

***Title:* Listen to two Old Testament sermons preached at your church (one can be preached by you). Write a reflection outlining the extent to which the sermons use the biblical theology approach described in the pre-intensive materials (assessments 1. and 2.). If none was adopted, consider the difference such an approach might make to interpretation and application of the biblical text used in the sermons.**

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DECLARATION

I certify that this ASSIGNMENT is my own work. I have acknowledged all material and sources used in it, and that I have not plagiarised in part or whole the work of others without stating the references.

Deborah: A Woman of Competence, Conviction & Courage (by Steven Low, 05-Sep-2021)

In this pulpit exposition on the word of God, Elder Steven Low focused on the historical narrative of Judges 4 – with the practical application being the readiness of believers to meet needs, and the role of women in a Biblically-based Christian setting. Given the context of this sermon being delivered in a Brethren Assembly, careful balance was taken between appreciating the valuable contributions of women to God’s service and yet maintaining the proper God-delineated roles of each gender.

As Jesus during the period of His earthly ministry did not cover aspects of gender roles at length, very little could be (or was actually) drawn out from the actions of Deborah and Jael to be linked to the “person, work and/or teaching of Christ” (as Greinadus puts it). Neither was there any direct extrapolation of a Christological picture from the characters and events surrounding Sisera’s gruesome death.

This made me consider whether preaching a practical message on Christian living could be a legitimate alternative to a strict *always preach Christ from the Old Testament* methodology. After all, if a believer is to live as “Christ who lives in me (Galatians 2:20)”, is not orthopractic exhortation also important? The preacher should endeavour to guide those who bear His Name (Revelation 3:12) in behaving as good Kingdom citizens should.

Recall that Greinadus’ interlocutor pondered: “...could a rabbi have preached your sermon in a synagogue?” In this case, the answer is clearly no – because a uniquely Christian approach to church and family order is being expounded together with the historical events of the Old Testament. Followers of Jesus affirm that both genders are of equal worth in God’s eyes: “there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28)”. This a far cry from Jewish rabbinic prejudices against women¹ or even Gentile customs of the time².

Reviewing this sermon on the life of Deborah indeed caused me to re-evaluate some earlier conclusions from reading the essay by Greinadus. I suppose that his definition that preaching Christ includes the ‘teaching’ of Jesus Christ could also encompass the epistles – albeit in an indirect manner. After all, the teachings of the Apostles flow from the lessons they learned from Jesus’ own words, and they had the Holy Spirit as their infallible guide.

That being said, if a modified approach to preaching from Judges 4 were to be applied, Christological parallels and typology could legitimately be drawn from those events – while still properly expositing the historical context and having a pertinent practical application for the congregation to take home.

For example, it could be explained that it was supposed to be the role of men like Barak to confidently lead the people and to fearlessly engage with the enemy. His dereliction of this duty meant that women had to take matters into their own hands – literally, in the case of Jael and the tent peg.

From there, the scope can be widened to survey the constant pattern seen throughout the Bible. Humanity repeatedly fails in their God-appointed duties – from Adam’s disobedience, to Moses’ outburst, to David’s conspiracy, to Solomon’s disloyalty, to the waywardness of Israel and all nations. With stewards such as these, God the sovereign had to take matters into His own hands – literally, in the piercing by the nails on the cross of Christ.

Additionally, God throughout the Biblical narrative is fond of using the unexpected and the overlooked to be His elect lineage of eternal redemption – Jacob the younger sibling (Romans 9:10-

¹ Wikipedia, “Eliezer ben Hurcanus”, *Wikipedia* (accessed 06-May-2022):

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eliezer_ben_Hurcanus#Roman_charge_of_heresy [References 30, 31, 32]

² SENTENTIAEANTIQUAE, ““If it is a girl...”: A Letter about Child Exposure”, *SENTENTIAE ANTIQUAE* (accessed 06-May-2022): <https://sententiaeantiquae.com/2018/07/15/if-it-is-a-girl-a-letter-about-child-exposure/>

12), Israel small among the nations (Deuteronomy 7:7). Likewise, Deborah and Jael as the “weaker vessels (1 Peter 3:7)” were chosen by God to be His instruments of temporal redemption. And Jesus as the promised ultimate redeemer was born to a humble family in “O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah (Micah 5:2, Matthew 2:6)”.

Hence while the original message on the women of Judges 4 can stand on its own merits, there does indeed lie room for improvement from the aspect of Biblical Theology.

God’s Name (by Scott Thong, 06-Sep-2020)

This sermon I preached³ was part of a series on the Ten Commandments, and ostensibly about not taking God’s name in vain (Exodus 20:7). However, I also delved deeper into the Ancient and Second Temple Jewish understanding of taking the ‘Name’ of God upon themselves.

It is not merely about uttering the holy name of YHWH flippantly or disrespectfully – although to be blunt, this has become a terribly commonplace habit in our modern era, one spread by the godless mass media machine.

Taking God’s name is rather about carrying the name of their God like a banner, a mark of loyalty and representation⁴. It is even about the name indicating God’s very presence⁵ manifesting in a specific place (Deuteronomy 12:5,10-11; 1 Kings 5:5) or even person (Exodus 23:20-21, cross-referenced with Isaiah 63:9).

In my sermon, these latter two ways of understanding God’s name were specifically linked to their ultimate fulfilment in the Incarnation – when God’s own presence took human form to be with us, Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23). The angel, the messenger of God’s presence: “Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt (Jude 5)” came to us once again – this time to save *all* people out of the dominion of sin and death. Where once it was specifically the Ark of the Covenant, in the Temple, in Jerusalem, in Israel which functioned as the location of God’s manifested presence... Now all believers are God’s living temples (1 Corinthians 6:19) bearing His Name to all nations (Matthew 18:19-20, 28:18-20).

Therefore, I hope that it is not with hubris if I contend that my sermon on this topic sufficiently displayed the basic tenets of Biblical Theology – linking Old Testament concepts to their ultimate fulfilment in Christ.

³ Scott Thong, “God’s Name”, *Scott Thong* (accessed 05-May-2022): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-e51wIPLLbI>

⁴ Carmen Imes, *Bearing God’s Name: Why Sinai Still Matters* (IL/USA: IVP Academic, 2019), Perlego Edition, Chapter 2, Invisible Tattoo: The Second Command

⁵ Michael S. Heiser, “The Name of the LORD is His Presence”, *Dr. Michael S. Heiser* (accessed 05-May-2022): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wni5PbfVeI>

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