

a workable model so that it can be used for biblical exegesis. This model will allow the Scriptures to serve as its own systematic theology so as to avoid elevating any other text above the biblical text during the process of exegesis.

PART TWO: IDENTIFYING THE THEMES OF THE HOLY BIBLE

A. The Theme of “Salvation History” Expanded - In an effort to identify the biblical themes of the Scriptures, scholars today are beginning with the fundamental observation that the Holy Bible is a unified book that contains a central message, then moving to the assumption that the parts of the Bible fit within the whole. Sailhammer notes, “The theology of the Old Testament is the sum of the theology of its various parts...Before one can understand the parts, however, there must be a sense of where the whole is leading.” He says many scholars believe that systematic theology has failed to see the “true picture of the message of the biblical writers” because the “biblical texts...do not fit neatly into such schemes.” He believes the task of biblical theologians is to “show how the parts fit into the whole. In other words, it must be able to present the inherent structure of the biblical message in its entirety, and thus, it is faced with the problem of how to arrange its parts meaningfully.”⁴⁰

While Sailhammer focuses upon the need to use biblical theology in identifying the parts within the whole, other scholars are applying this rule to expository preaching. In a lecture at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary on expository preaching, R. Kent Hughes said, “his systematic process for expository preaching begins with working out the theme of the entire book and dividing the book into homiletical sections.”⁴¹ Bryan Chapell makes a similar statement when he states the need for preachers to find a place for each passage of Scripture in “the historical sweep of God’s redemptive plan.”⁴² He believes a preacher will find more delight in preaching sermons as he discovers the redemptive message of Scripture at the “micro-level” as well as the “macro-level.” Chapell has developed a method he calls a “Fallen Condition Focus” (FCF) in order to identify the redemptive message within individual passages of Scripture (pg. 14, 48-52). He believes that a Christ-centered message should refer broadly to “the entire matrix of God’s redemptive work” (pg. 15). In other words, a sermon from a text of Scripture is Christ-centered not because it mentions Jesus’ redemptive work in His life and ministry, but because it reveals some aspect of God’s redemptive plan for mankind. He believes all Scripture is “a unified message of human need and divine provision” (pg. 20) He understands the Scriptures to be a revelation of God’s plan of redemption so that every passage must fall within this context (pg. 40). True exegesis seeks for a message on the role of that passage on “God’s eternal plan” (pg. 40). The purpose of this discussion is to develop biblical themes for each book of the Holy Bible as well as its thematic structure to enable “homiletical sections” (Hughes), or the “Fallen Condition Focus” (Chapell), to be more easily identified, since expository preaching uses redemptive, homiletical sections that are based upon the identification of a thematic scheme of the book, (called a structure or outline), that matches the book’s underlying redemptive theme.

The history of man’s salvation has been progressively revealed in the sixty-six books of the Holy Scriptures by the prophets and apostles whom God inspired to write the biblical text over a period of approximately sixteen hundred years. This author proposes to identify the parts within the whole of the biblical text by

⁴⁰John H. Sailhammer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, c1995), 18-19.

⁴¹Keith Collier, “Northcutt Lectures Focus on Mind, Heart, and Preparation of the Expositor,” *Southwestern News*, Fall 2007, vol. 66, no.1, 34.

⁴²Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching – Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 14-16. Chapell has developed a method he calls a “Fallen Condition Focus” (FCF) in order to identify the redemptive message within individual passages of Scripture (14, 48-52). He believes that a Christ-centered message should refer broadly to “the entire matrix of God’s redemptive work.” (15) In other words, a sermon from a text of Scripture is Christ-centered not because it mentions Jesus’ redemptive work in His life and ministry, but because it reveals some aspect of God’s redemptive plan for mankind. He believes all Scripture is “a unified message of human need and divine provision.” (20) He understands the Scriptures to be a revelation of God’s plan of redemption so that every passage must fall within this context (40). True exegesis seeks for a message on the role of that passage on “God’s eternal plan.” (40)

beginning with the phrase “salvation-history” (*Heilsgeschichte*),⁴³ which is used by both liberal and evangelical scholars to describe the central theme of the Holy Scriptures, in which man’s salvation is centered around the redemptive work of Christ Jesus (See figure 2). In essence, prior to the Cross man looked forward by faith to the promise of the coming Messiah in order to be justified by God; after Calvary man looks back in faith to Christ’s redemptive work in order to be justified. This phrase will be expanded so that it reflects the many biblical themes woven within the Scriptures that reveal man’s redemption through Jesus Christ.

