

Class 1: Introduction to Biblical Theology

Ground rules:

- I imagined the class being smaller....
- I expect interaction from you in this class
 - I'm going to ask questions, I expect answers - my questions usually don't have a right answer so don't worry about being wrong - they are usually think about it and tell me something questions
 - I'm going to say things that make sense to me, I expect questions - let me know if something doesn't make sense or you want more clarification on something I just said
 - I'm going to talk about books, I want reflection - for those of you reading the books, I want you to tell me what you agree with, what you don't agree with and what you don't understand
- I expect you to participate in this class
 - I'm going to talk about the Bible, I expect you to think - this class isn't designed primarily to give you information, although it might do that, it's designed primarily for you to think through these topics - if you don't think through these topics and own the answers yourself, this class won't be of much value to you
 - I'm asking you to read books, I expect you to compare them to Scripture - there are very few books I agree with 100% and I give you that freedom as well, in fact there's some books on this list that I only agree with at certain points and disagree with a lot, but I still find them useful - go to Scripture and find out why you agree or disagree with what the authors are saying
- I expect you to enjoy this class
 - The books may say things you disagree with, I may even say things you disagree with
 - This class is hopefully designed to draw your eyes to the glories of Christ
 - So don't let minor misunderstandings or disagreements make this class a burden to you
 - Let's together focus our eyes on Christ and rejoice that we have such a complete and beautiful revelation of Christ in the Bible
 - And let's together encourage each other to see Christ better in Scripture

Class 1 Objectives:

- What is Biblical Theology?
- Why do we do Biblical Theology?
- Where do we start in Biblical Theology?

Kids Objectives:

- What is theology? (Studying God in the Bible)
- Who is the center of the Bible? (Jesus is the center of the Bible)

Intro:

- Is the Bible one big story or a lot of little stories? What is the difference and why does it matter?
- Or, why did God decide to give us the Bible over some 2000 years (4000 years history) instead of instantly?
- Kid's Question: what is theology?
- Question - What is Biblical Theology? (Is it just theology according to the Bible?)
- Some Definitions (all decent definitions - other types of Biblical Theology)
 - Biblical Theology is that branch of Exegetical Theology which deals with the process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible. Biblical Theology deals with revelation as a divine activity, not as the finished product of that activity.
 - Biblical Theology seeks to uncover and articulate the unity of all the Biblical texts taken together resorting primarily to the categories of those texts themselves
 - Biblical Theology contends that to read the Bible as unified Scripture is not just one interpretive opinion among others, but that which best corresponds to the nature of the text itself, given its divine inspiration. As such, biblical theology, as a discipline, not only provides the basis for understanding how texts in one part of Scripture relate to all other texts, but it also serves as the basis and underpinning for all theologizing.
 - Biblical theology is the attempt to tell the whole story of the whole Bible as Christian Scripture
- My definition: Biblical Theology is the study of the Bible as a whole and seeks to determine how the Bible fits together as a whole based on the Bible's own teaching. The end of Biblical Theology is to see how each individual passage fits

into the message of the Bible and therefore to rightly (objective) interpret each passage's meaning to us.

- Two parts: Determine the one story of the Bible and then Determine how that one story relates to us
- Another way to put it: Biblical theology tries to answer the question: what is the Bible and why is it like that?

Why do we need Biblical Theology?

- Kid's question: how many books in the B/OT/NT?
- The New Testament has to interpret the Old Testament and the Old Testament has to inform the New Testament (arrows)
- We could break this down farther (books, arrows, $66 \times 65 = 4,290$ arrows), where do we start?
 - 1/month= 357 yrs, 1/week= 82 yrs, 1/day = 12 yrs
- We need to define a unifying principle of the whole Bible to help us start to understand it as a whole
- Other options:
 - Say it isn't a unified book - can we accept that? Why not?
 - Just give mouth service to it being a unified book, but treat it as though it isn't - can we accept that? Why not?

Unifying Principle

- Kid's question: what is a unifying principle? (what is the Bible really about?)
- Questions: what is the unifying principle of the Bible? (Jesus is the center of the Bible)
- The unifying principle is Christ and where Christ is most clearly revealed is in the gospel
 - Goldsworthy (Christ-centered Biblical Theology): "The nature of the gospel is such that it establishes Jesus Christ at the centre of the biblical message. Biblical theology, then, is the study of how every text in the Bible relates to Jesus and his gospel. Thus we start with Christ so that we may end with Christ; he is the Alpha and the Omega (Rev. 22:13). Biblical theology is Christological, for its subject matter is the whole Bible as God's testimony to Christ. It is therefore, from start to finish, a study of Christ. But, since Christ is the mediator who makes the Father known, biblical theology is also theological and not solely Christological."
- Question: can anyone back up my statement Biblically? Does the Bible hold Christ up as the center or the climax of the story?
 - Passages (7): Luke 24:25-32; Luke 24:44-49 John 5:36-40; Acts 17:1-3; Acts 18:24-28; Romans 1:1-4; I Corinthians 15:3-4
 - But these passages are just prooftexts, to see the true burden of Scripture pointing to Christ we'd have to study out the concepts of expectation (in the Old Testament) and fulfillment (in the New Testament) which portray Christ as the answer to everything in the Old Testament - all of Scripture calls us to see Christ at the center!
 - (Draw arrows from gospel to each book of the Bible and back)
 - Kid's question: Who is the center of the Bible?
- This means that all of the Bible must be viewed through the lens of Christ
 - All of the Old Testament must be pointing to Christ
 - The Old Testament can mean nothing on its own unless it is first related to Christ
 - This is how I am going to teach Biblical Theology - but we'll get to how to do that in future classes
 - First, I want to stop and consider our methods - how we need to think as we approach the Bible to find Christ
 - Second, I want to stop and consider our purpose - why are we doing Biblical Theology?
 - Third, I want to stop and consider what the gospel is - how is Christ the center? (next week)

