

# *Study Notes on the Holy Scriptures*

*Using a Theme-Based Approach  
to Identify Literary Structures*

*The Book of Habakkuk*



*Gary H. Everett*



**STUDY NOTES ON THE HOLY SCRIPTURES**  
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**THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK**  
*January 2018 Edition*

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All Scripture quotations in English are taken from the *King James Version (Authorized Version)* unless otherwise noted. Some words have been emphasized by the author of this commentary using bold or italics.

All Old Testament Scripture quotations in the Hebrew text are taken from *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: with Westminster Hebrew Morphology*. Stuttgart; Glenside PA: German Bible Society; Westminster Seminary, 1996. Logos.

All New Testament Scripture quotations in the Greek text are taken from *Greek New Testament, Fourth Revised Edition (with Morphology)*. Eds. Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, M. Robinson, and Allen Wikgren. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; United Bible Societies, 1993; 2006. Logos.

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**The Three-Tiered Thematic Scheme Shaping the Book of Habakkuk:  
Foundational, Structural, and Imperative**

*Foundational Theme – How to Serve the Lord with All Our Mind*

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:  
And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart,  
and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.  
Deuteronomy 6:4-5

*Structural Theme – God Will Redeem Israel by Filling the Earth  
with the Knowledge of the Glory of the Lord*

For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD,  
as the waters cover the sea.  
Habakkuk 2:14

*Imperative Theme – Man is Commanded to Love God with All His Mind*

And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart,  
and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.  
Deuteronomy 6:5

*Imperative Theme – Israel Loved the Lord their God with All of Their Mind  
by Placing Their Hope in Habakkuk’s Prophecies Concerning Man’s Need  
to Trust in God in the Midst of the Vanities upon the Earth*

Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him:  
but the just shall live by his faith.  
Habakkuk 2:4

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK<sup>1</sup>

***The Doctrinal Position on the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*** - *Study Notes on the Holy Scriptures* supports the view of the verbal, plenary inspiration of the biblical text of the Holy Scriptures, meaning that every word originally written down by the authors in the sixty-six books of the Holy Canon were God-breathed when recorded by men, and that the Scriptures are therefore inerrant and infallible. Any view less than this contradicts the testimony of the Holy Scriptures themselves. For this reason, the Holy Scriptures contain both divine attributes and human attributes. While textual criticism engages with the variant readings of the biblical text, acknowledging its human attributes, faith in His Word acknowledges its divine attributes. These views demand the adherence of mankind to the supreme authority of the Holy Scriptures above all else. The Holy Scriptures can only be properly interpreted by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, an aspect of biblical scholarship that is denied by liberal views, causing much misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the Holy Scriptures.

***The Message of the Book of Habakkuk*** – Based upon the view of the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, each volume of *Study Notes on the Holy Scriptures* begins with introductory material that develops the central ideas of each book. These introductions present the central message in a three-tiered framework. This framework reveals the literary structure of the book.

The book of Habakkuk offers a three-fold thematic scheme that supports the central claim of the Pentateuch, the claim found in Deuteronomy 6:4 and known to the Jews as “the Shema,” a verse that declares the God of Israel is one, true and living God, a theme that undergirds all of the prophetic books. Thus, the foundational theme of Habakkuk is the central claim of the Pentateuch, a theme shared by all books of the Holy Scriptures. The secondary, structural theme of the book of Habakkuk supports the primary theme of the prophetic books by offering the testimony of God’s covenant love to redeem Israel through the prophetic plan of the Messiah’s passion and atonement as supporting evidence that YHWH is the true and living God. The third, imperative theme of the book of Habakkuk states that Israel loved the Lord their God with all of their mind by placing their hope in Habakkuk’s prophecies concerning man’s need to trust in God in the midst of the vanities upon the earth. The application of this third theme for today’s reader is for us to place our hope of redemption in Habakkuk’s prophecies concerning God the Father’s divine providence in orchestrating our redemption, namely our faith in the presence of the glory and knowledge of God upon the earth through the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven.

***The Three-Fold Structure of the Book Introductions*** – In order to identify the central message of each book as a three-tiered statement, the book introductions in *Study Notes on the Holy Scriptures* address three major aspects of approaching the biblical text. These three aspects or sections are entitled (1) the Historical Setting, (2) the Literary Style (Genre), and (3) the Theological Framework.<sup>2</sup> These three sections of the book

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<sup>1</sup>The book introductions in *Study Notes on the Holy Scriptures* use a nine-level outline that follows an alphanumeric system: [omit] I. A. 1. a) (1) (a) i) α). While the first heading uses bold capital letters and no designation, the next seven levels follow *The Chicago Manual of Style*, while the ninth level incorporates the Greek alphabet. After the main heading, the other eight heading levels use bold and italicized headline style. See *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15<sup>th</sup> edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982, 1993, 2003), 275.

<sup>2</sup>Someone may associate these three categories with Hermann Gunkel’s well-known three-fold approach to form criticism when categorizing the genre found within the book of Psalms: (1) “a common setting in life,” (2) “thoughts and mood,” (3) “literary forms.” In addition, the *Word Biblical Commentary* inserts sections entitled “Form/Structure/Setting” preceding its comments. Although such similarities were not intentional, but rather coincidental, the author was aware of them and found encouragement from them when assigning the three-fold scheme of historical setting, literary style, and theological framework to his introductory material. See Hermann Gunkel, *The Psalms: A Form-Critical Introduction*, trans. Thomas M. Horner, in *Biblical Series*, vol. 19, ed. John Reumann

introductions coincide with the chronological development of historical and literary criticism.<sup>3</sup> More specifically, the twentieth century offered three major approaches to biblical research, generally recognized as source, form, and redaction (composition) criticism. These three approaches developed as scholars searched for better ways to understand the meaning of the biblical text and its application to the modern reader. Over the past three decades, biblical research has adopted a wide array of approaches collected under the field of study called literary criticism.<sup>4</sup> In the course of biblical scholarship, particularly in the writing of commentaries, book introductions have progressively become more complex through the advancement of critical studies in recent centuries. The book introductions found in *Study Notes on the Holy Scriptures* associate source criticism with the advancement of research in the book's historical setting; it associates form criticism with the advancement of research in a book's literary style; and it associates redaction (composition) criticism and literary criticism with the advancement of research in the theological framework of a book. These three aspects of introductory material serve my readers as an important foundation for understanding what the authors of the books of the Holy Scriptures were saying to their audience under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The book summaries within the third section of this introductory material include exegetical, theological, and homiletical ideas for each pericope as a guide for those who desire to preach or teach through this book. These central ideas reflect homiletical research by serving as a summary of the central ideas of the book's theological framework. This framework of a book is the key to bridging the difficult gap between exegesis and homiletics. In other words, these ideas help the student of God's Word to take that final step to not only understand what the ancient author meant to say to his original audience, but to apply the meaning of the

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(Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1967), 10; see also *Word Biblical Commentary*, eds. Bruce M. Metzger, David A. Hubbard, and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas, Texas: Word Incorporated, 1989-2007).

<sup>3</sup>Historical criticism, a term often used to encompass the fields of critical studies called source, form, and redaction (composition) criticism, has been an important tool in the effort to bridge the gap between what the ancient author recorded in the biblical text and what the text means to the modern reader. Dissatisfaction with the weaknesses of existing, critical approaches for each generation of critical studies has been the driving force behind the "evolution" of modern biblical scholarship. For example, James Muilenburg's 1968 address to the Society of Biblical Literature expressed the need for a new approach to the biblical text that went "beyond form criticism" because "historical criticism had come to an impasse, chiefly because of the excesses of source analysis." He proposed a new methodology called redaction criticism. See James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88 (1969): 1, 18. With the recent focus upon literary criticism, Paul House says, "[L]iterary criticism arose at least in part because of impasses in older ways of explaining Scripture. Just as scholars began to look for a better way to understand the Scriptures when the various fields of historical criticism appeared to fragment the biblical text rather than reveal its intended meaning, scholars today are searching for new ways to identify hermeneutical sections and their respective meanings." See Paul R. House, "The Rise and Current Status of Literary Criticism of the Old Testament," in *Beyond Form Criticism: Essays in Old Testament Literary Criticism*, ed. Paul R. House, in *Sources for Biblical and Theological Study*, vol. 2 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 3, 7; Grant Osborne, "Redaction Criticism," *New Testament Criticism and Interpretation*, eds. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 199; In summarizing the historical development of critical approaches to Mark's Gospel, Bruce Bain begins by saying, "The apparent lack or sufficiency in one method seems to have given impetus for the birth of the next method." See Bruce Alan Bain, "Literary Surface Structures in Mark: Identifying Christology as the Purpose of the Gospel," PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1997 [on-line]; accessed 29 August 2013; available from <http://search.proquest.com.aaron.swbts.edu/pqdthss/docview/304487757/1402E6CEA4242E4E21D/1?accountid=7073>; Internet, 4.

<sup>4</sup>Jeffery Weima offers an excellent discussion on literary criticism. The surveys of Stanley Porter and Craig Blomberg concerning the various sub-disciplines that make up today's literary criticism expose the reason for such a variety of literary structures found in today's biblical commentaries and studies. In other words, these different approaches of literary criticism are the reason behind the variations in proposed literary structures of a book found in modern commentaries. See Jeffery A. D. Weima, "Literary Criticism," in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, eds. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2001), 150-151; Stanley E. Porter, "Literary Approaches to the New Testament: From Formalism to Deconstruction and Back," in *Approaches to New Testament Studies*, eds. Stanley E. Porter and David Tombs (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 77-128; and Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 87-96.

biblical text to a modern audience. The appendices contain a collection of these exegetical, theological, and homiletical ideas to serve as an outline for those preparing sermons and lessons.

## HISTORICAL SETTING

“In-depth study of the historical setting is indispensable for sound exegesis.”  
(William Warren)<sup>5</sup>

“We dare not divorce our study from understanding the historical setting of every passage of Scripture if we are going to come to grips with the truth and message of the Bible.”  
(J. Hampton Keathley)<sup>6</sup>

Each book of the Holy Scriptures is cloaked within a unique historical setting. An examination of this setting is useful in the interpretation of the book because it provides the historical context of a passage of Scripture under examination. However, it helps when reading book introductions to understand that the discussions concerning historical setting for the books of the Bible have evolved through the centuries from simple to complex as biblical research has progressed.