Adam _____ † _____ Today

Figure 2 – Diagram of “Salvation History”

Sailhammer tells us that theologians have customarily grouped the biblical themes into three groups: God, salvation, man.⁴⁴ This means that these three themes are embedded within the phrase “salvation history.” Thus, we may expand “Salvation-history” into the phrase “God’s salvation for man,” or “God’s plan of redemption for mankind,” in an effort to identify the biblical themes of the Scriptures. We will then look into the biblical text to identify (1) God’s role, (2) man’s role, and (3) the plan of salvation.

1. God’s Role in Redemption Revealed. Perhaps the most important Old Testament passage to the Jews in revealing “God’s plan of redemption for mankind” can be found in Deuteronomy 6:4-6, which was a part of the Jewish “creed” called “the Shema” (שמע), a name derived from the first Hebrew word in this biblical text.⁴⁵ This passage of Scripture reveals that there is only one true God, and that Israel was to serve Him only. S. R. Driver calls this passage “the fundamental truth of Israel’s religion.”⁴⁶ Because of its historical importance to the Old Testament Jews this passage of Scripture appears numerous times in the New Testament writings (Matt 22:37, Mark 12:29-32, 37, Luke 10:27). For example, when Jesus was asked by the Pharisees what was the greatest commandment, He quoted the Shema, “The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord...” (Mark 12:29) In other words, Jesus considered the Shema the single most important text of the Old Testament, revealing to Israel that there is only one true God whom the Jews were to serve with all of their heart, soul and strength. This revelation allows the phrase “Salvation History” to be expanded to read “*God’s Salvation History*” based upon biblical theology.

The revelation of the triune God as the Father, Jesus the Son, and God the Holy Spirit was given to the New Testament Church under the new covenant, and not the old covenant. In fact, the doctrine of the Trinity has been the major stumbling block for Jewish conversion to Christianity because of their adherence to message of one true God in the Shema. The distinction of the triune God is found throughout the writings of the Evangelists and the Pauline epistles. The three-fold role of the Trinity in man’s redemption was explained by Peter the apostle in the opening statements of his first epistle, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” (1 Pet 1:2) Peter was present on the Mount of Transfiguration when Jesus was manifested in His glory and God the Father spoke from Heaven, and he was present on the day of Pentecost to experience the outpouring

⁴³The term *heilsgeschichte* is believed to have been first used by J. C. K. von Hofmann in his work *Weissagung und Erfüllung im alten und im neuen Testamente. Ein Theologischer Versuch* (Erste Hälfte; Nördlingen: C. H. Beck, 1841), 8. He used this term in an effort to describe in one word God’s broad-sweeping work of redemption throughout all ages.

⁴⁴John H. Sailhammer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, c1995), 19.

⁴⁵Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, n.d.), 268.

⁴⁶S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, in *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*, eds. Charles A. Briggs, Samuel R. Driver, and Alfred Plummer, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903), 89; Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1–21:9*, in *Word Biblical Commentary: 58 Volumes on CD-Rom*, vol. 6a, second edition, eds. Bruce M. Metzger, David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas: Word Inc., 2002), in *Libronix Digital Library System*, v. 3.0b [CD-ROM] (Bellingham, WA: Libronix Corp., 2004), notes on Deut 6:4-9, *Form, Structure, Setting*.

of the Holy Spirit. In the opening verse of his first epistle, Peter refers to the Trinity as the Father, the Spirit and Jesus Christ, in which he also associates each member of the Godhead with their respective redemptive roles. Thus, Peter revealed that God's divine plan of redemption is accomplished through what the Scriptures call "divine election." Our election unto salvation was not a simply thought in the mind of Almighty God before the foundations of the world, but rather a plan and a process to be worked out throughout the ages of time. Election was a lengthy process that began with the foreknowledge of God the Father, as revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures, reaching a climax through the work of Jesus Christ on Calvary offering regeneration to sinners, as revealed in the Gospels, continuing through the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying those who trust in Christ, as testified in the New Testament epistles, so that we may reach glorification, or the redemption, of our mortal bodies in Heaven, which has been shown to us through the book of Revelation. Thus, in order to understand the Holy Scriptures we must understand the office of the Godhead, which we call the Trinity: *God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and God the Holy Spirit.*

The doctrine of the Trinity is embedded in the earliest Church creeds, such as the Apostle's Creed (early 4th c.), the Nicene Creed (A.D. 325), the Athanasian Creed (A.D. 373), and the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451).⁴⁷ In his discussion of the seven earliest ecumenical councils, Philip Schaff says, "The first four Councils are by far the most important, as they settled the orthodox faith on the Trinity and the Incarnation."⁴⁸ This doctrine is found in a number of apologetical works by the early Church fathers in their efforts to combat heresy: Hilary of Poitiers (A.D. 315-367) (*On the Trinity*), Gregory of Nyssa (A.D. 330-395) (*On the Holy Trinity, and of the Godhead of the Holy Spirit, On Not Three Gods*), Augustine (A.D. 354-430) (*On the Trinity*). The revelation of the Trinity allows the phrase "Salvation History" to be expanded to read "*God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit's Salvation History.*"

