one side and of ethical conduct on man's side.... The Baptist's message (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3) suggests that his baptism was linked with impending judgment and the need for forgiveness of sins.... Thus John's baptism was a sign of prior repentance and a transformed life."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Demarest, *Cross and Salvation*, 252.

## *Faith*

According to Hebrews 11:1, "faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see." In other words, in light of this text a basic definition of faith is the "assurance or confidence in some stated or implied truth,"<sup>17</sup> whether it is a proposition or a person. It is important to note at this point that Hebrews 11:1 does not give us a full definition of what saving faith is because it does not define the object of our salvation. Though Hebrews 11 does not define the object of our salvation, 1 John 5:10 does. From this text, readers learn that the person who believes in the Son of God, has the "witness" in himself and the "witness" is the conviction that if a person has Christ, he has all that he needs for salvation (vv. 11-12).

Saving faith then includes the knowledge of Christ's personhood and saving work, it also includes the embracement of this truth; that is, a person in order to be saved not only needs to acknowledge Christ's deity, humanity and substitutionary work, he needs to assent with it. Putting it a different way, a person needs to embrace the truth of the gospel. As Demarest once again notes, "For Paul, to become a Christian one must assent from the heart to the realities of Jesus' atoning death (1 Cor 15:3; 1 Thess 4:14), resurrection (Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 15:4, 17; 1 Thess 4:14), and divine lordship (Rom 10:9)."<sup>18</sup>

Knowledge and assent is not everything saving faith entails. A faith that saves must also include "wholehearted *trust* and *commitment* to Christ evidenced by obedience and good works."<sup>19</sup> J. B. Hixson, who rejects this aspect of saving faith, argues that to attach obedience to saving faith is illogical and unsustainable. He says:

Logically a person believes what he believes whether or not he ever acts on that belief. Faith is faith. It is to trust (i.e., believe, have faith) with assurance and certainty that something is true. To suggest that faith is not real unless it produces consistent

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<sup>17</sup> J. B. Hixson, *Getting the Gospel Wrong* (Maitland, FL: Xulon, 2008), 105.

<sup>18</sup> Demarest, *Cross and Salvation*, 260.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

behavior is to make the very existence of faith (i.e., the actuality of faith) indiscernible until time and distance have transpired.<sup>20</sup>

The problem with Hixson's thesis is that he is seeing the "result" or "fruit" of real faith as only mere human performance. He fails to understand that both faith and its fruits are gifts of God and fundamental parts of the whole gift of salvation. Ephesians 2:8-10 says that believers have been created "for good works that God prepared beforehand so we may do them." In Romans 1:5 Paul tells readers that he was chosen to be an apostle in order "to bring about the obedience of faith." In this context Paul is clearly talking about his mission as an apostle to bring the gospel to the Gentile community. Paul understands obedience as an important element of faith as it relates to the Gospel. Douglas Moo, in his outstanding commentary on Romans, comments on this verse:

Paul saw his task as calling men and women to submission to the lordship of Christ (cf. vv. 4b and 7b), a submission that began with conversion but which was to continue in a deepening, lifelong commitment. This obedience to Christ as Lord is always closely related to faith, both as an initial decisive step to faith and as a continuing "faith" relationship with Christ.<sup>21</sup>

True faith, and thus real trust that leads to salvation is always accompanied by obedience. If a father tells his child not to put his finger in the socket, it does not matter how much the child believes and trusts in him, he will not "be saved" from getting shocked unless he obeys his father's command. Scripture is clear that a mere intellectual acknowledgment and assenting of Christ's personhood and work is not enough for true saving faith to be present. Obedience is an important element of faith that saves.

This truth is clearly taught in James 2:14-17. In this passage our Lord's brother acknowledges that there is a kind of faith

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<sup>20</sup> Hixson, *Getting the Gospel Wrong*, 135.

