

Biblical Theology - A New Order

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

I think that the glory of biblical theology, though, is that, above all, it points us to Jesus. It says Jesus is the center of the scriptures. It says Jesus is the center of God's heart and God's salvation plan.

It tells us to look at the scriptures and see Jesus there. And as such, it is intended to give us great confidence in the scriptures as the revealed of God, as that plan of salvation which God has enacted and brought into fruition through Jesus.

He is the center. He is the pinnacle. He is the focus. And everything, ultimately, is about him. And so I hope that out of these lectures, we'll see an increase in your confidence in the scriptures, recognizing that for all the skepticism of the age in which we live, and all the questioning of the authority and nature of scriptures, you would understand that in God's eye, that for Jesus, that for biblical theology, there is one message.

[2 : 04] There is an organic unity about the scriptures that ultimately and inexorably ushers us to Jesus. Why do we deal with biblical theology as a distinct discipline?

You might well ask. It is indeed regrettable that more theological institutions do not offer it as a separate subject. Of course, the region most notably does.

It is often suggested that it really got going as a distinct branch of theology back in 1787, when a theologian named Johann Gabler at the University of Altdorf gave his inaugural lecture entitled, *A Discourse on the Proper Distinction Between Biblical and Diagnostic Theology*.

You should have put that on your thing out there. It would have been quite good. It's not so dogmatic. Oh yeah, dogmatic is hard to say, isn't it? Now, Gabler was a child of the Enlightenment, and was actually one of the progenitors of theological liberalism.

His concern was not so much to set up a new study as to find a justification for the old study of dogmatics. His purpose in studying the historical nature of biblical theology was so that he could discard the historical aspects and keep hold of the abstract and eternal truth that he believed were enshrined within it.

[3 : 24] And so we can take some comfort that he did not invent biblical theology, but he helped put the name on the map with a rather dubious methodology. That is, however, the distinction between much biblical theology and liberal theology today.

The liberal theology of today is the heir of the Enlightenment, and much of the methodology of liberal theology is, indeed, to discard the historical aspects and keep hold of the abstract and eternal truth that we might find enshrined within Scripture.

And this ultimately is why it's important that we do biblical theology. It might seem self-evident that we are biblical theologians, but it is not. There are many questions we might have about how the two testaments relate to one another, how the old relates to the new and the new to the old.

Much of liberal theology today really does seek to make abstract and theoretical what is concrete and historical, especially in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Much of liberal theology would call us to look at the Old Testament and find it unacceptable that the God revealed there is an angry, warlike God versus the God of love in the New Testament.

[4 : 40] Biblical theology would call us to look at the Bible as a whole in exuberantly pointing its way to Jesus, and ultimately, therefore, that the historical acts of the life and death, resurrection of Jesus, historical interventions of God in human life, are important in their own right as historical events.

Because for biblical theology, the historical interventions of God in humanity are a place where the plane of our lives and the eschatological or heavenly intersect.

Isn't that a great word, eschatological? I'm getting used to saying it now. But those moments where God has intervened and broken into the human sphere, those are invitations for us to participate in the heavenly or eschatological sphere.

They are important. We need to see them as such and not write them off. But biblical theology, I hope, will challenge you to grasp hold of the scriptures, but especially the old. There are a lot of questions about why don't we study the old more, to which I say, amen.

We need to study the old more from the biblical theological perspective of faith, of confidence, that this is God revealing himself in a single coherent plan that comes to his culmination in Jesus and in ultimately the second coming.

[6 : 00] These are not to be written off as old and therefore not relevant to us. They are. They are part of one scheme, one plan. Let us be confident about the Bible and biblical theology.

In biblical theology, one of the great principles is that the Bible defines the Bible. It is a matter of simple observation that underpinning the biblical message is a timeline embracing the history of God's action from creation to new creation.

And once we accept the Bible's view of itself, that it is revelation from God, and then we recognize that God has revealed his truth over a period of time and within the context of a particular history.

We may wish to suggest that aspects of the truth revealed are timeless. It must be at the same time, we must assert that all revelation comes within history. It thus has a dynamic to it, a movement and a progression towards the goal of completeness.