2. *Man's Role in Redemption Revealed.* Not only did the Shema reveal the one true God, but it also revealed the three-fold make-up of man, showing the Jews that man was to serve the Lord with all of his heart, mind and strength, "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (Deut 6:5) This revelation of a three-fold emphasis of man's service to God allows the phrase "Salvation History" to be expanded to read "God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit's Salvation History *for Mankind (spirit, soul, body).*"

3. *The Plan of Redemption Revealed.* God the Father's divine plan of redemption for mankind follows a pre-designed course, which was revealed to Paul the apostle. Paul was given the revelation of the mystery of the New Testament, and a deep insight into the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ, which he expounded in the epistle of Romans as God's plan of redemption for mankind through the proclamation of the Gospel.⁴⁹ God revealed to Paul that this plan of redemption for the Gentiles was embedded in the bigger scheme of Israel's redemptive history (Rom 9-11). In Romans 8:28-30 Paul described the Gospel as God's four-fold plan of redemption, consisting of (1) predestination, (2) calling, (3) justification and (4) glorification, which plan is established through the divine foreknowledge of God the Father. In other words, the epistle of Romans reveals that God designed a plan to redeem mankind (predestination); He implemented this plan through divine intervention (the calling out of Abraham and the nation of Israel); He sent His Son Jesus Christ from Heaven to earth to be born of a virgin and die on Calvary to provide salvation (regeneration), and He sent the Holy Spirit to guide us through this process of sanctification, which together is called justification; through Christ's resurrection He will bring all of creation back into its original order (glorification). This passage of Scripture tells us that the overall purpose of this plan is to redeem mankind back unto the glory that he had with God in the Garden of Eden. In God the Father's foreknowledge, He first *predestined* each of us to be conformed to the image of His Son Jesus Christ. We read that "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

⁴⁷Philip Schaff, *Bibliotheca Symbolica Ecclesiae Universalis: The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes*, vol. 1, (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, c1877, 1919), 14-42.

⁴⁸Philip Schaff, *Bibliotheca Symbolica Ecclesiae Universalis: The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes*, vol. 1, (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, c1877, 1919), 44.

⁴⁹Goldsworthy says the Gospel is the "hermeneutical key" for interpreting any part of the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments. See Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Eerdmans: Michigan, 2000), 84.

(Eph 1:4) He then divinely intervenes in the affairs of each of us as a way of *calling* us to participate in this plan of redemption. Once we respond to this call, the Father divinely oversees our *justification* that prepares us for our future *glorification*. Man participates in this plan of justification with the Father through the process of regeneration by faith in Christ Jesus and sanctification by the Holy Spirit. We move into justification through Jesus Christ as we hearken unto this calling and believe in the redemptive work on Calvary through regeneration. We are kept in this position of justification as Jesus now serves as our Great High Priest making intercession for the saints. Thus, justification has two phases; our initial salvation and our daily cleansing through Christ's intercession at the right hand of the Father. At the time of regeneration, the Holy Spirit indwells the believer in order to guide us in our sanctification, which involves three steps: indoctrination, divine service in an office in the body of Christ, and perseverance. The final part of this plan of redemption for mankind is called glorification, when we enter into our eternal heavenly home. We see Jesus Christ making a reference to His glorification at the end of His earthly ministry in John 17:1-5 when He says, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son." In other words, Jesus Christ Himself partook of these same steps of redemption for us in order to become the firstborn from the dead. Thus, this entire process of redemption, which can be divided into the four stages (predestination, calling, justification [regeneration and sanctification], and glorification) is called divine election, which is the way Peter defines this term in his first epistle (1 Pet 1:2). This Pauline revelation allows the phrase "Salvation History" to be further expanded to read "God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit's *plan of redemption (predestination, calling, justification and glorification)* for mankind (spirit, soul, body)." Goldsworthy calls this structure the "mechanics of salvation," arriving at a similar plan in the "unfolding of the revelation of the kingdom," which he says biblical theology seeks to understand.⁵⁰

Finally, for the sake of brevity and frequent use in this paper, this phrase will be shortened to read "God's Plan of Redemption for Mankind," with God's role in redemption understood to reflect the three-fold offices of God the Father, Jesus the Son and God the Holy Spirit; man's role in redemption is understood to reflect the three-fold make-up of his spirit, soul and body; and, this "plan of redemption" is understood to reflect, "Predestination, Calling, Justification and Glorification." The underlying theme of the Holy Scriptures is now reworded from the generally accepted theme of "Salvation History" to "God's Plan of Redemption for Mankind."