<sup>21</sup> Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse and others (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 52.

that does not save, because it is without works and therefore a dead faith. James starts this text by asking the following question: “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Can this kind of faith save him?” In other words, what James is saying is that if a person professes that he or she believes in Christ and his word, but their life does not show their obedience to him, what good is this kind of faith? Can this faith save him? The obvious answer to these questions, which is implied, is ‘No good at all’ and in fact, it is so bad, that it cannot save him.

For James both faith and deeds go together, and they are both gifts from God. If a person claims to have faith but there are no fruits, James tells us that faith does not save for “even the demons believe and tremble with fear.”

Hixson rejects this interpretation, as is evident by the following statement: “James is not contrasting faith that leads to heaven with faith that does not lead to heaven in this passage. He is contrasting vibrant healthy faith of believers with useless, ineffective faith.”<sup>22</sup> The problem with Hixson’s conclusion is that the reference to salvation in relationship to faith is clear in verse 14. James asks a rhetorical question that requires a negative answer. Obviously, a faith without works does not save. Hixson argues that the fact that James refers to his audience as brothers shows that salvation is not in view; however, he fails to point out that James is using the conjunction ἐάν along with the indefinite and impersonal pronoun τις to provide a hypothetical situation.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the fact that salvation is in view in this text is found in the

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<sup>22</sup> Hixson, *Getting the Gospel Wrong*, 124.

<sup>23</sup> It is also important to consider that the book of James seems to be a collection of sermons that our Lord’s brother preached to his church in Jerusalem. Thus, it should not be a problem that James addresses everyone in his audience as brothers, even if among them there are unbelievers (See, Douglas J. Moo, *James: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC, ed. Leon Morris (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 39; Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 32.

reference to judgment just made in the verse before, and the mention of Abraham's justification in verse 21.

### ***Relationship Between Repentance and Faith***

So far we have argued that both repentance and faith are important elements of the one event labeled "conversion." It is true that sometimes when the gospel is proclaimed the summons in some passages is to repent (Acts 2:38), while in others it is to believe (Acts 16:31). There is no doubt, nonetheless, and most scholars will agree with this statement, that in light of Jesus's preaching (Mark 1:14-15), both elements are basic components of the one unique event of conversion.<sup>24</sup> As Sinclair Ferguson notes, "Here repentance and faith belong together. They denote two aspects in conversion that are equally essential to it. Thus, either term implies the presence of the other because each reality (repentance or faith) is the sine qua non of the other."<sup>25</sup> In fact, repentance, when speaking about conversion, cannot exist without faith, nor faith without repentance.

This definition of repentance of course does not mean that every person who believes the gospel will experience, in equal dose, the sense of repentance and trust. Reality and experiences show that every person responds differently to the gospel. Depending on the way the message is presented and the different needs a person might have at that specific moment, some people may experience a stronger sense of guilt and sorrow because of their sin, while others may experience a greater sense of awe and admiration of Christ because of his love and amazing grace. Regardless of the experience a person may have, both elements, repentance and faith, must be present for conversion to take place. As Ferguson notes,

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<sup>24</sup> I believe that both Ryrie and Hixson would agree with this statement although, as already mentioned their definition of repentance will differ from what I am proposing here.

<sup>25</sup> Sinclair Ferguson, "Faith and Repentance," *Table Talk Magazine*, June 1, 2013, accessed December 14, 2013, <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/faith-and-repentance/>.

In any particular individual, at the level of consciousness, a sense of either repentance or trust may predominate. What is unified theologically may be diverse psychologically. Thus, an individual deeply convicted of the guilt and bondage of sin may experience turning from it (repentance) as the dominant note in his or her conversion. Others (whose experience of conviction deepens after their conversion) may have a dominant sense of the wonder of Christ's love, with less agony of soul at the psychological level. Here the individual is more conscious of trusting in Christ than of repentance from sin.<sup>26</sup>

Regardless of the psychological sense the person has at the time of conversion, whether that person perceives a greater degree of guilt and hatred for sin, or a greater degree of joy and admiration for Christ, the theological reality is that, within the one event of conversion, both repentance and faith are present.

