

# Hermeneutics – Christocentric

“One can see that Jesus engages in a “literal” hermeneutic and not a Christocentric approach in the way He handles Scripture. He uses Scripture to speak of the resurrection (Exod 3:6; cf. Matt 22:32), eschatology (Dan 11:31; cf. Matt 24:15), loving God (Deut 6:5; cf. Luke 10:27), love for others (Lev 19:18; cf. Mark 12:31), marriage (Gen 2:24; cf. Matt 19:5–6), divorce (Deut 24:1–4; Matt 19:7–8), Israel’s judgment (Gen 19:1–24; cf. Matt 10:15), and honoring father and mother (Exod 20:12; cf. Matt 15:4). He never made any of these passages speak of Him but rather talked about what they talked about. Thus, the Christocentric hermeneutic’s goal and method is not Jesus’ goal or method. Our Lord’s goal is to affirm what the OT says. He has a literal approach to Scripture.”

—— Abner Chou, A Hermeneutical Evaluation of the Christocentric Hermeneutic, December 2016, 17.

“At the same time, our Lord not only understood the Scripture rightly in its immediate context but even in how the prophets wove OT texts together. Jesus knew of the greater context of Scripture intended by the authors themselves. Within this, our Lord grasped how the prophets maintained the meaning of prior revelation yet developed certain legitimate implications (significance) of those ideas. Jesus continues that pattern of upholding the original ideas of a text yet continuing the very applications the prophets specified and developed.”

—— Abner Chou, A Hermeneutical Evaluation of the Christocentric Hermeneutic, December 2016, 17.

“I would suggest there are at least six emphases that comprise the *sine qua non* of Christocentric hermeneutics.”

1. The Christocentric approach fundamentally desires to present every text in its relation with the person and work of Christ.
2. The Christocentric approach stresses the unity of Scripture. Because of this, it is sometimes called a redemptive-historical hermeneutic (however, some use the term without referring to a Christocentric model).
3. The Christocentric approach emphasizes the theology of Scripture. It contrasts “moral models” which preach narratives as purely examples of ethical behavior. As opposed to morality, the Christocentric view desires to preach doctrine and theology, a theology of Christ and the gospel.
4. The Christocentric approach stresses the need for grammatical-historical interpretation as a foundation for their method. It contrasts itself with allegorical systems in the early church as well as in recent history. To them, Rahab’s red scarf as a symbol of Christ’s blood is an illegitimate interpretation and use of a text. As we will further discuss, while they desire to proclaim a theology of Christ in every text, they desire to do so with some sort of expositional base.
5. At the same time, the Christocentric approach acknowledges the need to move beyond grammatical-historical hermeneutics to a theological method. It contrasts itself with a Christotelic approach which abides within a grammatical-historical framework. The Christotelic view upholds the original meaning of a text while acknowledging a text’s implications may ultimately link with Christ. The Christocentric method views this as not enough. To them, Christ is in every text. He is somehow the topic of every passage. Scriptural texts prefigure Christ’s work or intentionally show who Christ is or is not. Some caution here is required for not every supporter of the Christocentric hermeneutic agrees on exactly how this works. Nevertheless, they agree that a Christotelic/grammatical-historical approach is not sufficient.
6. The Christocentric approach emphasizes its Christian nature. It is Christian because it focuses upon the gospel and so is at times called gospel centered preaching. It is Christian because it derives from the apostles and so is at times called apostolic preaching. To them, Christ-centered teaching is what makes teaching Scripture distinctively Christian. Accordingly, language of preaching and teaching the Bible as Christian Scripture is also adopted. To be clear, just because one uses such language or terminology does not automatically mean he engages in the Christocentric hermeneutic. Nevertheless, such phraseology is found in the movement.”

—— Abner Chou, A Hermeneutical Evaluation of the Christocentric Hermeneutic, December 2016, 3-4.

“The central and controlling thesis that I believe is warranted by the biblical text is that the fulfillment of Israel’s prophetic hope as portrayed in the Old Testament documents is found in the person and work of Jesus Christ and the believing remnant, the Church, which he established at his first coming. The point is that Jesus Christ and his Church are the focal and terminating point of all prophecy. This may sound somewhat trite at first hearing. After all, most Christians

are quick to agree that Jesus is the center or focal point of all biblical revelation, that the Old Testament was a foreshadowing of his person and work, and that it is the Father's purpose to "unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:10b). But I have in mind something far more specific, something far more comprehensive in terms of how the Old Testament finds its consummate fulfillment in the person of Christ and his body, the Church."

—— Sam Storms, *Kingdom Come, The Amillennial Alternative* (Mentor Imprint of Christian Focus Publications, Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire, IV20 1TW, Scotland, U.K., 2013), 16.