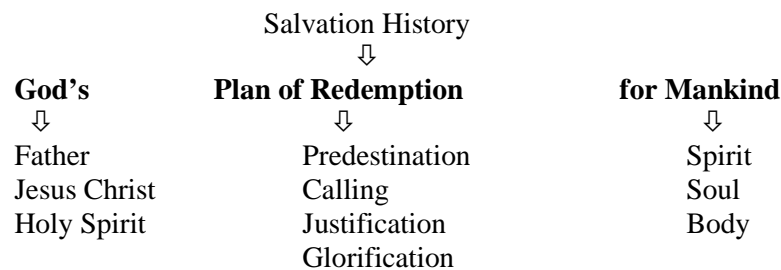


Figure 3 – Diagram of Formula for Identifying Themes in the Scriptures

The purpose of rewording the phrase "Salvation History" is for the student of God's Word to use it as a formula, or framework, which can be superimposed upon the biblical text in order to identify various thematic schemes woven throughout the Holy Scriptures. Used properly, this thematic statement achieves the goal of serving as a framework for studying the Scriptures without leaning upon frameworks designed from preconceived influences.

In summary, the central message and underlying theme of the Holy Bible is *God's Plan of Redemption For Mankind*. This means that the Holy Bible is not intended on being simply a history book, because much ancient history is excluded. The Scriptures contain only that information that is relevant to our redemption, information that explains God's plan of redemption. The Scriptures contain history, but only that history that

⁵⁰Goldsworthy says the revelation of the kingdom unfolds in the following proposed sequence: in the Garden of Eden, outside the Garden of Eden, in redemptive history, in prophetic history, in Jesus Christ, in the consummation. See Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Eerdmans: Michigan, 2000), 86-88.

relates to our redemption. It contains poetry, but only that history that relates to our redemption. Solomon wrote three thousand proverbs, but only about three hundred of these proverbs are recorded in Scripture, which are redemptive in content. There were many Israelite prophetic utterances delivered throughout the centuries, but only those that were redemptive in nature are recorded in Scriptures. There were other Gospels written about the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, but only four of them were divinely inspired with redemptive value for mankind. There were many epistles written by the early Church, but only the New Testament epistles were of divine inspiration and necessary for our redemption. The Holy Bible is a book of redemption, revealing God's plan of redemption for mankind.⁵¹

B. God's Plan of Redemption Incorporates Dispensations of Time - With this basic information in mind, we will be able to easily understand how the Scriptures are structured and outlined around this order of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit redeeming man's spirit, soul and body through the five-fold process of regeneration, indoctrination, an orderly lifestyle, perseverance and finally glorification. We will learn that each passage of Scripture places emphasis upon one of these aspects of God's plan of redemption for mankind. In addition, we can observe that God has wrought His plan of redemption in three phases, using three people-groups: the Jews, the Gentiles and the Church (1 Cor 10:32). He first worked in and through (1) the nation of Israel, followed by working through (2) the Gentile kingdoms, out of whom was born (3) the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. This will be followed by the restoration of the nation of Israel and the holy city of Jerusalem, where Jesus will rule and reign for a thousand years on earth before we enter eternity.

Before God chose Abraham to establish the nation of Israel, we see in the early chapters of Genesis how man was governed by his conscience. Since mankind was a fallen race this method of establishing righteousness upon the earth failed and it became necessary to destroy the whole earth and start anew with Noah and his sons. The ancient Jews called this the "first heaven", and the current condition of the earth they called the "second heaven", with the third heaven referring to the new heavens and earth that God will create at the end of the thousand-year Millennial Reign of Christ upon earth.

After dividing mankind into the seventy nations, God will call out the nation of Israel to establish His will upon this earth. This story is recorded in the Pentateuch. Thus, Israel will be found at the center of world history until the Times of the Gentiles is ushered in around 586 B.C. After the fall of Israel and their Captivity we enter into the "Times of the Gentiles," which is revealed in the book of Daniel. At this time God will use the Gentiles to orchestrate His divine will upon mankind as Gentile kingdoms take front and center of world history. It is within this period of history the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is born on the day of Pentecost around A. D. 33. God then places the Church at the forefront of the key events in world history for the next two thousand years. This will lead us into the rebirth of the nation of Israel in 1948 and finally into the Tribulation Period, after which the Second Coming of Christ Jesus takes place and the world enters the Millennial Reign of Christ as Jesus rules and reigns a thousand years from the holy city Jerusalem. After this period of "Sabbath rest" God will judge mankind at the Great White throne judgment and create a new heavens and a new earth, which will take us into eternity, where all things will be restored to perfection. Thus, there are three groups of people used by God to carry out His divine plan of redemption: the Jews, the Gentiles and the Church (1 Cor 10:32), and in this order. There are three dispensations in which God testifies to mankind. We see in the dispensation under the Law of Moses how God will speak to mankind through the Law, as God the Father testifies to the minds of men of the need of redemption in the coming Messiah. We see in the dispensation of the Church that God sends the Holy Spirit to testify to the hearts of men of our need for redemption through the work of Calvary. We see during the dispensation of the Millennial Reign of Christ how Jesus Christ in His physical person will testify to the nations from Jerusalem to man's physical senses of their need of redemption. Thus, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit take turns testifying to mankind, each with an emphasis upon their spirit, soul body.