### *Implications for the Ministry*

The concern and true zeal that some theologians, such as Hixson and Ryrie, have to protect the gospel from any type of human work that could be attached to it, has led them to suggest that in conversion, both repentance and faith, do not necessarily mean the abandonment of sin, but rather the recognition of the glory of Christ.<sup>27</sup> As well intentioned as this proposal may be, its implications could be spiritually disastrous, since it could lead many to a sort of antinomism,<sup>28</sup> and even worse, to a false assurance of salvation.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> It is necessary to emphasize that these scholars do not deny the importance of godliness in the believer's life. Certainly they believe and teach that every believer should strive to grow in holiness for the glory of God. Instead, what they suggest is that, when it comes to salvation, the calling to conversion does not require the sinner to abandon sin because they perceive this as a human work.

<sup>28</sup> Antinomism comes from the Greek words *ἀντί* (without) and *νόμος* (law), and in its simplest form it teaches that God does not demand believers to obey his moral laws.

To misunderstand the nature of repentance and faith in salvation could have dire consequences on the listener and could also dilute the impact and faithfulness of the gospel message presented by the preacher. As far as the listener is concerned, although it is very important that he recognizes the glory and the beauty of Christ, this recognition is no more than hypocritical if it is not accompanied by a thirst to put sin to death. Loving and appreciating the work and glory of Christ must never be divorced from a constant renunciation of sin. To do so may indicate an existence completely disconnected from the Savior, and thus, a future away from his presence (John 15). Every person who hears the gospel should embrace the glory of Christ and at the same time should put sin to death. Let us take seriously the exhortation of the great Puritan preacher John Owen:

Bring your lust to the gospel, not for relief, but for farther conviction of its guilt; look on Him whom you hast pierced, and be in bitterness. Say to your soul, "What have I done? What love, what mercy, what blood, what grace have I despised and trampled on! Is this the return I make to the Father for his love, to the Son for his blood, to the Holy Ghost for his grace? Do I thus requite the Lord? ... Entertain your conscience daily with this treaty. See if it can stand before this aggravation of its guilt. If this make it not sink in some measure and melt, I fear your case is dangerous.<sup>29</sup>

As far as the preacher is concerned, it is very important that he understands that repentance is a fundamental component of God's great gift of salvation. To view repentance as a human work through which a person approaches God confuses the teaching of Scripture because it ignores the fact that both repentance and faith are undeserved gifts from God (Acts 11:18; Rom 2:4; Eph 2: 8; 2 Tim 2:25). Once the preacher understands this truth, he should follow our Lord's example (as well as the apostles') to communicate the gospel, emphasizing both sides of the coin. In other words, the preacher should urge his audience to both repent and believe the gospel. To ignore

either component will constitute a diluted message, or even worse, a false gospel.

Finally, we must understand that Scripture "calls men and women not only to an initial conversion to Christ that enrolls them among the justified, but to a continual conversion that makes them more like Jesus Christ in word and deed."<sup>29</sup> This means that throughout the entire Christian life there should be a continual need for repentance and confession (1 John 1:8-9; James 5:16), which should translate in an abandonment of the old man, along with his old and fallen vices (Col 2:11; 3: 5, 8-10). There should also be a continual need to apply the faith that already belongs to believers by daily trusting in the Lord, constantly depending on, and being energized by his power (2 Cor 5: 7).

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<sup>29</sup> Demarest, *Cross And Salvation*, 271.