Source critical studies that emerged during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were concerned in its early stages with investigating the sources used by the Gospel writers because of their parallel passages. This interest spread to other relevant books of the Bible as well, such as the Pentateuch. These studies necessitated a re-evaluation of the various aspects of the historical setting of the books of the Bible. Source criticism required biblical scholarship to give greater attention to the book's title, historical background, authorship, date and place of writing, and recipients when searching for the original sources of various passages within the book. Interest in source criticism stimulated more extensive book introductions in commentaries, which became characteristic of this period of biblical research as scholars argued about various proposed views of the historical setting. Prior to this era, the book introductions to biblical commentaries were generally brief because they simply reflected the traditions handed down from the church fathers. Therefore, *source criticism* has made positive contributions to biblical scholarship despite its widespread use by liberal theologians who argued against divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. Its positive effects are seen as conservative scholars are able to these various aspects of a book's historical setting to defend the integrity of the Scriptures.

This discussion supports the Jewish tradition that Habakkuk was the author of the book of Habakkuk, with him and others recording his prophecies during his public ministry. As evidence to support this claim, this section on the historical setting addresses the issues of (I) Title, (II) Historical Background, (III) Authorship, (IV) Date and Place of Writing, and (V) Recipients.

### I. The Title

Henry Swete groups the Old Testament Scriptures into three classifications when dealing with book titles: (1) books whose titles reflect its theme found in the opening verses [Gen-Deut, Prov, Lam], (2) books whose titles reflect the author or a key individual in the story [the early and latter prophets, Ezra, Neh, Esth], and (3) books whose titles reflect its contents [Ps, Songs, Chronicles].<sup>7</sup>

### II. Historical Background

*The Martyrdom of Isaiah* refers to several Old Testament prophets who ministered during the reign of Hezekiah (Isaiah, Micaiah [Micah], Joel, and Habakkuk). Although these prophets prospered under the reign of King Hezekiah, they were persecuted and martyred when his son Manassah came to power. These prophets fled together into a deserted for several years prior to their persecutions.

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<sup>5</sup>William F. Warren, Jr., “Interpreting New Testament Narrative: The Gospels and Acts,” in *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture*, second edition, eds. Bruce Corley, Steve W. Lemke, and Grant Lovejoy (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 323.

<sup>6</sup>J. Hampton Keathley, III, “Introduction and Historical Setting for Elijah,” (Bible.org) [on-line]; accessed 23 May 2012; available from <http://bible.org/seriespage/introduction-and-historical-setting-elijah>; Internet.

<sup>7</sup>Henry B. Swete, *An Introduction to Old Testament in Greek* (Cambridge: University Press, 1902), 214.

“And when Isaiah the son of Amoz saw the lawlessness which was being perpetrated in Jerusalem and the worship of Satan and his wantonness, he withdrew from Jerusalem and settled in Bethlehem of Judah. And there also there was much lawlessness, and withdrawing from Bethlehem he settled on a mountain in a desert place. [And Micaiah the prophet, and the aged Ananias, and Joel and Habakkuk, and his son Jôsâb, and many of the faithful who believed in the ascension into heaven, withdrew and settled on the mountain.] They were all clothed with garments of hair, and they were all prophets. And they had nothing with them but were naked, and they all lamented with a great lamentation because of the going astray of Israel. And these eat nothing save wild herbs which they gathered on the mountains, and having cooked them, they lived thereon together with Isaiah the prophet. And they spent two years of days on the mountains and hills.” (*The Martyrdom of Isaiah* 2:7-11)<sup>8</sup>

### III. Authorship

#### A. Internal Evidence

**B. External Evidence** - Extra-biblical literature offers clues regarding the authorship of the book of Habakkuk. For example, the Babylonian *Talmud* records much Jewish tradition, one of which says that the men of the great assembly wrote the books of Ezekiel, the Twelve Prophets, Daniel, and Esther.

“And who wrote all the books? Moses wrote his book and a portion of Bil’am [Numbers, xxii.], and Job. Jehoshua wrote his book and the last eight verses of the Pentateuch beginning: “And Moses, the servant of the Lord, died.” Samuel wrote his book, Judges, and Ruth. David wrote Psalms, with the assistance of ten elders, viz.: Adam the First, Malachi Zedek, Abraham, Moses, Hyman, Jeduthun, Asaph, and the three sons of Korach. Jeremiah wrote his book, Kings, and Lamentations. King Hezekiah and his company wrote Isaiah, Proverbs, Songs, and Ecclesiastes. The men of the great assembly wrote Ezekiel, the Twelve Prophets, Daniel, and the Book of Esther. Ezra wrote his book, and Chronicles the order of all generations down to himself. [This may be a support to Rabh’s theory, as to which, R. Jehudah said in his name, that Ezra had not ascended from Babylon to Palestine until he wrote his genealogy.] And who finished Ezra’s book? Nehemiah ben Chachalyah.” (*Babylonian Talmud, Tract Baba Bathra (Last Gate), 1.Mishna 5*)<sup>9</sup>

### IV. Date

### V. Recipients

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<sup>8</sup>*The Martyrdom of Isaiah*, trans. G. H. Box and W. O. E. Oesterly, in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English With Introductions and Critical and Explanatory Notes to the Several Books*, vol. 2, 155-162, ed. R. H. Charles (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 160.

<sup>9</sup>Michael L. Rodkinson, *New Edition of the Babylonian Talmud*, vol. 13 (New York: New Talmud Publishing Company, 1902), 45.

### LITERARY STYLE (GENRE)

“Perhaps the most important issue in interpretation is the issue of genre. If we misunderstand the genre of a text, the rest of our analysis will be askew.”  
(Thomas Schreiner)<sup>10</sup>

Form critical studies followed on the heels of source criticism in the first half of the twentieth century in an effort to identify the evolution of the text from its original form as oral tradition to the stage of canonization. John Hayes and Carl Hallodday describe the four primary aspects of form criticism, which are (1) the *content* “what is said,” (2) the *form* “how it is said,” (3) the *life setting* “in what setting or occasion it is said,” and (4) the *function* “the purpose of what is said.” They believe these aspects of form criticism allow the books of the Bible to be classified into their various genres as well as associate these genres with “sociological realities in the life of ancient Israel and the early church.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, form criticism reveals biblical genres through the book’s content and form; it reveals the occasion of the book through its life setting; and it reveals its purpose through its function. This section of the book introduction will address these four aspects of form critical studies in three sections in the following order:

1. Life Setting – Discussions on the occasion
2. Form and Content – Discussions on the type of genre occasioned by the author and the characteristics of the book in light of its genre
3. Function – Discussions on the purpose

These three categories follow Hermann Gunkel’s well-known three-fold approach to form criticism when categorizing the genre found within the book of Psalms: (1) “a common setting in life,” (2) “literary forms,” and (3) “thoughts and mood.”<sup>12</sup> In addition, the *Word Biblical Commentary* uses “Form/Structure/Setting” preceding each commentary section.<sup>13</sup>

#### I. Occasion

#### II. Genre and Characteristics of the Book

Within the historical setting of the kingdom of Israel, the author of the book of Habakkuk chose to write using the literary style of the ancient prophetic literature. Thus, the book of Habakkuk is assigned to the literary genre called “prophecy.” Included in the genre of prophecy are the three books of the Old Testament major prophets and twelve minor prophets.

#### III. Purpose

The Old Testament books of prophecy served a number of purposes for the nation of Israel and for the Gentiles. These books were written primarily to testify that the God of Israel is the true and living God; thus, they served a doctrinal and apologetic purpose. However, the authors chose to frame their testimonies within the genres of Old Testament prophecy; thus, they served an historical and didactic purpose. Finally, the books of prophecy served a hortative and kerygmatic purpose in calling mankind to serve the Lord with all of his mind. Israel was set apart as a holy nation through which God would reveal His divine plan of redemption for mankind through the promises/prophecies of the coming Messiah.

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<sup>10</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, second edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, c1990, 2011), 11.

<sup>11</sup>John H. Hayes and Carl A. Hallodday, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner’s Handbook*, revised edition (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1987), 83-84.

<sup>12</sup>Hermann Gunkel, *The Psalms: A Form-Critical Introduction*, trans. Thomas M. Horner, in *Biblical Series*, vol. 19, ed. John Reumann (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1967), 10.

<sup>13</sup>*Word Biblical Commentary*, eds. Bruce M. Metzger, David A. Hubbard, and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas, Texas: Word Incorporated, 1989-2007).

**A. The Doctrinal and Apologetic Purpose: To Establish and Defend the Central Claim of that YHWH is the True and Living God** - The primary purpose of the prophetic books of the Old Testament is to provide supporting evidence that establishes and defends the claim of the Pentateuch that YHWH is the true and living God through Israel's historical records.

*The Testimony of Biblical Scholarship* – Charles Elliott provides a lengthy discussion on the doctrines of the prophetic books, saying, “Prophecy is more or less a commentary upon the doctrine of divine providence . . . The doctrinal teaching of the prophets is intermediate between the Law and the Gospel. It is a step in advance of the Law and preparatory to the Christian dispensation. . . . The Law had said: ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might’ (Deut. vi. 5). Nothing could go beyond this commandment, in its extent; but where nothing can be added to extend a law, much may be added to expound it, animate its spirit, and direct its practice. It is precisely this that the prophets do.”<sup>14</sup>

*Conclusion: The Purpose Reflects the Theme* – This doctrinal-apologetic purpose of the book of Habakkuk reflects the foundational theme of the historical books, which is the central claim that the God of Israel is the one true and holy God, who is orchestrating a plan of redemption for mankind through the nation of Israel.

