

Cincinnati Bible Seminary
PMN 520
Fundamentals of Biblical Communication

Professor: Dr. Boltinghouse

Book Review of:
Graeme Goldsworthy's
“Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture”

By: Keith Wagar

Review of “*Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*”

Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture in the words of its author, Graeme Goldsworthy is a “handbook for preachers that will help them apply a consistently Christ-centered approach to their sermons.”¹ Within Mr. Goldsworthy’s book, his readers will find that he has strategically broken the text into two separate but equally important sections. The first, “*Basic Questions We Ask About Preaching and the Bible*” will educate the reader through answering a few of the most foundational questions of biblical theology. He starts out with the most basic of questions, “What is the Bible?” and then adds to the readers foundational knowledge chapter by chapter finally climaxing with what Mr. Goldsworthy himself would consider the central theme of the entire book, “Can I Preach a Christian Sermon without Mentioning Jesus?”. This chapter guides the reader to accept the presupposition that a Christian sermon should never be spoken without Christ being the central focus. Within the second section of his text, appropriately titled *Practical Application Of Biblical Theology To Preaching*, Mr. Goldsworthy provides his readers with a generous number of examples of how to apply this central theme to one’s future sermons. The examples he provides span all three theological epochs and focus on 8 separate biblical text types (i.e. law, wisdom, apocalyptic, etc.) and are meticulously written to provide evidence that it is indeed possible to apply a consistently Christ-centered approach to all scripture.

Mr. Goldsworthy, whether intentionally or not, has written this book in a way that will resonate with all levels of readers. Those just starting out in ministry will be blessed by his clear and concise answers to basic theological questions. The well seasoned ministers will both be reminded of what it means to preach Christ in all scriptures as well as be reminded of how to convey the meaning of it to the listeners of one’s sermons. Either way, Mr. Goldsworthy has provided a book that many will read and learn from as well as reference for years to come.

With a text of this nature, a reader is bound to find aspects that resonate with them and I am no different. I found Mr. Goldsworthy’s ability to clearly communicate the application of his primary topic within Section 2 of this text provides the most impact as it opened my eyes to new ways of preaching from within biblical texts. By doing so, he can be assured that I will reference the information contained within his book repeatedly, especially when preaching the specific text types examined in section 2. Mr. Goldsworthy’s ability to document many of his conceptual statements in diagram (picture) form also resonated with me in that I am a visual learner and was able to find clarity in these references.

A principal concern that I have about Mr. Goldsworthy’s text is that he seems to inherently negate many Old Testament sermon texts by focusing strictly on his definition of Salvation History (Abraham to David/Solomon to Christ) within section 1 of this book. By doing so, all text not directly related to Abraham/ David/Solomon/Christ is left out of Section 2, where Mr. Goldsworthy provides the practical application of his primary focus. The reader may then come to one of two incorrect conclusions about the remaining texts:

1. They are not important enough texts to preach on.

¹ Graeme Goldsworthy, “*Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*” (1989): p xi

Review of *“Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture”*

2. When preaching from a non-Abraham/ David/Solomon/Christ text, one does not need to worry about assuring that the message of Christ is included.

Based upon my experience of reading Mr. Goldsworthy’s text, this book has much to offer all students of the Bible, new and seasoned, and I would highly recommend this book to them. Based upon Mr. Goldsworthy’s writing style, (Theologian/Textbook) however, I would be more conservative on recommending his text to non-Bible students unless they have a theological mentor to whom they could direct questions.

Many lessons can be learned from Mr. Goldsworthy. The obvious lesson is discussed in Chapter 9, which answers its own chapter title, “Can I Preach a Christian Sermon without Mentioning Jesus?”. The words contained within this chapter have the potential to create significant change in its reader’s ministerial effectiveness. If the readers are committed to allowing this information to produce change in them, then they will be driven to examine their bibles, looking not only at the actual story line contained in the Old and New Testaments but taking a critical look at how the text relates to the first and/or second coming of Christ. A second and somewhat less obvious lesson that Mr. Goldsworthy provides is that in order to successfully communicate theological concepts, we must remember to provide sufficient background information and a generous number of application related examples. In this case of background information, Mr. Goldsworthy supplies his readers with answers to some basic theology questions and then builds upon them in order to bring across his ultimate message. Mr. Goldsworthy continues by provides his readers with what could be considered the most important information contained within the book: examples of how to apply his teachings. This is a recipe that all of the readers can pack away and use during their teaching moments.

An author like Mr. Goldsworthy can provide the best of lessons, but if the readers are unwilling to allow those lessons create change in them, then their reading of the text is all for not. Change is defined as “to transform or convert”² and this text has transformed the way that I look at, listen to or read biblical based text. After reading Mr. Goldsworthy’s book, I have found myself listening more critically to every message or sermon that I read or hear. Furthermore, I find myself reading more Old Testament passages, looking specifically for the Christ centered message that is contained within.

Looking back over Mr. Goldsworthy’s book, I have to say that after reading the first couple of chapters, I was a bit skeptical as I truly thought that he had written a book that could have been appreciably condensed. However, after completing the book, I have a new appreciation for the level at which Mr. Goldsworthy is speaking, preaching and teaching. The question remains however, what does one do differently after reading this text? I hope to be a more critical reader, listener and student of the Bible and realize how the stories that the Bible contains can always reference back to the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

² <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/change>