## Sports, the Word & Dr. Arp

Paul Golden

**T**he power of sports. Many professional athletes like Tim Tebow utilize the platform of sports for the cause of Jesus Christ. Dr. Bill Arp—a former athlete himself—also understood the power of sports and used it to influence others for the sake of the gospel. Earlier this week I attended an outreach event featuring Tebow as the guest speaker. The Heisman trophy winner-turned-baseball-player articulately shared his faith with the hundreds in attendance. If Dr. Arp were still living, I would have stopped by his Jackson Hall office the next day to inform him of the special evening which I experienced—we enjoyed talking sports and ministry. Even though it has been one year since the passing of Dr. Arp (July 2017), I still feel the loss of my regular interactions with him. Whether discussing our families, ministry or sports—his friendship and biblically-based wisdom is genuinely missed.

As I reflect on the legacy of Dr. Arp, he was not only a seminary professor and theologian, but also a godly husband, caring father, and grandfather. He exhibited the seemingly perfect balance of loving God (and his word) while loving the people God brought across his life's path. In addition to his faith and family, Dr. Arp took pleasure in sports. It comes as no surprise that he loved his Philadelphia franchises: primarily, the Phillies, Flyers, Sixers, and Eagles. In sum, Dr. Arp was the quintessential Philly sports fan. His allegiance to his teams was undisputed by anyone who knew Dr. Arp. Until recently, his teams—most notably the Eagles and Phillies—were consistently bad and usually at the bottom of their respective league standings. Despite year after year of losing seasons, Dr. Arp

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displayed loyalty (and the patience of Job) with his beleaguered teams. Interestingly, a few months after his death, Dr. Arp's beloved Philadelphia Eagles (finally) won the Super Bowl; Penn State won their major collegiate bowl game; and the Sixers made the NBA playoffs. At the time of this writing, his Fightin' Phils are battling for first place in the National League East. Undoubtedly, Dr. Arp would be extremely gratified with this newfound success in Philadelphia.

Every once in a while, the Phillies would (surprisingly) get on a winning streak. I would then congratulate Dr. Arp on his team's recent success on the ball field. Humorously, Dr. Arp would remind me it was still too early in the season to get excited about the consecutive victories (regardless if it were the start or end of the baseball campaign). With a smile and wit, he would assure me the Phillies would find the means to squander their winning ways. Dr. Arp was a realist when it came to any perceived success with his Phils. Dr. Arp possessed a unique approach to disarming rival fans. He often joked about one seminary colleague in particular—who occasionally reveled about his favorite sports team defeating Dr. Arp's team on the gridiron. Dr. Arp frequently quipped--with a grin on his face and in his one-of-a-kind Dr. Arp voice—"some people are sore losers—he's a sore winner."

Dr. Arp employed the topic of sports to create connections with individuals---strangers and friends alike. He knew so many people and, more often than not, remembered their favorite teams. By expressing interest in them (with something as inconsequential as a favorite team), Dr. Arp cultivated the relationship. His disarming demeanor enabled one to interact freely with Dr. Arp—sports being the gateway to deeper dialogue. The seemingly surface-level conversations led to in-depth exchanges about life, marriage, and ministry. Regularly he would inquire about my chaplain ministry to the local professional hockey team. Since he was a former chaplain, I truly appreciated Dr. Arp's insights and encouraging words. (I sometimes wish that Dr. Arp were still living and a short walk down the hall to his office so I could seek his advice and counsel as I interact with my chapel guys). Dr. Mark McGinniss—a friend of Dr. Arp and fellow seminary

professor—recounts a similar exchange. On countless Monday mornings during the football season, Dr. Arp would ask McGinniss what Mark's father—an avid fan--thought about the Giants' performance on the football field the day before. It was a special way for Dr. Arp to connect not only with Dr. McGinniss, but display his gracious interest in Mark and his family.

In the community, Dr. Arp, his son, Joshua, and grandson Billy would be a regular spectators at the local high school football and basketball games. Although not his alma mater, for decades Arp was an ardent enthusiast of the Baptist Bible College (now Clarks Summit University) men's basketball program. (No more so then when his daughter's boyfriend—now son-in-law—Derek Mosher played on the BBC hardwood.) Furthermore, Dr. Arp attended Red Barons' games, Penn State football games in Happy Valley, and Bucknell basketball games. This former high school and college athlete from Williamsport, PA, enjoyed doing life with his family and friends—it was even more gratifying when spending time with family and friends at sporting events.