⁵¹Jerry Vines says, "The Bible addresses in some way all the major issues of life – human identity, the reason for existence, the future, guilt, love, marriage, relationships, death, eternity, and more. Although specific guidelines for each subject are not always delineated, Scripture speaks to these issues as they relate to the redemption of mankind and the transformation of individuals into Christlikeness. Thus, the expositor must address these issues from the timeless truths he finds in his Scripture passage." See Jerry Vines and Jim Schaddix, *Power in the Pulpit* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1999), 123.

1. *Predestination and Calling (Genesis 1:1 to 50:26)* – The Scriptures open with the story of God’s creation (Gen 1:1 to 2:3), then quickly moves to a more detailed description of the creation of man and woman (Gen 2:4-25), which is the peak of God’s creation. Adam and Eve fall and are cast out of the Garden of Eden, only to multiply and fill the earth with corruption. God destroys the earth during the time of Noah, and begins afresh with a righteous family of eight, whom God predestines to multiply and inhabit the earth. He divides mankind into seventy nations in order to prevent man to dominate as a single world power. After establishing the origin of the nations in the first eleven chapters (Gen 1-11) the book of Genesis focuses upon the calling out of Abraham and the founding of the nation of Israel through the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 12-50). In this section, the book of Genesis narrows its story down to the nation of Israel as God’s chosen people, whom He will use throughout this period of history to carry out His plan of redemption for mankind. The book of Genesis establishes the original purpose and intent for mankind, which is to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth with righteousness. God calls out Abraham in order to fulfill this plan for mankind through his seed.

2. *The Dispensation of the Law - The Nation of Israel (Exodus 1:1 to Malachi)* - The rest of the books of the Pentateuch tell of the establishment of the nation of Israel under the Mosaic Law. This group of people becomes the focus of the rest of the Old Testament as God uses them to redeem mankind back unto Himself. As we continue through the Scriptures we are told the story of the rise and fall of this nation until they are removed from their land during the Babylonian Captivity and divinely restored after seventy years. Thus, we can divide this period of God’s Plan of Redemption into three time periods: the period before the kings, the period of Israel’s kingdom, and the period after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. This three-fold aspect is clearly reflected in Matthew 1:17 as it divides Jesus’ genealogy into three periods of time consisting of fourteen generations each.

Matthew 1:17, “So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.”

Had the nation of Israel been faithful to serve the Lord, God would have used them to bring redemption across the world.

During This Period God the Father Speaks to our Minds About Redemption. We see that in this dispensation of the time of Israel that God will speak to mankind through the Law of Moses, as God the Father testifies to the minds of men of the need of redemption in the coming Messiah. This is what Paul meant in Gal. 3:24 when he said, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”

3. *The Times of the Gentiles (Daniel) and the Birth of the Church (Matthew to Jude)* – At the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. the period of Israel’s prominence ends and a new era opens, which is called the “Times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24). The book of Daniel explains that this period of history will be divided into four eras in which four kingdoms will take center stage in world events: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. God will use these kingdoms to further His divine plan of redemption for mankind. For example, God used the Babylonian empire to judge His people by destroying Jerusalem. God used the Persians to initiate the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The Greek empire spread its language across the civilized world, which would be used to write the New Testament. The Romans build a road system for the New Testament apostles to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth. It is during the Roman government that God will orchestrate the birth of the Messiah, the Savior of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ, as He is born a Jew of the seed of Abraham, of the nation of Israel. Thus, it is out of the Gentile nations that the Church will be born. This is the focus of the prophecies of Daniel, as he ministers to the Gentile nations.

Luke 21:24, “And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”

The birth of Jesus Christ ushers the world into a new age, which Jesus called the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven, which we also call the Church Age, in which the Church takes front and center stage of world events until His Second Coming. This “Church Age” will fall within the “Times of the Gentiles”, and in particular, during the time of the Romans. We see in the New Testament that God will broaden His plan of redemption through the Church, calling both Jews and Gentiles to salvation. At this time God the Father will send the Holy Spirit from Heaven to live upon the earth in order to sanctify the saints in preparation for the His Second Coming. The age of the Church will close with the Rapture of the Church and the seven-year Tribulation period upon the earth, which will be used to usher in the Second Coming of Christ.