This is what we're looking at today, completeness, a new era. To say that the Bible defines itself, including its inspiration and authority as the Word of God is a circular argument, but not a vicious circle.

[7 : 15] It does not bind us to futility, but leads us to freedom, to eternal life. We cannot hope to prove the authority of the Bible on the basis of criteria from outside the Bible, for that would be like shining a pocket flashlight on the sun to see if it is real.

God's Word is the ultimate authority, and only such a Word can authenticate itself. So the Bible defines the Bible.

The Bible interprets the Bible. There is an inevitable discussion in formulating a definition of biblical theology that will find general acceptance amongst all.

The history of the discipline and present debates in scholarship show us that there are differing opinions as to what is meant by the term biblical theology. But most seem to agree on these points. First, biblical theology can be distinguished from systematic theology, and second, it is in some sense descriptive of what is in the Bible.

In other words, we can define biblical theology only in dynamic terms because it does not look so much at the permanence of theological truth as at the process by which truth is revealed.

[8 : 35] We want to look at the process by which truth is revealed in the Bible. At its simplest, it is theology as the Bible revealed it.

That is, within its historical framework. The great biblical theologian Gerhardus Bosch defines it thus. 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 is that branch of exegetical theology which deals with the process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible. That's what our concern is.

It is the process of God revealing himself as it is handed to us in the Bible. This involves A, the historic progressiveness of the revelation process.

B, the embodiment of revelation as the word of God within history. And C, the organic nature of the historic process observable in revelation.

[9 : 47] Voss's relating a biblical theology to exegetical theology, exegesis with his view to getting at the theological content of the text, reminds us that it is one of the first fruits of exegesis of the Bible text.

It is the first fruit of our working through a Bible text, whether it's in a sermon or a Bible study or in your own private devotion. It may be helpful to some to compare and contrast the nature of biblical theology with other theological disciplines, for example, systematic or historical theology.

In doing so, we should not overlook the difficulty in strictly defining the parameters of different theologies or in assessing the relationship they bear to one another. But very briefly, to compare it to systematics or dogmatic theology, some who would distinguish the disciplines of systematic theology and dogmatics.

Systematics is what Dr. Packer teaches so ably at Regence, so if you've done your course on systematics, you'll know all of this already. is that the former systematic theology allows a logical or philosophical organization and the latter follows a church confessional organization.

So systematics follows a logical or philosophical organization of theological truth. Dogmatic theology follows a church confessional organization.

[11 : 11] Doctrine and doctrine alone is systematic because it involves the organization of biblical teachings on a logical basis. Biblical theology, on the other hand, uses mainly historical and thematic approaches.

Is that quite clear to everyone? Biblical theology uses mainly historical and thematic approaches from the Bible. Doctrine is dogmatic in that it is the orderly arrangement of the teachings of a particular view of Christianity.

Dogmatics involves the crystallization of teaching as the end of the process of revelation and as what is to be believed now. Biblical theology, on the other hand, looks at the progressive revelation that leads to the final formulation of doctrine.

Systematic theology is derivative of biblical theology and the two continually interact. The relationship of biblical and systematic theology is subject of some ongoing debate in the Christian sphere.

some of the early impulse for biblical theology came from the dissatisfaction with liberal approaches to dogmatics.

[12 : 24] Yet, the early biblical theologies were often driven by dogmatics so that the categories of dogmatic theology were used for the organization of biblical theology. While there is broad agreement about the distinction between biblical and systematic theology, it needs to be recognized that the relationship is not always as clear-cut as some might think.

Our presuppositions for doing biblical theology are likely to be elements of doctrine concerning revelation and the Bible. So, there is a relationship between the two, but our concern has to do with doctrines concerning revelation and revelation in history of God to the human race.

Historical theology. If biblical theology is in historical discipline, it does differ in some ways from historical theology. Historical theology is usually taken to be the study of the history of Christian doctrine or more broadly, the history of Christian ideas.

Historical theology looks at the way the church came to formulate doctrines at different periods of history. It is interested in key Christian theologians and thinkers and in the struggles that so often led to the formulation of doctrines and confessions of faith.