### **Connecting with People**

Dr. Arp was not an over-the-top sports fan—he knew the proper priority of sports in his life. Dr. Arp unquestionably had the right perspective on athletics in light of eternity. What I loved about Dr. Arp is this: he intentionally used his love of sports to impact others spiritually. This is best exemplified in his Baseball Chapel ministry. From 1992-2007, Dr. Arp combined his love for God and God's word with his love for baseball by serving as the chaplain for the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Red Barons (the AAA affiliate of his favorite team, the Philadelphia Phillies). For fifteen seasons, Dr. Arp faithfully brought messages to both the Red Barons and the visiting teams that passed through the minor league ballpark in Moosic, PA. I confidently believe his depth of theological knowledge coupled with his ability to communicate the truths of the Bible impacted hundreds and hundreds of ballplayers. Only eternity will reveal the extent of his influence from his Sunday chapels. Not only

was his influence felt at the stadium, but also Dr. Arp and his dearly loved wife, Joanna, had an incredible ministry to the professional athletes away from the stadium. The Arps frequently invited the ballplayers and wives into their home for meals. Anyone who knew the Arps most likely experienced and enjoyed their fine hospitality and welcoming environment at their Clarks Summit home. In addition to delicious home cooked meals, the Arps conducted Bible studies with the players and wives. Dr. Arp's love for the church was evidenced by encouraging his chapel guys to attend his local church along with him. On numerous occasions, I recall seeing his chapel guys worshipping at Heritage Baptist Church (Clarks Summit, PA). The players attended the early worship service at Heritage before heading to the ballpark for the game later that day. While a student at Baptist Bible Seminary, I remember several SWB players sitting in on Dr. Arp's classes (Introduction to the New Testament/NT Literature and Biblical Hermeneutics). Many of the men were drawn to his knowledge of the Scriptures, including his ability to explain the significance of the biblical context (and authorial intent of course). It was fascinating to see Dr. Arp's "two worlds" collide---the professor and the chaplain, the classroom and the clubhouse, the Bible and baseball.

Although Dr. Arp wished to see his ballplayers excel professionally, his greater concern was their spiritual condition. If a player was not a follower of Christ, Arp's desire was to introduce that player to the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. If a player was already a born-again Christian, his objective was to contribute to the individual's spiritual growth. Without question, numerous men blossomed spiritually under his significant ministry in their lives.

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The following testimonies are representative of Dr. Arp's influence on countless athletes and their spiritual walk:

### ***Kyle Abbott***

*There are some men you meet in your life whose example of what it means to love as Jesus loved us is burned in your psyche. These types of men are role models for those young in their faith. Bill Arp was one of those men in my life. I am grateful for having had him pour his knowledge and love of Jesus into my life! He has shaped me as a man and a follower of Jesus Christ.*

Kyle met Dr. Arp while playing for the Red Barons in 1992-1993. He also played four seasons in MLB with the California Angels and Philadelphia Phillies. He resides in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, coaching and instructing pitching. Following Dr. Arp's example, Kyle also served as chaplain for the Texas Rangers from 2000-2007. After his baseball career, Kyle earned his Master of Theology degree from Dallas Theological Seminary (2002). Dr. Arp was one of the major influences in his pursuit of the ThM degree.