During This Period the Holy Spirit Speaks to Our Hearts About Redemption. We see in the dispensation of the Church that God sends the Holy Spirit to testify to the hearts of men of our need for redemption through the work of Calvary.

4. *The Dispensation of Christ’s Reign from Jerusalem - The Millennial Reign of Christ (Revelation)* – At Christ’s Second Coming we find the nation of Israel being brought back into the center focus of history as discussed in Romans 9-11 and other passages when Jesus returns to earth and set up His earthly kingdom in Jerusalem during the Millennial reign. The book of Revelation will shows us that God will use this plan to bring redemption and restoration back to His entire creation.

During This Period Jesus Christ Himself Speaks to Man’s Physical Senses About Redemption. We see during this dispensation how Jesus Christ in His physical person will testify to the nations from Jerusalem to man’s physical senses of their need of redemption.

Thus, the Scriptures have taken us full circle in God’s plan of redemption, from the creation of the heavens and the earth and mankind, to the fall of mankind, to the birth of the nation of Israel, the creation of the Gentile kingdoms, the birth of the Church, the Millennial Reign of Christ, then back to the redemption of His entire creation. During these three dispensations God has clearly spoken to the mind, heart and body of mankind about their redemption through the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ

The Holy Bible shows how man has failed under every form of government to justify himself before God and it reveals that mankind under each dispensation stands in need of a Saviour. From his state of innocence in the Garden of Eden and his Fall, into the age of being governed by his conscience from the Fall until the Flood, during the time of the dividing of the nations at the tower of Babel, through the age of creation of the nation of Israel through His servant Abraham, during the time of the Mosaic Law and the children of Israel, during the Times of the Gentiles, in this present Church age culminating with the great Tribulation, and even during the thousand year Millennial Reign of Christ on earth ending with the last great battle with Satan, mankind has always failed to redeem himself and God has always been justified in His divine judgment upon this fallen race. It was Adam’s sin that opened the door for Satan to gain his dominion over the earth through deception in the hearts of men. It was Israel’s failure as a nation that opened the door for Satan to rule and dominate over nations as the age of the Gentiles was ushered in when Jerusalem fell to Babylon in 586 B.C. However, thank God, because throughout all ages He had been at work implementing His divine plan of redemption. This plan of redemption for mankind and for all of creation is the underlying theme of the Holy Scriptures.

It is also important to note that this theme of redemption for mankind and for all of creation finds its center point in the Cross, where our Lord and Saviour died to redeem mankind. The central figure of the Holy Scriptures is the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, the Cross is the place where man meets God and where we die to our selfish ambitions and yield our lives to the God who created all things. In the Old Testament men looked forward to the Cross as they saw their need of a Redeemer. In the New Testament we look back at Calvary and put our faith in its redemptive work. Therefore, the Holy Scriptures are not intended to be a precise record of ancient history. Rather, its intent is to provide a record of God’s divine intervention in the history of mankind in order to redeem the world back to Himself through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on Calvary.

If we look at structure of the epistle of Romans, it will help us to see how the Old Testament reveals God the Father's plan of divine election, how the Gospels reveal regeneration through faith in His Son Jesus Christ, how the epistles reveal the work of sanctification through the Holy Spirit and how the book of Revelation reveals the ultimate plan of man's glorification with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thus, the Holy Scriptures are structured in the same way that the epistle to the Romans is structured, as an exposition of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; we have been election by the Father, justification by the Son and sanctification by the Holy Spirit, who have been working together to bring man into glorification through conformity with the image of His Son. In other words, through divine election, He prepares us for glory. Note this statement in Romans 9:23, "And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,"

Thus, the Holy Bible is divided into the three-fold redemptive role of the Trinity. The Old Testament emphasizes the foreknowledge and divine election of God the Father, the Gospels-Acts emphasizes the redemption work of Jesus Christ on Calvary, the New Testament Epistles emphasizes the process of sanctification wrought by the Holy Spirit in the life of every believer, and the book of Revelation reveals the final glorification of the Father in His Church. In addition, the Old Testament focuses upon the kingdom of Israel, the book of Daniel focuses upon the Gentiles, while the New Testament focuses upon the kingdom of God and the great mystery of the grafting in of the Church to the vine of Israel, which Paul refers to as the mystery of the Gospel "hidden from the ages" (Col 1:26-27).