**B. The Prophetic-Didactic and Historical Purpose: To Reveal Israel's Hope of Redemption through God's Demonstration of the Restoration of His Glory among His People** - The book of Habakkuk serves an historical purpose because it records the events of the nation of Israel preceding the Babylonian Captivity. However, this book also serves a didactic purpose by revealing God's role in offering Israel redemption through God's promises to restore His glory among His people. The book teaches the children of Israel that God is able and faithful to fulfill His promises of their future redemption because He is the true and living God.

*Conclusion: The Purpose Reflects the Theme* – The historical-didactic purpose of the book of Habakkuk reflects its secondary, structural theme, which is the testimony of God's promises to redeem Israel by filling the earth with the glory of the knowledge of the Lord.

**C. The Hortatory and Conciliatory Purpose: To Exhort the Children of Israel to Place Their Hope in the Lord and His Promise of the Future Restoration of His People** - A third purpose found in the book of Habakkuk is seen in its references to the restoration of God's people. This book provides hope to the Jewish people as it reveals the restoration of God's people and their ultimate victory over sin and oppression. Habakkuk's prophecies allow the children of Israel to place their hope in the Lord and His promise of the future restoration of His people. Through these prophecies, Israel was comforted through their hope of redemption.

*Conclusion: The Purpose Reflects the Theme* – The hortatory-conciliatory purpose of the book of Habakkuk reflects its third, imperative theme, which states that Israel served the Lord their God with all of their mind by placing their hope in Habakkuk's prophecies concerning man's need to trust in God in the midst of the vanities upon the earth.

**D. Conclusion of the Three-fold Purpose of the Prophetic Books** – Having identified three purposes to the Prophetic Books, it is logical to conclude that there are three themes embedded within these writings, with each theme supporting a particular purpose. Therefore, the three-fold thematic schemes of these books will be discussed next.

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<sup>14</sup>Charles Elliott, *General Introduction to the Prophetic Writings of the Old Testament and Especially to the Minor Prophets*, in *The Minor Prophets, Exegetically, Theologically, and Homiletically Expounded, in A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical*, ed. John Peter Lange, trans. Philip Schaff (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886), 11.

## THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

“Scholarly excellence requires a proper theological framework.”  
(Andreas Kösenberger)<sup>15</sup>

*Redaction (composition) criticism* built upon earlier forms of critical studies known as *source criticism* and *form criticism* to better understand the final composition of a book. This research asks how the literary authors edited and assembled their material into its final form. As a result, scholars began to approach the books of the Bible as independent, literary works rather than a compilation of fragmented parts gathered from various sources. A study in the evolution of the writing of commentaries reveals that extensive book outlines did not find their way into biblical commentaries until this recent era of biblical studies. Such outlines emerged during the trend of *redaction criticism*, so that by the mid-nineteenth century most commentaries offered book outlines in their introductory material. Earlier outlines existed in commentaries, but they were generally simplistic in form because scholarship lacked the necessary hermeneutical tools developed only recently in biblical scholarship.

During the last two decades of the twentieth century, biblical scholarship took a further step, using a number of approaches collectively known as *literary criticism*. This approach allowed modern critical studies and commentaries to propose greater detail in literary structures in an effort to reveal the book’s theological framework. The current trend in *literary criticism* allows greater accuracy in book outlines. As a result, these outlines become valuable tools in exegesis as well as homiletics because of the recognition of a book’s theological framework.

Based upon the historical setting and literary style of the book of Habakkuk, an examination of the thematic scheme and the literary structure with its respective outline to this book of the Holy Scriptures will reveal its theological framework. This introductory section will sum up its theological framework with a set of exegetical-homiletical outlines, which are used to identify smaller units or pericopae within the book of Habakkuk for preaching and teaching passages of Scripture while following the overriding message of the book. By following these outlines, the minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ takes his followers on a spiritual journey that brings them to the same destination that the author intended his readers to reach.

### I. Thematic Scheme

David Clines says, “. . . a statement of theme is the first step in formulating the message of the work within its historical context or in setting up guidelines within which future readings or interpretations of the work in different historical contexts may be considered legitimate.”<sup>16</sup>

*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.<sup>17</sup> 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

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<sup>15</sup> Andreas J. Kösenberger, *Excellence: The Character of God and the Pursuit of Scholarly Virtue* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2011), 173.

<sup>16</sup> David J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch, second edition* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 2001), 20-21.

<sup>17</sup> For 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).

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.

*The Thematic Scheme of the Books of the Old Testament* - The underlying theme of the Old Testament Scriptures is the office and ministry of God the Father as He works out His divine plan of redemption for mankind through His divine foreknowledge and sovereign intervention in the affairs of man. The primary theme of the Pentateuch is the central claim that YHWH is the true and living God. For this reason, man is to love him with all of his heart, mind, and strength. The books of Hebrew poetry emphasize man's love towards God with all of his heart. The prophetic books emphasize loving the Lord with all of one's mind. The historical books emphasize loving the Lord with all of one's strength.

*The Three-fold Thematic Scheme of the Prophetic Books* - The prophetic books are woven together as a major division of the Holy Scriptures with a three-fold thematic scheme. (A) *Primary Theme* - The primary, foundational theme of the prophetic books is the claim found in Deuteronomy 6:4 and known to the Jews as "the Shema," a verse that declares the God of Israel is one, true and living God, a theme that undergirds all five books of the Pentateuch. (B) *Secondary Theme* - Each one of the prophetic books has a secondary theme that supports this central theme, providing the evidence to prove that the God of Israel is one God, who had dominion over all other gods worshipped by depraved humanity. Collectively, the secondary themes of the prophetic books reveal that YHWH has chosen Israel through His foreknowledge and divine election to be His chosen method of bringing redemption to mankind. These books form a thematic scheme of God's plan of redemption for the kingdom of Israel and for the heathen nations with their secondary themes. This thematic scheme follows the triune God-head, with each book placing an emphasis on the redemptive role of either God the Father, Jesus the Son, or the Holy Spirit. (C) *The Third Theme* - The third theme of the Prophetic books is an imperative theme, and it is also found in the Shema, where Moses commands Israel to love YHWH their God with all of one's mind (Deut 6:5).

*The Three-fold Thematic Scheme of the Book of Habakkuk* - The book of Habakkuk offers a three-fold thematic scheme that supports the central claim of the Pentateuch, the claim found in Deuteronomy 6:4 and known to the Jews as "the Shema," a verse that declares the God of Israel is one, true and living God, a theme that undergirds all of the prophetic books. Thus, the foundational theme of Habakkuk is the central claim of the Pentateuch, a theme shared by all books of the Holy Scriptures. The secondary, structural theme of the book of Habakkuk supports the primary theme of the prophetic books by offering the testimony of God's covenant love to redeem Israel through the prophetic plan of the Messiah's passion and atonement as supporting evidence that YHWH is the true and living God. The third, imperative theme of the book of Habakkuk states that Israel loved the Lord their God with all of their mind by placing their hope in Habakkuk's prophecies concerning man's need to trust in God in the midst of the vanities upon the earth. The application of this third theme for today's reader is for us to place our hope of redemption in Habakkuk's prophecies concerning God the Father's divine providence in orchestrating our redemption, namely our faith in the presence of the glory and knowledge of God upon the earth through the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven.

**A. The Primary Theme of the Book of Habakkuk (Foundational): The Central Claim of the Prophetic Books Declares that YHWH is the True and Living God – The Primary Theme of the Holy Bible** - The primary 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 complete or comprehensive 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. The Holy Scriptures are "Redemptive History."

Every book of the Holy Bible makes a central claim that undergirds one particular aspect of man's redemptive history. 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.

*The Testimony of Biblical Scholarship* – Charles Elliott says, "The God of the prophets is the Creator of all things (Is. xlii. 5); and the upholder of all things (Jer. x. 23; xviii. 6; Dan. v. 23) . . . These passages teach a universal, particular, and present Providence, controlling all things and directing their issues . . . It is not restricted to man, but extends to the beasts of the field. It is not confined to the Jewish theocracy . . . but it embraces . . . all the nations of the earth . . . Prophecy is more or less a commentary upon the doctrine of divine providence."<sup>18</sup>

*Literary Evidence for the Primary Theme of the Prophetic Books* – The primary theme that YHWH is the true and living God is clearly reflected in the prophetic books by the frequent use of the divine title *The Lord of Hosts* (יהוה צבאות) or *The Lord God of Hosts* (יהוה אלהי צבאות). Archibald Duff says this title declares that "Jehovah is Supreme Lord over all other gods, powers, and nations."<sup>19</sup> Duff notes that this title is very popular with the prophets (Isaiah 60, Jeremiah 79, Hosea 1, Amos 9, Micah 1, Nahum 1, Zephaniah 2, Habakkuk 1, Haggai 14, Zechariah 54, Malachi 24). He says this title is not found in the Pentateuch, Joshua, or Judges; however, it occurs in the historical books (Samuel-Kings 14, Chronicles 3) and one book of poetry (Psalms 16).<sup>20</sup> Thus, every divine oracle recorded in the prophetic books, which oracles are often preceded with the phrase, "Thus says the Lord," is founded upon the faith that YHWH is God of all the earth. The prophet books collectively embrace not only the message of Israel's judgment and ultimate restoration, but of the redemption of the nations through Israel's restoration.

Also, the Hebrew phrase *Day of the Lord* (יום יהוה) occurs fifteen times in the Old Testament, being used only in the books of prophecy (Isaiah 2, Joel 5, Amos 3, Obadiah 1, Zephaniah 3, Malachi 1). The phrase *Day of the Lord* is associated with God's judgment upon the nations. It is used to reflect the role of God the Father in His plan of redemption for Israel and the nations.

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<sup>18</sup>Charles Elliott, *General Introduction to the Prophetic Writings of the Old Testament and Especially to the Minor Prophets*, in *The Minor Prophets, Exegetically, Theologically, and Homiletically Expounded*, in *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical*, ed. John Peter Lange, trans. Philip Schaff (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886), 9-10.