### ***JC Show***

*Dr. Arp was an amazing example and influence to my family and I. My parents would tell stories about how knowledgeable Dr. Arp was in the Bible, as he taught their Sunday school class. The first—and most important—encouragement Dr. Arp gave me was his overall knowledge of the God he loved and served. As a local high school athlete, I was always encouraged by Dr. Arp's consistent support at numerous Abington Heights games. It was always nice to play a football game on a Saturday afternoon, and then discuss the game with Dr. Arp at church on Sunday. Even when I went away to college to play basketball at Bucknell University, Dr. Arp still made time to come support our team and me. His investment into supporting me as an athlete was encouraging, but his example of living for the Lord was the biggest thing I will take away from his life. He would always tell me he was praying for me whenever he saw me, and he was a sounding board for wisdom and guidance to my parents and me. I am grateful to have been one of the many lives touched by Dr. Arp. It is encouraging for me to know that he is heaven with the God he so faithfully served.*

As a gifted athlete, JC was a two-year captain and all-state football player, and a three-year captain and three-time all-state basketball player while at Abington Heights High School (Clarks Summit, PA). His senior year of high school he was named “Mr. Basketball” in Pennsylvania. In addition, he received the prestigious Gatorade Player of the Year award (2014). Following one season of collegiate basketball at Bucknell, JC transferred to Binghamton University (NY) playing two full seasons to date (2016-17, 2017-18). JC’s father served as the men’s basketball coach at Clarks Summit University for 20+ years.

### ***Mickey Weston***

*When my wife Lisa and I arrived in Scranton in 1992 to play for the Phillies’ AAA professional baseball team, we met the chaplain for the team and were concerned about his spiritual condition. We desired to have a couple’s Bible study and realized he would not be a good fit to lead the study. After some research, Lisa contacted Baptist Bible Seminary and asked a secretary if she knew of someone who might be interested in leading the study. She immediately pointed us to Dr. Bill Arp. Little did we know that it would be the beginning of a lifelong friendship between our families. Bill and Joanna Arp, along with all of their family, welcomed us and another couple (Pat and Christina Combs), and Kyle Abbott into their home to feed us physically, emotionally, and most importantly, spiritually. Bill and Joanna became spiritual mentors to both Lisa and me. Soon after meeting, Bill was brought in to replace the current chaplain for the Red Barons. I believe it was almost a dream-come-true for this life-long Phillies fan. Bill loved to teach the word and he loved to talk baseball. That summer we lived in Clark Summit less than 10 minutes from the Arp’s home. It seemed like if we had any time off, we spent that time at their house. Bill and I spent hours talking about how the word of God affects our daily life. We gained great insight into raising our kids by learning how they had developed such close relationships with their own children. Bill and I spent countless hours discussing what was wrong with the Phillies and how those issues could be fixed. I am not sure we had anything to do with it, but the Phillies were in*

*the World Series the next year. Though Lisa and I spent only one season with the Red Barons, our relationship with the Arps continues to this day. Through phone calls, occasional visits, letters, and notes we maintained our relationship over the last 25 plus years. Bill's wisdom, humor, knowledge, and great love are sorely missed. I look forward to the day when he and I will be able to have a nice game of catch in Glory.*

Mickey played fifteen years of professional baseball with the Phillies, Mets, Orioles and Blue Jays. He currently serves with Baseball Chapel as the chaplain for the Chicago White Sox. Mickey also serves as the executive director of UPI (Unlimited Potential Inc.). UPI's mission is to "reach, teach, and train baseball players for the purpose of sending them out into the world to make disciples of Jesus who love God passionately and love others radically." Mickey has ministered in 40 countries since serving with UPI in 1996. Lisa Weston serves with Baseball Chapel coordinating the women's ministry throughout the major and minor leagues.