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Regarding Luke 24:

1) There are no records of which texts Jesus is referring to in Luke 24, which then leads you to \*assume\* that this means \*all\* texts must be about Jesus. Also, this somehow leads you to believe that the LGH Hermeneutic is somehow rejected by Jesus, and that this Hermeneutic is not consistent in of itself.

2) The second fallacy of using Luke 24 as a reference is that you \*assume\* "all the scriptures" (v.27) refers to every single passage in the O.T. It is more likely that Jesus is referencing (as you quoted above) "the Law of Moses, Prophets, and the Psalms". It is one thing to argue that prophecies contained in these three things are focused upon Jesus, it is another thing to argue that Jesus is found in each O.T. text.

"The same can be said of Jesus' statements recorded in Luke. The language does not state that Jesus spoke Scripture as all about Himself but rather that which was about Himself (τὰ περὶ ἑαυτοῦ) in Moses and the prophets (Luke 24:27). Jesus is not making every scriptural passage speak of Him but rather highlighting throughout the OT the pertinent passages concerning Himself. In fact, Jesus condemns His disciples for not recognizing what the prophets have spoken. This shows that the hermeneutic the disciples had was adequate to identifying what the prophets spoke. Even more, it shows that Jesus affirms the human authorial intent of the authors."

—— Abner Chou, *A Hermeneutical Evaluation of the Christocentric Hermeneutic*, December 2016, 9.

3) The "things concerning himself" does not mean that everything in the O.T. is about him. It simply means that all the things that were written or prophesied about him will come to pass. I like the illustration that Matt Waymeyer uses:

"As a good friend of mine once illustrated, it's similar to a man going through an old photo album and showing his wife all the pictures that he himself is in. The proponent of the Christological Hermeneutic would want to affirm that the man was in every picture. But the natural reading of the account would be that the man was in some of the pictures, and those are the ones he showed his wife from the whole album. In a similar way, Luke 24:25-27 definitely affirms that Jesus Christ may be found in the OT, but it cannot be made to say that Jesus is hidden in every OT text, waiting to be uncovered by employing a Christological Hermeneutic."

Website Reference:

<http://www.expositors.org/resources/the-expositors-blog/author/matt-waymeyer/>

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Regarding John 5:39-46

"Jewish diligence in studying the Torah was legendary. But although the Jews' zeal in studying Scripture was undeniable, Jesus maintained that such zeal was misguided, for alone it was insufficient for attaining eternal life. What is required, rather, is an understanding of Scripture's true (christological) orientation and purpose. Not merely are individual sayings of Scripture fulfilled in Jesus; Scripture in its entirety is oriented toward him. Yet Jesus' Jewish opponents "did not want" to come to him (i.e., to accept his claims and believe in him): their refusal is deliberate (R. Brown 1966: 225)."

—— Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 193.

"Likewise, Christ's own statement in John 5:39 is Christotelic. He rebukes the religious leaders for reading the Scriptures yet miss the very point of the Scripture which is Christ. Such language does not demand that every single passage be Christocentric. Rather, John 5:39 parallels other statements which discuss how the OT generally points to Christ (cf. 1:45; 2:22; 3:10; 5:45-46; 20:9). In those statements, the notion is not exhaustive but rather deals with the general tenor of the

OT.”

—— Abner Chou, *A Hermeneutical Evaluation of the Christocentric Hermeneutic*, December 2016, 9.

“By contrast, Jesus insists that there is nothing intrinsically life-giving about studying the Scriptures, if one fails to discern their true content and purpose. These are the Scriptures, Jesus says, that testify about me. This is one of six passages in the Fourth Gospel where Scripture or some writer of Old Testament Scripture is said to speak or write of Christ, even though no specific passage is adduced (cf. 1:45; 2:22; 3:10; 5:45–46; 20:9). What is at stake is a comprehensive hermeneutical key. By predictive prophecy, by type, by revelatory event and by anticipatory statute, what we call the Old Testament is understood to point to Christ, his ministry, his teaching, his death and resurrection.”

—— D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary, e-book (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 204.

“The Greek text begins this verse with ‘For’ (gar): For if you believed Moses, you would believe me. They pinned their hopes on Moses (v. 45), not in the one of whom Moses wrote. No specific passage from the books of Moses is mentioned (cf. notes on v. 39). If a particular one is in view, perhaps it is Dt. 18:15 (cf. notes on Jn. 1:21; 4:19; 6:14; 7:40, 52). But it is perhaps more likely that this verse is referring to a certain way of reading the books of Moses (cf. notes on 1:51; 2:19) than to a specific passage (cf. Carson, ‘OT’).”

—— D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary, e-book (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 206.