<sup>19</sup>Other scholars make similar statements. For example, in his commentary on the book of Amos, Douglas Stuart says, "Amos portrays Yahweh as sovereign not only over (northern) Israel, but over all nations of the earth, over all creation, and over all individuals, including specifically Amos himself . . . As יהוה צבאות "Yahweh of the Armies" (3:13, etc.), he is supreme in heaven." See Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, in *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 31, eds. Bruce M. Metzger, David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas: Word Books, Publisher, 1987), 289, Logos.

<sup>20</sup>Archibald Duff, *Old Testament Theology: The History of Hebrew Religion from the Year 800 B.C.* (London and Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1891), 63-64.

*The Primary Theme of the Book of Habakkuk* - The foundational, underlying theme of the book of Habakkuk is the central claim of the books of prophecy of the Old Testament, a claim stating that YHWH is the true and living God in Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD." He is orchestrating a plan of redemption for mankind. The books of prophecy develop this central claim through the four-fold plan of redemption: predestination, calling, justification, and redemption (Rom 8:29-30). These books collectively reveal God's unfolding plan for mankind as He supernaturally intervenes in the affairs of His people Israel, as we read in Proverbs 16:9, "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps." These books require Israel's response to Him.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the books of prophecy testify of the office and ministry of the Heavenly Father as the One who has divinely elected His people to salvation from their sins and eternal rest in Heaven through His foreknowledge, which the apostle Peter mentions in 1 Peter 1:2, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

***B. The Secondary Theme of the Book of Habakkuk (Structural): God Will Redeem Israel by Filling the Earth with the Knowledge of the Glory of the Lord*** - The secondary, structural theme of the book of Habakkuk supports the primary theme of the prophetic books by offering the testimony of God's promises to redeem Israel by filling the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, which offers supporting evidence that YHWH is the true and living God.

***1. The Secondary Themes 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.

*The Secondary Themes of the Pentateuch* - The central claim of the Pentateuch declares that the Lord God of Israel is the true and living God, a statement found in the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4-5, which is the foundational theme of the Old Testament. The secondary themes of the five books of the Pentateuch provide supporting evidence. In Genesis, God predestined mankind to take dominion upon the earth and He called the patriarchs and commissioned them to fulfill this task. In Exodus, God redeemed Israel and justified them as His people, and He delivered the Law to them in covenant as their foundational doctrine and teaching. In Leviticus, God provided mankind the service of the Tabernacle so maintain fellowship with man. In Numbers, God divinely provided for His people during the wilderness journey. In Deuteronomy, God made a provision for Israel to choose between the blessings and the curses. In Joshua, God brought His people into the Promised Land as their place of rest and redemption, while Judges reveals Israel's failure due to disobedience.

*The Secondary Themes of the Historical Books* - The historical books provide supporting evidence to the claim that YHWH is the true and living God by creating the nation of Israel and exalting it above all nations. However, the children of Israel disobeyed their God and brought divine judgment upon them. God predestined the Davidic lineage (Ruth), called David to be Israel's king and justified him before the people through divine providence (1-2 Samuel), indoctrinated Israel under the reign of Solomon's (1-2 Kings), instituted Temple service (1-2 Chronicles), restored a remnant of Israel from Captivity (Ezra-Nehemiah) and divinely watched over His people until the coming of the Messiah (Esther).

*The Secondary Themes of the Hebrew Poetry* - The books of Hebrew poetry provide evidence to the claim that YHWH is the true and living God by expounding upon God's provision for man to love Him with all his heart. God provided wisdom literature to offer the knowledge of God to redeem his mind (Proverbs, Job); God provided the commandments of the Law for the Jews and legal institutions for the nations to guide man to his destiny and redeem his body (Ecclesiastes, Lamentations); and God offers a

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<sup>21</sup>Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, c2006), 234.

personal call to mankind for fellowship and devoted service to redeem man's heart (Song of Solomon, Psalms).

*The Secondary Themes of the Prophets* - The books of the prophets provide supporting evidence to the claim that YHWH is the true and living God through the testimonies of the later prophets so that Israel could set her hope upon God's future redemption. Isaiah predicts Israel's redemption through the coming of the Messiah. Jeremiah predicts God the Father's time-table of seventy weeks for their redemption. Ezekiel predicts the restoration of the nation of Israel and victory over its enemies. The twelve minor prophets offer supporting testimonies to the three major prophets. Finally, Daniel testifies of God's time frame for Israel's redemption, which Jesus called "the Times of the Gentiles."

*The Secondary Themes of the Gospels and Acts* - The central claim of the four Gospel writers states 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 Secondary Themes of the Pauline Church Epistles* - The central claim of the Pauline Church Epistles states that the Gospel of Jesus Christ alone how the power to redeem and transform man into the image of Jesus. These epistles deliver the doctrine of the Gospel to the New Testament Church. 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 Secondary Themes of the Pastoral Epistles* - The central claim of the Pastoral Epistles states that God calls faithful believers into divine service in order to establish and grow the New Testament Church. The secondary themes of these epistles support their primary theme by giving instructions on the order of the Church. The epistle of 1 Timothy provides instructions concerning structure the offices and ministries of the local church so that believers can serve the Lord within their local church with a pure heart. The epistle of 2 Timothy expounds upon this theme as Paul exhorts Timothy to develop his gifts and calling. The epistle of Titus provides instructions on the importance of establishing the Church doctrines within the local church. The teaching of Church doctrines renews the mind of the believer, providing redemption for the mind. The epistle of Philemon expounds upon the theme of the love walk among fellow believers, providing redemption for men's bodies. Collectively, the secondary themes of the Pastoral Epistles provide redemption for the three-fold make-up of the believer.

*The Secondary Themes of the General Epistles* - The central claim of the General Epistles states 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 Secondary Theme of the Book of Revelation* - The secondary theme of the book of Revelation reveals the judgment upon the earth through the Tribulation Period and Second Coming of Jesus Christ, 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 primary theme of the book of Revelation is the revelation of Jesus Christ, who is coming to take His Bride the Church to Glory. The secondary theme supports this claim with the prophecies concerning the Great Tribulation Period and Second Coming.

**2. The Secondary, Structural Themes of the Prophetic Books** - The prophetic books provide supporting evidence to the claim that *YHWH* is the true and living God through the testimonies of the later prophets so that Israel could set her hope upon God's future redemption. Isaiah predicts Israel's redemption through the coming of the Messiah. Jeremiah predicts God the Father's time-table of seventy years for their redemption. Ezekiel predicts the restoration of the nation of Israel, victory over her enemies, and the rebuilding of a more glorious Temple with the return of the glory of God. The twelve Minor Prophets offer supporting testimonies to the three Major Prophets. Finally, Daniel testifies of God's time-frame for Israel's redemption, which Jesus called "the Times of the Gentiles."

**a) The Secondary, Structural Theme of the Book of Daniel: The Times of the Gentiles** - The theme of the book of Daniel is God's Plan of Redemption during the Times of the Gentiles. The book of Daniel stands alone in the Old Testament in its structure and content in much the same way that the book of Revelation is unique to the New Testament. Both are apocalyptic in nature, using symbolic figures to prophesy of future events. Daniel is structured different from the three major prophets, being similar to the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther in its narrative material, while containing a large amount of prophecy. The book of Daniel takes us through the Times of the Gentiles when God divinely works in this group of people to carry out His divine plan of election and redemption. He makes mention of the Kingdom of Heaven from the view of the ages of the worldly kingdoms. Thus, the theme and prophecies of Daniel focus upon the "Times of the Gentiles" from the fall of Jerusalem until the full restoration of the nation of Israel at Christ's Second Coming. Daniel's prophecies encompass the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, so that it serves as a foundational book of prophecy.

While the other thirty-eight books of the Old Testament focus upon the nation of Israel, the prophecies in the book of Daniel focus upon the period of human history called the "Times of the Gentiles" and upon the destiny of the Gentile nations from the fall of Jerusalem up until the time when the nation of Israel is fully restored at Christ's Second Coming. Thus, its primary theme is about the period of history called the "Times of the Gentiles." The fall of Jerusalem to King Nebuchadnezzar began this period of human history and it will last until the time when Christ returns and usher the world into the thousand-year Millennial Reign. At that time, Christ will rule and reign from the holy city of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel will again take center stage and be restored to its fullness. The prophet Daniel ministered directly to the Babylonian kings. As a result, he was given insight into the period known in biblical prophecy as the "Time of the Gentiles." However, this Jewish Old Testament writing ministers to the Jews as well in that it tells them when their nation will be fully restored and when their Messiah will come to deliver them from the oppression of the Gentiles. Thus, we can then see the importance of Daniel's understanding of the seventy-year prophecy of Jeremiah. He understood by a vision that a temporary restoration would take place in a seventy-year period, but that a full restoration would not be accomplished until a seventy-week period was fulfilled.

The book of Daniel weaves the theme of God's sovereign power and destiny for mankind within the revelation of the Times of the Gentiles. Despite the historical setting of the destruction of Jerusalem and enslavement of God's people, these prophecies clearly show that the God of Israel is still on the throne and determining the outcome of mankind. Thus, the foreknowledge of God the Father is the underlying theme of the Old Testament with the book of Daniel being given special emphasis upon the destiny of the Gentile nations as they are a part of God's redemptive plan for mankind.

The prophet Daniel was a contemporary of Ezekiel. While Daniel was ministering to the kings of the Gentile nations, Ezekiel was providing comfort and hope to the Jews in Babylonian captivity. If we compare their two ministries, we see that they both served to provide to the Jews a hope of future restoration. Daniel's prophecies emphasize their restoration from the period of the Age of the Gentiles, while Ezekiel's prophecies reveal Israel's restoration from the perspective of a clear understanding of divine judgment upon His people Israel, His pending judgment upon their enemies and their future restoration. Although Ezekiel did prophesy about the judgment of those nations surrounding Israel, his primary focus reveals the rebirth and establishment of Israel, while Daniel focused upon the rise and fall of the Gentile nations. In addition, both prophets show us that all nations will one day be made subject to the Ancient of Days, the King of Kings, when Jesus Christ will rule and reign over this earth with His saints. The book of Daniel plays an important role in the books of the prophets in that it sets a framework and timelines for all other prophetic events to take place. Daniel literally predicted the year A.D. 27 as the year of the Messiah's atonement. Although the prophet Isaiah, as well as King David in Psalm 22, described the coming and death of the Messiah, Daniel established the timeline for Christ's first and second Coming.