### ***Dan Giese***

*Bill Arp made a huge impact on many of us during our playing time in Scranton. Bill was the perfect fit at the AAA level. Many players at that level go through huge transitions in their lives--whether it was starting a family, getting married, making it to the big leagues for the first time, or retiring from the game. Bill helped us navigate the toughest waters. I will never forget the times I got to meet his family for a home-cooked meal or the time he would spend just making sure we were okay and taken care of. We shared the same local church and he invited me to the seminary just to chat on many occasions. Bill had a huge heart and loved people. I considered Bill a dear friend and I will never forget the times he would call over the years just to say hello and check in. He is dearly missed. Thank you for all you did for us over the years, Dr. Bill. I look forward to listening to a ball game with you, on the radio of course, in Heaven.*

A native of California, Dan met Dr. Arp while playing with the Phillies organization (2003-2006). Dan also played professionally with the San Francisco Giants, Oakland Athletics, and the New York Yankees. Following his retirement from baseball as a pitcher, Dan became a scout for the NY Yankees. Dan currently serves with the Yankees as their Director of Pro Scouting. Dan and Shannon along with their family reside in Greenwich, CT.

### ***Pat Combs***

*Bill Arp was the team Baseball Chapel leader during the time I was with the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Red Barons. I was introduced to Bill shortly after I arrived in SWB on a rehab assignment from the Phillies. Bill and I became fast friends. Our families also became close during my time in Scranton. My wife, Christina, still frequently corresponds with Bill's daughters. You could say that we became lifelong friends. Bill's son, Josh, and I spent time together when he was young and have stayed in touch after my time in baseball. I will never forget taking in my first air show with Josh and Bill. That was a fun day!*

*Bill Arp was one of the finest men I have ever known. He was the consummate gentleman. Bill had a true servant's heart and was one of the first men I observed that modeled the life and behavior of Jesus. Bill would always end our discussions with a kind word of encouragement and a reminder that his family was available to help us (Christina, my sons and me) whenever we needed assistance. His daughter, Jeanne, babysat our boys on many occasions, just to give Christina a break, especially when I was on the road playing ball. Bill also had a heart for discipleship, and we spent many hours together studying the Word of God and bantering questions and answers.*

*On one particular Sunday, we had a late extra-inning Saturday night game, and I knew it would be difficult to get players to chapel. Bill walked in the locker room and could sense it was a somber clubhouse. I pulled Bill aside and told him that we would be a little light in attendance and that it may be just him and me that day. He told me, "No worries, God always brings the men he*

*wants when he wants them.” We walked into our television room, where we had chapel on Sundays and one of the players was taking a nap. I tried to wake him and explain that we would be starting chapel that day. He did not want to move and so stayed and listened in a half-awake posture. By the end of our time together, this particular player was asking Bill how he could know this Jesus, and Bill led him in a prayer to trust him that day. Bill was right... God had the man he wanted that day and that player turned to God through Bill’s ministry.*

*For three summers, Bill spoke truth into my life and impacted me as a man, husband, and a father. He made me a better man, because he cared for me and showed me the love of Christ every moment we were together. He was not enthralled that I was a professional athlete, although he sure loved the game of baseball. He was more concerned about my spiritual growth and maturity in Christ and that part of him showed up every time we were together. Bill Arp is one of the men that I really look forward to seeing again one day in the presence of God. That round, jovial face of his always brought a smile, and we will get to enjoy each other for eternity!*

A first-round draft pick by the Phillies in 1988, Pat played four MLB seasons with Philadelphia (1989-1992). In 1989, he started the year in minor league A-level and quickly reached the major league by the end of the season. Pat currently resides in Texas and is employed in the private sector.

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In his pastoral epistle, the Apostle Paul writes these words to his spiritual son, Timothy: “And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2, ESV). Dr. Arp devoted 45 years of his life to training the next generation for the cause of Christ. His formal teaching ministry in the college and seminary classroom certainly did train faithful men and women just as Paul exhorted Timothy. Moreover, Dr. Arp’s ministry outside the formal classroom to athletes emulated Paul’s challenge. It is satisfying to fathom Dr. Arp’s impact as

he taught and encouraged many baseball-playing Timothys. His legacy continues to this day through the men he influenced as their chaplain.