In addition, the Gospel of Matthew serves as a transitional book with emphasis upon both the Old Testament Scriptures of God the Father's foreknowledge as well as justification through the Gospels of Christ Jesus. The book of Acts serves as a transitional book between the office of Jesus Christ in the Gospels and the work of the Holy Spirit in the epistles since it places emphasis upon both. The epistle of Jude serves as a transitional book between the epistles and the book of Revelation, placing emphasis upon both sanctification by the Holy Spirit and the end times revealed in the book of Revelation.

THE THREE-FOLD THEMATIC SCHEME OF HOLY SCRIPTURES

Introduction - Each book of the Holy Scriptures contains a three-fold thematic scheme in order to fulfill its intended purpose, which is to transform each child of God into the image of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:29). The primary, or foundational, theme of a book offers a central claim that undergirds everything written by the author. The secondary, or structural theme, of the book supports its primary theme by offering reasons and evidence for the central "claim" made by the author as it fully develops the first theme. Thus, the secondary theme is more easily recognized by biblical scholars than the other two themes because they provide the literary content of the book as they navigate the reader through the arguments embedded within the biblical text, thus revealing themselves more clearly.⁵² The third theme is imperative in that it calls the reader to a response based upon the central claim and supporting evidence offered by the author. Each child of God has been predestined to be conformed into the image and likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Scriptures, and they alone, have the power to accomplish this task. This is why a child of God can read the Holy Scriptures with a pure heart and experience a daily transformation taking place in his life, although he may not fully understand what is taking place in his life. In addition, the reason some children of God often do not see these biblical themes is because they have not fully yielded their lives to Jesus Christ, allowing transformation to take place by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Without a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit, a child of God is not willing to allow Him to manage his life and move him down the road that God predestined as his spiritual journey. This journey requires every participant to take up his cross daily and follow Jesus, and not every believer is willing to do this. In fact, every child of God chooses how far down this road of sacrifice he is willing to go. Very few of men and women of God fulfill their divine destinies by completing this difficult journey. In summary, the first theme drives the second theme, which develops the first theme, and together they demand the third theme, which is the reader's response.

⁵²For an excellent discussion on the use of claims, reasons, and evidence in literature, see Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).

A. *The Central Theme of the Holy Scriptures* - The central theme of the Holy Bible is God's plan of redemption for mankind. This theme finds its central focus in the Cross, where our Lord and Saviour died to redeem mankind. The central figure of the Holy Scriptures is the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, the Cross is the place where man meets God and where we die to our selfish ambitions and yield our lives to the God who created all things. Therefore, the Holy Scriptures are not intended to be a precise record of ancient history. Rather, its intent is to provide a record of God's divine intervention in the history of mankind in order to redeem the world back to Himself through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on Calvary.

Every book of the Holy Bible makes a central claim that undergirds the arguments or message contained within its text. For example, the central claim of the Pentateuch is found in Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD," to which all additional material is subordinate. The bulk of the material in the Old Testament is subordinate in that it serves as reasons and evidence to support this central claim. This material serves as the secondary theme, offering the literary structure of the book. In addition, the central claim calls for a response, which is stated in the following verse, "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (Deut 6:5) Such a response is considered the third, imperative theme that runs through every book of the Holy Scriptures.

This central claim is the primary, or foundational, theme and is often obscured by the weight of evidence that is used to drive the central message, which weight of evidence makes up the secondary theme; and thus, it contains more content than the primary theme. Therefore, the secondary themes of the books of the Holy Scripture are generally more recognizable than the primary theme. Nevertheless, the central claim, or truth, must be excavated down to the foundation and made clearly visible in order to understand the central theme driving the arguments contained within the book. Only then can proper exegesis and sermon delivery be executed.

B. *The Secondary Theme (Structural) of the Holy Scriptures* – The secondary themes of the books of the Holy Scriptures support the primary themes by offering reasons and evidence for the central "claim" of the book made by the author. Thus, the secondary themes are more easily recognized by biblical scholars than the other two themes because they provide the literary structure of the book as they navigate the reader through the arguments embedded within the biblical text, thus revealing themselves more clearly. For example, the central claim of the Pentateuch declares that the Lord God of Israel is the only God that man should serve, and man is to love the Lord God with all of his heart, mind, and strength, a statement found in the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4-5, which is the foundational theme of the Old Testament. The books of Hebrew poetry provide evidence to this claim by expounding upon how man is to love God with all of his heart as its secondary theme. The books of the prophets provide evidence to this claim by expounding upon how man is to love God with all of his mind as its secondary theme, as he set his hope in the coming of the Messiah to redeem mankind. The historical books provide evidence to this claim by expounding upon how man is to love God with all of his strength as its secondary theme.