If we compare the three prophetic books of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation, we can make the following observations. Regarding the end-time events, Daniel addresses the Gentiles, Ezekiel addresses the Jews on these same events, and the book of Revelation addresses the Church on this subject. The book of Ezekiel was written to the people of Israel to help them persevere through their time of persecutions during the Babylonian Captivity; but the book of Revelation was addressed to the Church, and not to the Jews, to help them persevere until the end. Therefore, Ezekiel speaks of three major events that relate to the nation of Israel leading up to the ushering in of the Millennial Reign of Christ Jesus, which are the restoration of Israel (36-37), the great battle with Russia and its allies (38-39) and the rebuilding of the Temple with its institution of worship (40-48). These three important events will involve Israel during these last days leading up to and through the seven-year Tribulation Period. Thus, Ezekiel tells of these end-time events from the perspective of Israel. In contrast, the book of Daniel tells of Christ's Second Coming from the perspective of the Gentile nations. Finally, the book of Revelation tells of the end-time events from the perspective of the Church.

Finally, it is interesting to note how the prayers of the saints throughout history determined the outcome of many historical events within God's framework of His plan of redemption. This reveals the important role of God's people in shaping history for good by overcoming evil. Thus, both God and men have a role to play in God's eternal plan of redemption for mankind.

***b) The Secondary, Structural Theme of the Three Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel): Israel's Redemption through the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*** – The secondary, structural themes of the three major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel) offer supporting prophecies that establish key events during the Times of the Gentiles presented in the book of Daniel.

While the prophetic books share the common literal content of divine prophecies against Israel and Judah because of their disobedience followed by a promise of future restoration, each prophet offer unique perspectives regarding the methods used to accomplish Israel's redemption and restoration.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>W. G. Moorehead says, "The great theme of these [Minor Prophets] prophets is Israel primarily, then the nations that were either the foes of Israel, or were used by God for the punishment of His disobedient people . . . Israel's relation to God, the binding force of the Mosaic legislation, and the apostasy of the people from the Lord and their transgression of the law given at Sinai—these and the like fundamental truths afford the ground for the indictment against the chosen people . . . But while they denounce sin and announced judgment, they foretold the glory of the latter days, the re-gathering of scattered Israel, the re-erection of David's fallen tabernacle, the coming of Messiah the second time, and the blessedness of the millennial age . . . It is impossible to read it with any attention without perceiving this central truth." See W. G. Moorehead, *Outline Studies in the Books of the Old Testament* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1893), 297-298.

This restoration will be accomplished by the redemptive roles of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The apostle Peter refers to these three roles of the Trinity, saying, "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) The New Testament citations of the Minor Prophets focus upon prophecies concerning these various roles of the Trinity in God's plan of redemption. Therefore, the distinctive secondary themes of the twelve Minor Prophets can be grouped by their emphasis concerning the redemptive roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Charles Elliott identifies three "classes" of Old Testament prophecies: (1) those prophecies that "disclose God's purposes of grace to men," revealing His "covenant love and faithfulness," (2) those prophecies that "disclose the settled purposes of God," revealing to Israel God destines for other kingdoms that oppose Him, and (3) those prophecies that address men's ethical and moral responsibilities, giving predictions that are often conditional and based upon man's response. The first class often carries Messianic predictions, the second class offers Israel hope in God's eternal plan for the nation's future redemption, and the third class offers man a way to walk in right standing with God.<sup>23</sup> In light of this similarity, an effort will be made to classify the three Major Prophet and twelve Minor Prophets into classes based upon the predominance of one of these proposed literary classification.

Jeremiah's seventy-week prophecy establishes a prophetic time frame for the commencement and fulfillment of the Times of the Gentiles and the arrival of the Messiah through the office and ministry of God the Father. Isaiah's Messianic prophecies establish the redemptive work that God will accomplish for Israel during the Times of the Gentiles through the office and ministry of Jesus Christ the Son. Ezekiel's prophecies reveal the key events in the life of the nation of Israel that usher in the end of the Times of the Gentiles and the eternal reign of Messiah through the office and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

***(1) The Secondary, Structural Theme of the Book of Jeremiah: Israel's Redemption Through God the Father's Foreknowledge*** - The prophecies of Jeremiah emphasize God the Father's divine timeline of judgment and redemption for the nation of Israel and Gentile nations, as stated in its opening passage of Jeremiah 1:10, "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." Jeremiah's prophecy of Israel's seventy-year captivity serves as God's remedy for divine judgment upon His people Israel before He can bring about their restoration. God also called Jeremiah to judge the nations (Jer 1:10) in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. Thus, we can see how Jeremiah's prophecies ushered in the "Times of the Gentiles."

Jeremiah also spoke of the rise and fall of Babylon and gave prophecies of other nations besides Israel. The prophecy of Israel's seventy-year Captivity was perhaps the most important prophecy he made because it dealt with the nation of Israel and gave us a timeline of the Last Days. We find a two-fold fulfillment in this prophecy when studying Daniel 9. Jeremiah was speaking of the Jews returning to Jerusalem after a literal seventy-year period. The angel explained to Daniel that this prophecy also served as a prediction of the time of the Messiah's First and Second Coming. Thus, Jeremiah places emphasis upon God the Father's foreknowledge of Israel's redemption as well as the Gentile nations in that he shows us a timetable for God's plan of redemption. Thus, God's remedy for divine judgment is to bring about full redemption to Israel and the nations through the First and Second Coming of the Messiah. In addition, Zechariah asked the angel of the Lord about this seventy-year period (Zech 1:12). Thus, Jeremiah's prophecy was well-known among the Jews during and after the Babylonian Captivity.

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<sup>23</sup>Charles Elliott, *General Introduction to the Prophetic Writings of the Old Testament and Especially to the Minor Prophets*, in *The Minor Prophets, Exegetically, Theologically, and Homiletically Expounded, in A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical*, ed. John Peter Lange, trans. Philip Schaff (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886), 13-14.

**(2) The Secondary, Structural Theme of the Book of Isaiah: Israel's Redemption Through Jesus the Son's Justification** - The prophecies of Isaiah emphasize the cleansing of the rebellious nation of Israel, as stated in its opening verses (Is 1:2). The prophet calls them to repentance by saying, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool," (1:18). He will explain how this cleansing works later in chapters 52-53 by giving them a lengthy description of Christ's sacrificial death on Calvary as a reference to Jesus' first coming. This is because the remedy for rebellion is reconciliation, and God chose Calvary as the means of reconciling Israel and the Gentiles back unto Himself. We may be able to say that Isaiah focuses upon the justification of God's people, which was accomplished by Jesus' work on Calvary.<sup>24</sup>

In his commission, Isaiah found himself unclean before the throne of God and received cleansing by the angel from the live coals of fire being placed upon his tongue. He was then told to preach a message of conversion and healing to a rebellions people. We see this message in the preaching of Jesus Christ. Thus, in this vision we see the theme of justification.

God then told Isaiah to speak to a rebellious people that will reject his message so that they are scattered and a remnant allowed to remain (Is 6:9-13). Isaiah's prophecies were two-fold in application also. They were fulfilled by the carrying away of the Babylonian Captivity. They were also prophetic of the Messiah's First Coming. Thus, they had a two-fold application. Isaiah places emphasis upon Jesus' work of Calvary, which offers justification to a sinful world. Thus, the remedy for Israel's rebellion is provided for in justification through the coming Messiah.

**(3) The Secondary, Structural Theme of the Book of Ezekiel: Israel's Redemption through the Holy Spirit's Sanctification and Future Glorification** - Ezekiel emphasizes Israel's future restoration through the rebirth of the nation and building of the new temple that will allow God to dwell once again with men. At his commission, the prophet Ezekiel had a vision of four creatures that were sent from the throne of God to set in motion God's divine plan of the restoration of the nation of Israel. This is why God gave to Ezekiel three major prophecies regarding the role of Israel's during the times leading up to Christ Jesus' Second Coming. He closes his prophecies by telling about God's three-fold method of restoring Israel to its fullness through (1) the restoration of the nation, (2) the battle of Armageddon and (3) the rebuilding of the Temple, for this is the method in which God has chosen to restore His people. In this vision we see the theme of glorification emphasized as Ezekiel seems to focus upon the glorification of God's people Israel at the time of Christ's second coming.

**c) The Secondary, Structural Themes of the Twelve Minor Prophets** - The twelve Minor Prophets support the themes of the three Major Prophets by further revealing the office and ministry of the Trinity in God's plan of redemption. Four of the prophets emphasize the role of God the Father, showing how His righteousness demands judgment upon the nations in the Day of the Lord (Nahum, Zephaniah, Obadiah, Habakkuk). These four prophets expound upon God's divine commission to Jeremiah, saying, "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." (Jer 1:10) Four of the prophets emphasize the role of Jesus Christ, showing God's love and mercy through the passion and exaltation of the Messiah (Hosea, Amos, Jonah, Micah). These four prophets expound upon God's divine commission to Isaiah to proclaim Israel's atonement through the Messiah (Is 6:1-10; 53:1).

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<sup>24</sup>The book of Isaiah is sometimes referred to as "the Gospel of the Old Testament" or "the Gospel of Isaiah" because the emphasis upon the redemptive work of Jesus Christ is well recognized. Literary evidence is offered by Davies and Allison, who note that half of the Old Testament quotes found in the Gospel of Matthew come from the book of Isaiah. See W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew: Commentary on Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, vol. 3, in *The International Critical Commentary* (London: T. & T. Clark Ltd, 1988), 575, Logos.

Four of the prophets emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit, showing how God seeks a dwelling place for His glory in the Temple (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Joel). These four prophets expound upon God's divine commission to Ezekiel preach to Israel concerning the restoration of Israel and the Temple where the glory of God will dwell among men.