In 2018, I was privileged to become the chaplain for the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre RailRiders (the New York Yankees' AAA affiliate). Although it has a different team name and affiliation, I occupy the exact chaplain position that Dr. Arp held for fifteen seasons with the Red Barons. It is an incredible honor to hold the same role that my friend and beloved professor possessed. Ironically, Dan Giese attended the second chapel I held as RailRiders' chaplain. As I looked across the room and saw Dan that Sunday morning, the thoughts of Dr. Arp's life and friendship came flooding to my mind. At that special moment, I cherished the man of God that had enhanced both Dan's life and my own. We are just two examples of the legacy of Dr. Arp's use of sports to influence others spiritually. To God be the glory for the great things God has accomplished through his servant, Dr. Bill Arp: the professor and chaplain—in the classroom and in the clubhouse—with the Bible and baseball.

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## Dissertation Defenses at Baptist Bible Seminary

### — *Old Testament* —

Tim Little — *The Identity of the King of Babylon in Isaiah 14:4-21*

**Abstract:** The identity of the King of Babylon in Isaiah 14 has perplexed scholars for millennia. The early church sometimes identified the king as Nebuchadnezzar, but most also saw a deeper meaning and believed Isa 14:12–14 referred to Satan. Many current scholars reject both views and offer a variety of alternatives. This dissertation proposes that the king of Babylon referred to in Isa 14 is Israel’s eschatological enemy.

### — *New Testament* —

Jared M. August — *The Climax of Christ: Toward a Broader Semantic Range of πληρόω in Matthew’s Formula-Citations*

**Abstract:** In Matthew’s formula-citations, the Gospel author uses the verb πληρόω to denote the “fulfillment” of the OT fourteen times (1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14 [ἀναπληρόω], 35; 21:4; 26:54, 56; 27:9). Although not all the OT passages cited by Matthew were predictive in their original contexts, quite a few scholars have assumed that since πληρόω can denote predictive fulfillment, it should be understood as such in every case. Due to this assumption, these scholars assert that the formula-citations demonstrate Matthew’s non-contextual approach to the OT.

However, once Matthew’s formula-citations are examined on their own terms, it becomes evident that πληρόω did not presuppose previous prediction. On the contrary, it appears to have been used in a wide variety of ways, with a much broader semantic range than has previously been assumed. This study demonstrates that Matthew used πληρόω in regard to three distinct categories: five times in reference to non-predictive OT historical accounts (2:15, 17; 13:14, 35; 27:9), four times in reference to generally anticipatory OT themes (2:23; 5:17; 26:54, 56), and five times in reference to predictive OT prophecies (1:22; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 21:4).

In view of this semantic range, it is proposed that rather than “to fulfill,” a more textually sensitive translation of πληρόω is “to

climax.” This study demonstrates the validity of this translation in relation to the overarching theme of Matthew, as well as the individual uses of πληρόω in these fourteen passages. Ultimately, this study concludes that in regard to the formula-citations, Matthew used the OT with keen contextual sensitivity.

Tom Dailey — *Informal Conditions in the New Testament: A Triangulated Approach*

**Abstract:** Informal conditions are set off from formal conditions in that they are missing one or two structural elements that characterize formal conditions. In NT Greek, informal conditions are often presented without the presence of the conditional particle or by the use of unexpected verb forms. How does NT exegesis determine the presence and function of conditionality when key structural features for identifying a condition are missing?

The approach suggested by this study begins by addressing conditional form and function as they are described in cognitive psychology, philosophical logic, and linguistic pragmatics. These fields provide generic conceptions of conditional usage with specific reference to internal logic and illocution. The study focuses on structural elements to establish a baseline for conditional semantics. This baseline is supplemented by two contributions from pragmatics. The first of these concerns the internal logic that exists between the conditional protasis and apodosis; the second entails the determination of the illocutive purpose for the utterance of the conditional itself. The study suggests that NT exegesis must approach informal conditions by triangulating structural semantics with internal logic and illocutive purpose.