How do we need to think? Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology

- There is no book of the Bible called the gospel - this is a systematic term (distinguish gospels from gospel)
 - Which brings us to another level of arrows (Exegetical, Biblical, Systematic, Historical, etc.)
 - Define exegetical, biblical, systematic, historical theology
 - Exegetical theology - reading and determining the meaning of an individual text (preaching)
 - Biblical theology - fitting any text into the story of the whole Bible and relating the parts to the whole
 - Systematic theology - condensing the teaching of the Bible into applications for us today
 - Systematic Theology must be based on good Biblical Theology, but good Biblical Theology must start with good Systematic Theology - a catch 22?
 - Interaction: How can we solve this catch 22?
- Discussion of presuppositions when we come to the Bible
 - As I just demonstrated, we can't come to the Bible in a complete void, we have to have some starting presuppositions about what we are going to read there - for example, what is the gospel?

- These presuppositions include:
 - Who is God?
 - What is the Bible? Is it true?
 - What is the purpose of the Bible? Is it infallible? Is it sufficient? Is it inerrant?
 - Do the Old Testament and New Testament relate to each other? How?
 - How do we define and read different literary genres in the Bible?
- Often these presuppositions, at least the bigger ones, are part of Systematic Theology
- Hermeneutical Spiral
 - Exegetical Theology --> Biblical Theology --> Systematic Theology --> Exegetical Theology
 - We start with our best, Holy Spirit definition of the gospel and use it to interpret the New Testament and the Old Testament, but as we read the New Testament and the Old Testament, we use those to inform and improve our understanding of the gospel
 - This is why we don't just read the Bible once, our understanding of the gospel and our understanding of the Scriptures should always be being improved by the hermeneutic spiral, but we must start somewhere, and that is with our best understanding of the core message of Christ, our unifying principle - the gospel
 - And then there is a general order in which understanding the Bible makes sense, we should start by finding our organizing principle in all the Bible - finding Christ in all of Scripture, understood in its historical sense but finding its fulfilment and ultimate meaning in Christ - Biblical Theology
 - And then, once we know how each part of the Bible ought to be interpreted in light of its historical context and with a view toward Christ we can then distill the teaching of the whole Bible on individual topics into clear teachings - Systematic Theology

Purpose of Biblical Theology

- Question: Why are we doing Biblical Theology?
 - Biblical Theology helps us think about the Bible in terms of the Bible and to examine our own presuppositions (which sometimes we call Systematic Theology) in light of Scripture
 - Everybody has (and must have) a Systematic Theology (not necessarily formal) - how does Scripture apply to the questions of real life
 - We don't do Biblical Theology to get rid of our presuppositions, but we do try to improve and hone our presuppositions
- In other words, Biblical Theology is useful for interpreting the Bible well, especially the Old Testament
 - What does the story of Abraham or David have to do with me? Maybe that's an easy question for some, maybe hard for others
 - What does the story of David and Goliath have to do with me? That's a somewhat harder question, and often gotten wrong
 - What does the story of the concubine cut in four quarters and sent to all Israel have to do with me? Perhaps that's a really challenging question
 - To look at it from another angle, how should the Mosaic Law apply to the Christian's life?
 - How should I apply Proverbs to my life?
 - Does Ecclesiastes have anything positive to say to me?
 - When Jesus commands the 72 to go on mission, do those commands apply to me or someone in my church?
 - These are the questions that Biblical Theology helps us answer and these are really important questions - if God is the ultimate author of the Bible then these stories must mean something for me
 - We probably aren't going to answer all of these questions in this course, but during this course I want to introduce you to the tools or methods that we use to answer these questions
 - Then you can go use them next time you have to explain why Ehud is in the Bible, or why some Proverbs directly contradict themselves and how all these things are pointing to Christ and showing us His glory more fully
- The problem is we are going to answer these questions somehow:
 - We can say the Old Testament stories don't matter to us (whether explicitly or practically) - the Old Testament is irrelevant
 - We can say the Old Testament stories apply to us directly (if the Old Testament says something we must do it) - the history and pattern of revelation is irrelevant
 - We can say the Old Testament is full of moral examples (we should learn from the actions of the Old Testament characters) - the main story of the Bible is irrelevant
 - Or, we can try to see how the Old Testament points to Christ and to understand what it means for me in Christ

- I want to help us develop good Biblical Theology so that we answer the questions rightly and apply the Bible as God desires for us to apply it, including the Old Testament
 - Ephesians 4:11-13 - to reach unity in the faith
- But, answering questions isn't the only, or even perhaps the primary reason for studying Biblical theology
 - II Corinthians 4:1-6 - to see the glory of the gospel of Christ
 - I want Biblical theology to lead you to greater joy in Christ and therefore greater worship of Christ - as we see Christ in all of Scripture I hope your heart overflows with joy and with worship

Next Week: Finish reading 'What is the gospel?' - we will discuss the question, 'What is the gospel?' in order to solidify our understanding of the unifying principle of the Bible.

Review Objectives

- What is Biblical Theology? (understanding the story of the whole Bible and applying that story to me)
- Why do we do Biblical Theology? (to interpret the Bible rightly and to see the glory of Christ well)
- Where do we start in Biblical Theology? (Christ in the gospel)
- What is theology? (Studying God in the Bible)
- Who is the center of the Bible? (Jesus is the center of the Bible)