(1) *God the Father - God's Righteousness Demands Judgment upon the Nations in the Day of the Lord (Nahum, Zephaniah, Obadiah, Habakkuk)*<sup>25</sup> - John Lange distinguishes the four minor prophets Nahum, Zephaniah, Obadiah, and Habakkuk with the common characteristic as prophets of judgment.<sup>26</sup> God will begin Israel's redemption by vindicating them through divine judgment upon Assyria (Nahum). The prophets Zephaniah, Obadiah, and Habakkuk develop the theme of the Day of the Lord, in which God will judge the pagan nations, fully redeem His people, and restore His glory upon the earth. God will judge the nations and restore the nation of Israel and its Hebrew language, appointing a King over them (Zephaniah). God will restore the land to Israel and establish Mount Zion as a place of deliverance and holiness (Obadiah). His glory will fill the earth (Habakkuk).

(a) *Nahum: God Vindicates His People* - The prophet Nahum reveals the divine nature of YHWH as a righteous God, who will begin Israel's redemption by avenging her enemy Assyria (Nah 1:2) and restore His people to their former glory (Nah 2:2).

(b) *Zephaniah: The Restoration of Israel* - The prophet Zephaniah reveals that God will judge the nations in the "Day of the Lord." After judging Israel's enemies, He will gather a remnant of His people (Zeph 3:19-20) and appoint a King over Israel (Zeph 3:15-18), and restore them to a "pure language" (Zeph 3:8-9).

(c) *Obadiah: Zion, the City of Holiness* - The prophet Obadiah declares that the Day of the Lord has come upon the nations, demonstrated first with Edom. The Lord will establish Mount Zion as a city of deliverance, a place of holiness, and Israel shall possess the entire land promised to them by Moses (Obad 1:17-21). The sign of God's promise is divine judgment upon the nation of Edom.

(d) *Habakkuk: The Glory of God upon the Earth* - The prophet Habakkuk reveals that the Lord God, who is from Everlasting, will fill the earth with His glory (Hab 2:14; 3:3); in the presence of the knowledge of this glory, the just will live by faith (Hab 2:4).

(2) *Jesus Christ - God's Love Offers Mercy and Redemption through the Reign of the Messiah (Hosea, Amos, Jonah, Micah)* - The prophets Hosea, Amos, Jonah, and Micah share the common distinction of containing Messianic prophecies. Hosea reveals God's covenant love for His people Israel, a love that will move Him to offer His Son to pay for their redemption. The prophets Amos, Jonah, and Micah develop the theme of the Messianic kingdom. The Messiah will conquer Israel's enemies and bring them back from captivity to establish His Kingdom (Amos). He will offer salvation to the Gentiles on the third day through the resurrection of the Messiah (Jonah). God will raise up a Ruler who will gently shepherd His children with forgiveness and compassion (Micah).

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<sup>25</sup>Johannes Bleek notes that Nahum and Zephaniah make no distinct Messianic prophecies. The books of Habakkuk and Obadiah also contain no specific Messianic prophecies. See Johannes Bleek, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, vol. 2, eds. Adolf Kamphausen and Edmund Venables, trans. G. H. Venables (London: Bell and Daldy, 1869), 150, 156.

<sup>26</sup>John Lange says, "Its [the epistle of Jude] more definite analogies in the Old Testament as revelations of the judgment are the books of Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah." See J. P. Lange and J. J. van Oosterzee, *The Epistle of James*, trans. J. Isidor Mombert, in *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical*, ed. John Peter Lange and Philip Schaff (New York: Charles Scribner and Co., 1867), 7.

(a) *Hosea: God's Redemption Price Paid Love for His People* - The prophet Hosea accused Israel of spiritual adultery against the Lord; yet, He loves His people unconditionally. Based upon His unending love towards Israel, God calls His people to return to Him and know Him so that they walk in truth and mercy towards one another (Hos 6:6, Matt 9:13; 12:7). God's promise to redeem Israel in this manner is a demonstration of His eternal, covenant love for His people. In order to accomplish this act of redemption, Hosea predicted the calling of the Messiah out of Egypt (Hos 11:1, Matt 2:15). Hosea predicts Israel's restoration through the grafting in of the Gentiles (Hos 1:10; 2:23, Rom 9:25-26), which provokes them to jealousy (Rom 11:11, 15, 30-31). In His great love for Israel, God purchased a backslidden people through the blood of His Son Jesus Christ as Hosea purchased his wife out of harlotry and slavery, a redemption price that delivered them from death (Hos 13:14, 1 Cor 15:55).

(b) *Amos: The Messiah Establishes His Kingdom* - The prophet Amos reveals God's plan to conquer Israel's enemies and bring back the a remnant from captivity to establish His Kingdom. He will raise up the Tabernacle of David to establish His kingdom and offer redemption to the Gentiles (Amos 9:11-12, Acts 15:16-17). According to Acts 15:16, the Church understood the prophecy of Amos as the grafting in of the Gentiles through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

(c) *Jonah: The Messiah Offers Redemption to the Gentiles* - The prophet Jonah emphasizes God's compassion to offer redemption to the Gentiles. God will accomplish their redemption through the resurrection of the Messiah on the third day Israel salvation on the third day (Jonah 1:17, Matt 16:4).

(d) *Micah: The Messiah Reigns as the Shepherd and Ruler over Israel* - The prophet Micah predicts the restoration of Israel as a kingdom (Mic 2:12-13) with a King whose dominion brings peace in Israel (Mic 4:1-8). The birth of this Ruler will come from the city of Bethlehem (Mic 5:1-4, Matt 2:6), who will shepherd Israel, forgiving their iniquities and showing mercy (Mic 7:14) as all nations come to worship Him in Zion (Mic 4:2, 7-8). The book of Amos characterizes the Messiah as a Shepherd feeding His flock Israel. God will raise up a Ruler who will gather the remnant of Israel and gently shepherd them with forgiveness and compassion.

(3) *The Holy Spirit: God's Glory Seeks a Dwelling Place in the Temple of the Lord (Malachi, Zechariah, Haggai, Joel)* - The prophets Malachi, Zechariah, Haggai, and Joel share the common distinction of emphasis upon the Temple, its priesthood, and the role of the Holy Spirit in Israel's Redemption. The prophets Malachi, Zechariah, Haggai, and Joel develop the theme of the restoration of the Temple as a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit among men. The Lord will send His Messenger to restore the priesthood as His messengers to Israel (Malachi), appoint a High Priest to cleanse the people and restore the nation of Israel (Zechariah), rebuild the Temple (Haggai), and pour out the Holy Spirit to dwell in men, who serve as the Temple of the living God (Joel). Ezekiel served as the Lord's messenger to Israel and the nations (Eze 1-32). As His messenger, he predicted that God would raise up a true Shepherd to institute a new covenant with Israel and saw in a vision the restoration of their nation through divine judgment upon their enemies (Eze 33-39). He saw in a vision the rebuilding of a more glorious Temple (Eze 40-42), resulting in the return of the glory of God into the Tabernacle of the Lord and its ministry to Israel and the Gentiles (Eze 43-48). While the prophet Ezekiel addressed various aspects of the role of the Holy Spirit in the restoration of Israel and Temple worship, the four Minor Prophets Malachi, Zechariah, Haggai, and Joel give specific prophecies concerning how these particular events will take place.

(a) *Malachi: The Office of the Priest as God's Messengers* - The prophet Malachi rebukes the priests as messengers of the Lord for failing in their office. He predicts the coming of John the Baptist to announce the arrival of the Messiah (Mal 3:1, Matt 11:1-19, Mk 1:2, Lk

7:27), who will purify Temple worship as God's true Messenger. The prophet Malachi gives two distinct prophecies of John the Baptist as the priestly herald of the coming Messiah (Mal 3:1; 4:5).

(b) *Zechariah: The Office of the High Priest as the Lord's Anointed* - The prophecy of Zechariah declares that God Himself will send His servant the Branch to remove Israel's sin in a single day (Zec 3:8-9). This Messiah will serve the dual role as priest-king to atone for sin and reign over the nations to bring peace upon earth.

(c) *Haggai: The Rebuilding of the Temple* - The prophet Haggai exhorts Israel to build the Temple (1:8) because the Lord is with them (1:13). He explains that the latter Temple will be more glorious than the former (2:9). With the laying of the foundation, God will begin to bless Israel again (2:19) as a demonstration of His coming restoration, and the Lord will choose His servant to be the high priest (2:23).

(d) *Joel: The Day of the Lord and the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit* - The prophecy of Joel promises the restoration of Israel and the judgment of the nations in the Day of the Lord. The sign that Israel's restoration has come will be the outpouring of God's Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Joel 2:28-29).

**3. The Secondary, Structural Theme of the Book of Habakkuk: God Will Redeem Israel by Filling the Earth with the Knowledge of the Glory of the Lord** - The secondary, structural theme of the book of Habakkuk supports the primary theme of the prophetic books by offering the testimony of God's promises to redeem Israel by filling the earth with the glory of the knowledge of the Lord, which offers supporting evidence that YHWH is the true and living God. Therefore, the book of Habakkuk places emphasis upon the glory of God dwelling on earth again among men. The early Church recognized the theme of the divine judgment upon the proud (Hab 1:5 and Acts 13:41) and the lifestyle of faith in God to the humble (Hab 2:3-4 and Heb 10:37-37, Rom 1:17, Gal 3:11), who will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord.

*The Testimony of Biblical Scholarship* – Charles Elliott says, “In the book of Habakkuk there are two passages, which cannot be excluded from some relation to the Gospel. The first is, ‘The just shall live by faith’ (ii. 4), cited in Rom. i. 17 and in Heb. x. 38 . . . Faith—the habit of trusting in God, or in his revealed Word—is the principle of divine life; so, in every age, complete salvation has been a matter of faith rather than of sight. The other passage is chap. iii. 17, 18, which contains a confession of the prophet's own faith—a faith separated from all earthly and temporal hopes.”<sup>27</sup>

**C. The Third Theme of the Book of Habakkuk (Imperative): Israel's Charge to Love the Lord Their God with All of Their Mind** – The imperative theme of the book of Habakkuk reflects the third theme of the Pentateuch, which is the command to love the Lord God with all of one's mind.