The central claim of the four Gospel writers is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, which is the foundational theme of this division of the Holy Scriptures. In addition, each Gospel writer offers evidence as its secondary theme to support his claim. The Gospel of John offers the five-fold testimony of God the Father, John the Baptist, the miracles of Jesus, the Old Testament Scriptures, and the testimony of Jesus Christ Himself as its secondary theme. Matthew expounds upon the testimony of the Old Testament Scriptures as its secondary theme; Mark expounds upon the testimony of the miracles of Jesus as its secondary theme; Luke expounds upon the testimony of John the Baptist and other eye-witnesses and well as that of the apostles in the book of Acts as its secondary theme.

The central claim of the Pauline Church Epistles is that the Gospel of Jesus Christ alone has the power to redeem and transform man into the image of Jesus, which is the foundational theme of this division of the Holy Scriptures. The epistle of Romans supports this claim by offering evidence of mankind's depravity and God's plan of redemption to redeem him as its secondary theme. The epistles of Ephesians and Philippians expound upon the role of God the Father in His divine foreknowledge as their secondary theme; the epistles of Colossians and Galatians expound upon the role of Jesus Christ as the head of the Church as their

secondary theme; the epistles of 1, 2 Thessalonians and 1, 2 Corinthians expound upon the role of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying the believers as their secondary theme.

The central claim of the Pastoral Epistles is that believers must serve God through the order of the New Testament Church. The epistles of 1, 2 Timothy expound upon how to serve the Lord within the Church with a pure heart, which is its secondary theme. The epistle of Titus expounds upon how to serve the Lord within the Church with a renewed mind, which is its secondary theme. The epistle of Philemon expounds upon how to serve the Lord within the Church with a genuine lifestyle, which is its secondary theme.

The central claim of the General Epistles is that believers must persevere in the Christian faith in order to obtain eternal redemption. The epistles of Hebrews, James, and 1 Peter modify this theme to reflect perseverance from persecutions from without the Church. The epistle of Hebrews expounds upon the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ, which is its secondary theme. The epistle of James expounds upon a lifestyle of perseverance through the joy of the Holy Spirit, which is its secondary theme. The epistle of 1 Peter expounds upon our hope of divine election through God the Father, which is its secondary theme. The epistles of 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3, John and Jude reflect perseverance from false doctrines from within. The epistle of 2 Peter expounds upon growing in the knowledge of God's Word with a sound mind, which is its secondary theme. The epistles of 1, 2, 3 John expound upon walking in fellowship with God and one another with a pure heart, which is its secondary theme. The epistle of Jude expounds how living a godly lifestyle with our bodies, which is its secondary theme.

The Apocalypse of John, though not considered an epistle, emphasizes the glorification of the Church, giving believers a vision of the hope that is laid up before them as a source of encouragement for those who persevere until the end. The central claim of the book of Revelation is that Jesus Christ is coming to take His Bride the Church to Glory. The secondary theme supports this claim with the evidence of Great Tribulation Period.

C. *The Third (Imperative) Theme of the Holy Scriptures* - The third theme of each book of the Holy Scriptures is a call by the author for the reader to apply the central truth, or claim, laid down in the book to the Christian life. It is a call to a lifestyle of crucifying the flesh and taking up one's Cross daily to follow Jesus. Every child of God has been predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:29), and every child of God faces challenges as well as failures in the pursuit of his Christian journey. For example, the imperative theme of the Old Testament is that God's children are to serve the Lord God with all of their heart, mind, and strength, and love their neighbour as themselves (Deut 6:4-5).

The child of God cannot fulfill his divine destiny of being conformed into the image of Jesus without yielding himself and following the plan of redemption that God avails to every human being. This 4-fold, redemptive path is described in Romans 8:29-20 as predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. The phase of justification can be further divided into regeneration, indoctrination, divine service, and perseverance. Although each individual will follow a unique spiritual journey in life, the path is the same in principle for every believer since it follows the same divine pattern described above. This allows us to superimpose one of three thematic schemes upon each book of the Holy Scriptures in order to vividly see its imperative theme. Every book follows a literary structure that allows either (1) the three-fold scheme of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: or (2) the scheme of spirit, soul, and body of man; or (3) the scheme of predestination, calling, justification (regeneration, indoctrination, divine service, and perseverance), and glorification in some manner.

THE THEMATIC SCHEME OF THE OLD TESTAMENT:
THE ROLE OF GOD THE FATHER IN
DIVINE ELECTION THROUGH FOREKNOWLEDGE

C. *The Central Theme of the Old Testament* - The major theme of the Old Testament is the work of divine election through the foreknowledge of God the Father as He prepares mankind for the coming of the Messiah. Simply defined, foreknowledge looks ahead at what God is about to do while divine election looks back at what God has already done. Emphasis upon the foreknowledge of God the Father can be found from