**1. The Third, Imperative Themes 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).

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<sup>27</sup>Charles Elliott, *General Introduction to the Prophetic Writings of the Old Testament and Especially to the Minor Prophets*, in *The Minor Prophets, Exegetically, Theologically, and Homiletically Expounded*, in *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical*, ed. John Peter Lange, trans. Philip Schaff (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886), 29.

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.

**2. The Third, Imperative Theme of the Prophetic Books** - While the book of Psalms and other Hebrew poetry move us to worship God with all of our hearts and the historical narratives and writings inspire us to serve the Lord with all of our strength, the prophets stir us up to seek God with all our mind as they reveal to us God's eternal plan and destiny for Israel and the Gentiles. The prophets teach us the future so that we will serve the Lord now in hope of obtaining our eternal, divine destiny. We find several examples in the New Testament as to the purpose of the books of prophecy. In 1 Peter 1:10-12, we are told that these Old Testament prophets did a mental search in order to understand the meaning of their prophecies of the future. They realized that they were speaking of events that would not happen to themselves, but to a future generation.

One story that illustrates the theme of prophetic literature is found in Acts 8:30-31, in which Philip the evangelist meets the Ethiopian eunuch in the desert while reading the book of Isaiah. This eunuch was inspired by this book to seek a deeper understanding of its meaning and of the ways of God. Philip then took the opportunity to instruct him in the ways of righteousness by faith in Christ Jesus (Acts 8:30-31). We see how the Holy Spirit brought the Old Testament prophecies to the remembrance of the early Church so that they could understand the events that took place in the life of Jesus Christ in John 12:14-16, "And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him." In these three New Testament passages, the prophetic books were used to stir up the minds of men to seek God. In other words, it inspired men to seek God with all of their minds.

**3. The Third, Imperative Theme of the Book of Habakkuk: Israel Loved the Lord their God with All of Their Mind by Placing Their Hope in Habakkuk's Prophecies Concerning Man's Need to Trust in God in the Midst of the Vanities upon the Earth** - The third, imperative theme of the book of Habakkuk states that Israel loved the Lord their God with all of their mind by placing their hope in Habakkuk's prophecies concerning man's need to trust in God in the midst of the vanities upon the earth. God reveals man's pride as the source of man's rebellion, while the humble live by faith and obedience to His Word (2:4). Habakkuk's closing prayer exemplifies man's ultimate faith in God in the midst of divine judgment upon the earth (3:17-19).

**D. Summary of the Three-fold Thematic Scheme of the Book of Habakkuk** - The foundational, underlying theme of the book of Habakkuk is the central claim of the Pentateuch, a claim stating that the God of Israel is the one true and holy God, who is orchestrating a plan of redemption for mankind. The secondary, structural theme of the book of Habakkuk supports the primary theme of the prophetic books by offering the testimony of God's promises to redeem Israel by filling the earth with the glory of the knowledge of the Lord, which offers supporting evidence that YHWH is the true and living God. The third, imperative theme of the book of Habakkuk states that Israel loved the Lord their God with all of their mind by placing their hope in Habakkuk's prophecies concerning their future redemption in the return of God's glory in the Temple.

Nahum Zephaniah Obadiah Habakkuk	Hosea Amos Jonah Micah	Haggai Zechariah Malachi Joel
Jeremiah – Israel's Redemption thru God the Father	Isaiah – Israel's Redemption thru God the Son	Ezekiel – Israel's Redemption thru God the Holy Spirit
Daniel		

Thematic Scheme of the Prophetic Books

## II. Literary Structure

1. *Superscription (1:1)*
2. *Habakkuk's Cry to the Lord concerning Human Injustice (1:2-4)*
3. *The Lord's Reply to Judge the Nations with the Chaldeans (1:5-11)*
4. *Habakkuk Acknowledges Man's Mortality and God's Omnipotence (1:12-1:17)*
5. *Habakkuk's Oracle against Israel (2:1-20)*
  - a) *Habakkuk Waits for the Lord to Speak (2:1)*
  - b) *The Lord's Charge to Habakkuk to Write His Vision Down (2:2-3)*
  - c) *Five Woes against the Proud Chaldeans (2:4-20)*
    - (1) *The Proud Character of Man verses the Righteous (2:4-5)*
    - (2) *The First Woe (2:6-8)*
    - (3) *The Second Woe (2:9-11)*
    - (4) *The Third Woe (2:12-14)*
    - (5) *The Fourth Woe (2:15-18)*
    - (6) *The Fifth Woe (2:19)*
    - (7) *The Holy Character of the Lord (2:20)*
6. *The Song of Habakkuk (3:1-19)*

## III. Outline of the Literary Structure

The reason for preparing an outline of the literary structure of a book is to visualize its theological framework at a glance. This brevity allows one to look at the book's framework from beginning to end in order to understand the author's purpose.

## EXEGESIS AND COMMENTS

### Chapter 1

#### 1:1 The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

**1:1**            *Comments* – *The Dates of Habakkuk’s Ministry* - Douglas Stuart dates the prophecies of Habakkuk at 598 to 597 B.C.<sup>28</sup> Since the prophet Habakkuk predicts the invasion of the Chaldeans in Judah, many scholars date his ministry slightly earlier, such as 610 B.C., during the reign of Jehoiakim.<sup>29</sup>

*The Manner in which Divine Oracles were Delivered unto the Prophets* - God spoke through the Old Testament prophets in various ways, as the author of the epistle of Hebrews says, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets . . .” (Heb 1:1). The Lord spoke divine oracles (נְאֻמֵּי) through the Old Testament prophets in three general ways, as recorded in the book of Hosea, “I have also spoken by the prophets, and have multiplied visions; I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets.” (Hos 12:10) (NKJV) In other words, the prophets spoke to Israel through the words they received, they described divine visions to the people, and they acted out as divine drama an oracle from the Lord.

(1) *The Word of the Lord Came to the Prophets* - God gave the prophets divine pronouncements to deliver to the people, as with Hosea 1:1. The opening verses of a number of prophetic books say, “the word of the Lord came to the prophet . . .” Thus, these prophets received a divine utterance from the Lord.

(2) *The Prophets Received Divine Visions* - God gave the prophets divine visions (וִיזוֹן), so they prophesied what they saw (הִזָּה) (to see). Thus, these two Hebrew words are found in Isaiah 1:1, Obadiah 1:1, Nahum 1:1, and Habakkuk 1:1. Ezekiel saw visions (מְרָאָה) of God.

(3) *God Told the Prophets to Deliver Visual Aids as Symbols of Divine Oracles* - God asked the prophets to demonstrate divine oracles to the people through symbolic language. For example, Isaiah walked naked for three years as a symbol of Assyria’s dominion over Egypt and Ethiopia (Is 20:1-6). Ezekiel demonstrated the siege of Jerusalem using clay tiles (Ez 4:1-3), then he laid on his left side for many days, then on his right side, to demonstrate that God will require Israel to bear its iniquities.

**1:2 O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!**

**1:3 Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention.**

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<sup>28</sup>Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, in *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 31, eds. Bruce M. Metzger, David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas: Word Books, Publisher, 1987), xliii, Logos.

<sup>29</sup>Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *The Portable Commentary: A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*, vol. 1 (Glasgow: William Collins, 1863), 733.

**1:4** Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

**1:5** Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.

**1:6** For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs.

**1:7** They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves.

**1:8** Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat.

**1:9** They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand.

**1:10** And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it.

**1:11** Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god.

**1:12** Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.

**1:13** Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?

**1:14** And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?

**1:15** They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad.

**1:16** Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous.

**1:17** Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?

## **Chapter 2**

**2:1** I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.

**2:2** And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.

**2:3** For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

**2:4** Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

**2:5** Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people:

**2:6** Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!

**2:7** Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them?

**2:8** Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

**2:9** Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!

**2:10** Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul.

**2:11** For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.

**2:12** Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!

**2:13** Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?

**2:14** For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

**2:15** Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!

**2:16** Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the LORD'S right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory.

**2:17** For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts, which made them afraid, because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

**2:18** What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols?

**2:19** Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it.

**2:20** But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

**2:20**        *Comments* - When the presence of the Lord descended into the Temple, all flesh was put silences. The priests were not able to stand and minister. The musical instruments fell silent as everyone was in awe at the glory of the Lord (1 Chron 5:11-14).

Benny Hinn says that divine silence is produced from abundance and not lack. There is a place in God's presence where words cannot be spoken. This is where true prayer begins, where the soul no longer labours, but is at rest.<sup>30</sup>

### Chapter 3

**3:1 A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.**

**3:2 O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.**

**3:3 God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.**

**3:4 And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power.**

**3:5 Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.**

**3:6 He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting.**

**3:7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.**

**2:8 Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation?**

**3:9 Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.**

**3:10 The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high.**

**3:11-15**      **The Army of the Lord** – We see a description of an army in Hebrews 3:11-15 with their arrows and spears marching and making battle. We know in the beginning of Habakkuk that God will use the Chaldeans to punish Israel. Thus, we can understand its literal significance. However, this prophecy also has a figurative meaning, in that God's army of angels will also bring redemption by making battle against the enemy. My mother had two visions of an army of angels dressed like Roman soldiers carrying spears for battle and marching in a troop. This army of God is alluded to in the divine title "Lord of Hosts" and "Lord of the Sabaoth."

**3:11 The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear.**

**3:12 Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger.**

**3:13 Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah.**

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<sup>30</sup>Benny Hinn, *This is Your Day* (Irving, Texas), on Trinity Broadcasting Network (Santa Ana, California), television program.

**3:14 Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly.**

**3:15 Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters.**

**3:16 When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops.**

**3:17 Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:**

**3:18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.**

**3:19 The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.**

**3:19**        *Comments* – Habakkuk 3:19 uses figurative language to describe God’s children being able to walk above the circumstances of this life. The prophet describes the mountain goats and antelope that live on the high cliffs, having the amazing ability to navigate the steep slopes with their hooves feet. This characteristic of being sure-footed on such difficult terrain, living on a higher elevation than its predators, is applied to those people who serve the Lord. However, the condition that God’s children must meet is described in the preceding verse (3:18), which tells us to worship the Lord in the midst of our trials and difficulties. This genuine worship moves the heart of to protect and deliver His children. The principle of praise unto the Lord, and His response to deliver is seen in Psalm 8:2, “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.” See Matthew 21:16, “And said unto him, Hearst thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?”

**APPENDIX 1: THEMATIC SCHEME OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**

Gen 1:1-2:3—Predestination (The Creation Story)			
Gen 2-11—The Calling of the Seventy Nations Gen 12-50—The Calling of Israel as a Nation			
Exodus—Deliverance (Justification) & Doctrine			
Leviticus—Divine Service			
Numbers—Perseverance: Persecutions			
Deuteronomy—Perseverance: False Doctrines			
Joshua-Judges—Israel's Glorification (Rest) & Failure			
	Ruth – Predestination of the Davidic Lineage		
	1 Samuel – Calling of the Davidic Lineage		
	2 Samuel – Justification of the Davidic Lineage		
	1-2 Kings – Doctrine of the Kingdom & Redemption in Davidic Lineage		
	1-2 Chronicles – Divine Service of Israel & Redemption in Davidic Lineage		
	Ezra – Perseverance of Israel (Persecution)		
	Nehemiah – Perseverance of the Israel (False Doctrine)		
	Esther – Glorification of the Davidic Lineage		
	Proverbs – The Mind	Job – Our Example	
	Ecclesiastes – The Body	Lamentations – Our Example	
	Songs – The Heart	Psalms – Our Example	
		Isaiah – Jesus' Role in Israel's Redemption	Hosea, Amos, Jonah, Micah
		Jeremiah – The Father's Role in Israel's Redemption	Nahum, Zephaniah, Obadiah, Habakkuk
		Ezekiel – The Spirit's Role in Israel's Redemption	Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Joel
	Israel's Monarchy The Acts of God (Rom 15:1, 1 Cor 6, 11)	Daniel The Times of the Gentiles	
Israel's Theocracy		Poetry of Israel The Heart of God	Prophecy of Israel The Mind of God (1 Pet 1:10-11)
	Serve the Lord with all thine heart, mind, and strength (Deut 6:4-6)		
	God's Plan of Redemption for the Nation of Israel		
	Foreknowledge of God The Father		

**APPENDIX 2: THEMATIC SCHEME OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**

Matthew – Testimony of Scripture	Ephesians – His Role	Philippians - Our Role	Colossians -- His Role	Galatians -- Our Role	1 & 2 Thessalonians --- His Role	1 & 2 Corinthians --- Our Role	1 & 2 Timothy – Role of Our Spirit	Titus – Role of Our Mind	Philemon - Role of Our Body	Hebrew – The High Priesthood of Jesus Christ	James – Our Sanctification by the Holy Spirit	1 Peter – Our Divine Election by God the Father	2 Peter - Mind	1, 2, 3 John - Spirit	Jude - Body	The Book of Revelation										
																	Foreknowledge of the Father	Justification Thru Jesus Christ	Sanctification by Holy Spirit	Romans - Justification thru God the Father (Rom. 8:28-30)	Pastoral Epistles - Church Order & Discipline	Persecutions From Without (1 Pet. 1:2)	False Doctrines From Within	Glorification of the Church		
																									Church Epistles - Doctrine	General Epistles - Perseverance in the Faith
John - Testimony of Jesus as the Son of God	Sanctification by the Holy Spirit - New Testament Epistles																									
Justification in Jesus Christ																										
Foreknowledge of God The Father																										

### APPENDIX 3: CENTRAL IDEAS FOR SERMON PREPARATION

“An exegetical outline displays a passage’s thought flow; a homiletical outline organizes a preacher’s explanation, development, application, and communication of a passage’s truths.”  
(Bryan Chapell)<sup>31</sup>

The introductory material of this bible commentary searches for the theological framework of the book in order to identify the author’s thought flow, allowing for more accurate exegesis of the biblical text. The following collection of central ideas of the text has come out of this research to aid the preacher in sermon preparation. The three-fold sets of central ideas in this collection attempt to identify the ideas the writer intended for his original readers (exegetical ideas), the enduring and timeless doctrinal statements that remains true throughout history (theological ideas), and the Gospel’s call towards men for a particular response to the text (homiletical ideas). As such, the following exegetical, theological, and homiletical ideas provide an outline that endeavours to shape the flow of thought of the biblical text into messages that can be clearly communicated to a modern audience. In this way, the preacher/teacher of this book of the Bible can lead his audience towards the intended destination of the author.<sup>32</sup> These central ideas are an effort to understand what the author meant to say to his original recipients and to communicate this message to a modern audience.

*Study Notes on the Holy Scriptures* defines ‘exegetical idea’ as the main idea of a block, a section, a subsection, or a pericope of the text within the theological framework of a book that best expresses what the writer intended for his original readers. Therefore, this idea is written using verbs in the past tense. For example, the exegetical idea of Matthew 1:1-2:12 says ‘The Old Testament Scriptures testify that Jesus Christ was predestined to be the Messiah, having fulfilled the Messianic prophecies concerning His humanity, deity, and Davidic kingship’.

*Study Notes on the Holy Scriptures* defines ‘theological idea’ as the primary theme of a block, a section, a subsection, or a pericope of the text within the theological framework of a book that best reflects and supports its primary theme. The theological idea is an enduring and timeless, doctrinal statement that remains true throughout history. Therefore, this idea is written using verbs in the present perfect tense. This idea uses the evidence of the exegetical idea to reflect the primary theme of the book. For example, the theological idea of Matthew 1:1-2:12 says ‘Because He has proven to be both fully man and fully God, destined to reign as Lord over all (secondary theme), Jesus Christ is the Messiah and the Son of God (primary theme)’.

*Study Notes on the Holy Scriptures* defines ‘homiletical idea’ as the imperative theme of a block, a section, a subsection, or a pericope of the text within the theological framework of a book that best reflects the required response of the reader. The homiletical idea reflects the Gospel’s call towards men for a particular response based upon the theological idea. This idea best expresses what the book means for today’s readers. Therefore, this idea is written using verbs in the present tense. For example, the homiletical idea of Matthew

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<sup>31</sup>Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching – Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 129.

<sup>32</sup>The advantage of this three-fold approach to biblical studies has been recognized by the authors of *Theologisch-homiletisches Bibelwerk: Die Heilige Schrift. Alten und Neuen Testaments mit Rücksicht auf das theologisch-homiletische Bedürfniss des pastoralen Umtes in Verbindung mit namhaften evangelischen Theologen* (Bielefeld: Belhagen und Klasing, 1857-77), edited by Johann Peter Lange. This work was later translated into English as *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical with special reference to ministers and students* in twenty-five volumes (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1865-80) under the general editorship of Philip Schaff. The commentary notes in this series are divided into the same three categories: (1) exegetical and critical, (2) doctrinal and ethical, and (3) homiletical and practical. Later biblical commentary series can be grouped into three major categories: critical, devotional, and homiletical. These groups also reflect the exegetical-theological-homiletical approach used in *Study Notes on the Holy Scriptures*.

1:1-2:12 says, 'Because Jesus is the Son of God (primary theme), as testified through His predestined birth as the Messiah (secondary theme), the Gospel calls men to place their faith in Jesus Christ as both the Son of man and Son of God, destined to reign as Lord over all (imperative theme)'.

This collection of central ideas provides a theme-based approach for crafting exegetical studies on a book into a cohesive, text-driven, expository sermon series with a clear destination for its hearers. This approach to the biblical text follows the book's theological framework, which is the key to avoiding fragmentation. Crafting sermons around the book's framework aids the expository preacher in the delivery of a sequence of connected sermons/teachings with a clearly defined destination for the hearers.<sup>33</sup>

A sermon series requires theological cohesion at its macro and micro-levels if the expository preacher is to take his congregation on the spiritual journey shaped from a book of the Bible. Each sermon of this spiritual journey should continually echo the book's central theme within its theological framework throughout the series. A clear, central theme supported by secondary themes allows the congregation to follow the preacher's messages as he leads them toward the spiritual transformation specific for that book. Therefore, an individual sermon text should hinge upon the central idea of its context, and this context should reflect the theological framework of the book itself.<sup>34</sup>

In addition, the preacher should design the sermon series within the Christocentric framework of the Scriptures themselves. Specifically, the book's theological framework should support the central theme of the book itself, as well as the overarching theme of the major division of the Bible into which it is placed. Therefore, every sermon should reflect an aspect of the central theme of the book, and this central theme must fit properly within the theme of its major division in reflecting the overarching, Christocentric theme of the Holy Scriptures.<sup>35</sup> In order to design a sermon series into this type of cohesive unity at all levels, the preacher needs a theological, or theme-based approach that effectively identifies the central ideas at the macro-level as well as micro-level of the book's sermon pericopae.<sup>36</sup>

This approach allows the text-driven preacher to follow the book's theological framework when preparing sermon outlines that reflect a clear and focused set of connected messages. He is able to develop a sermon series that clearly navigates through the biblical text and presents a clear destination for the congregation. This theme-based approach serves to bridge the gap between exegesis and homiletics by revealing a book's theological framework. A book's theological framework is the 'bridge' between exegesis and homiletics.

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<sup>33</sup>Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), xiv. Graeme Goldsworthy says, "In my experience the preaching of a series of sermons, say, from an epistle, easily leads the preacher to fragmentation. . . ." He says fragmentation disconnects Paul's doctrinal message in the first part of the epistle from his practical message in the last part.

<sup>34</sup>For this reason, homileticians recommend reading the entire book numerous times in several versions in preparation for exegesis of its individual passages.

<sup>35</sup>Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 57. Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix echo the view of modern, conservative biblical hermeneutics by saying, "From beginning to end, the Bible has one overarching theme: the redemption of God's creation."

<sup>36</sup>Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching—Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 16. Bryan Chapell discusses the need for preachers to find a place for each passage of Scripture in "the historical sweep of God's redemptive plan." He believes a preacher will find more success in preaching sermons as he discovers the redemptive message of Scriptures at both the micro and macro-levels.

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