It is an important dimension of church history. biblical and systematic theologians are concerned with the history of theology because we do not wish to reinvent the wheel.

[14 : 01] Or to put it another way, we don't do theology in a vacuum, but from within living and historical community of believers. We do not wish to fall into the trap that liberal theologians of today have fallen into, which is to say, that is how they believed in God, that is how they imagined him, we do so differently now.

In one sense, historical theology is a continuation of biblical theology, in that it reflects on the theology of God's people at any given time. But note this, the theological views of Israel at any given point in history do not necessarily coincide with the theology of the Old Testament.

So too in the history of the church. The theology of the people is not necessarily, in fact, never is completely, the theology of Jesus and his apostles. The most important distinction is that historical theology looks at how people responded to the gospel revelation.

Biblical theology seeks to understand revelation as it unfolds. We want the Bible to speak to us. We want to pull out from it God's revelation of himself as it unfolds in history.

There are two technical terms often used by the theologians and they refer to different methodological standpoints that affect the kind of results we get from our investigation.

[15 : 30] They're two really cool words. Synchronic and diachronic. Isn't that wonderful? Well, I'll try. I'm having a hard time reading my text today because my computer switched on its it's some checking thing and so it's got little marks all through it here and I haven't been able to switch it back off.

Synchronic or diachronic? Synchronic S-Y-N-C-H-R-O-N-I-C Diachronic D-I-A-C-H-R-O-N-I-C
Synchronic This refers to an approach that looks at synchronous events things that happen at a given time.

We might inquire about the theology of a particular prophet, book, or corpus a group of books. This is a cross-cut approach as some refer to it because it involves us cutting across the progressive revelation and taking a look at what is going on at any given point in time.

Biblical exegesis always begins at this level. However, we may want to understand the text as part of the progressive revelation and this will then always take us beyond the synchronic approach to the diachronic approach.

Isn't that a great word? Sounds like a medical test to me. Oh, that's my word. I measured the word proleptic in three times last week. Diachronic.

[16:59] This refers to the approach that looks at the development or changes over time. This is the long cut approach. It is particularly important in understanding the dynamics of biblical revelation.

We may trace a particular concept or theme through the whole process that may take us from, say, Abraham to Jesus and ultimately the confirmation of the kingdom. You may come across discussions in which one approach is more valid, but I would suggest most are quite important.

It is important to have both in your mind as you consider your own study of the Bible, particularly as the Old Testament. We do want to be able to look at events in their situ in the Bible, don't we?

Take the exodus and see what is going on there, see what place that takes in historical, progressive revelation. But we also want to have this long view, and it is this long view, which I think is the great gift of biblical theology, that we recognize that there are things being worked out over the expanse of biblical theology, beginning in creation and ending in new creation.

And we want to see how events fit in that scheme. So when you're reading the Bible, or preaching the Bible, especially when you do the Old Testament, what you want to do is keep your eye on that long view.

[18:21] How does this point to Jesus? How does this fit in with God's revelation of himself? And likewise, when you're doing the New Testament, sometimes you want to look back and say, well now, how does that, how does this all fit?

How does it all fit in? We were doing that briefly this morning at the 7.30 service. There's that rapture again happening. It always cuts me off. I think I can't do it anymore.

We were looking at that this morning. We're doing in the evening service, Matthew 13. We've come to the end of Matthew 13 this week. These little snapshots of the kingdom. And at the end, the last one, Jesus talks about a division at the end, how at the end of time there's going to be a division. Good fish and bad are going to be separated. The bad are going to be thrown into the fire. And then he gives an example, which is of a scribe, a teacher of the law. Now the scribes are the really bad guys in Jesus, in the gospels.

They are anti-kingdoms. They are enemies of the kingdom. And yet he says a scribe who has been trained for the kingdom will bring out of his treasury old treasure and new.

[19:24] that's a biblical theological point there. That is a biblical theological point, isn't it? That's looking back. You see, so that this scribe, if he will be but trained for the kingdom, as someone who is going to be powerful for the kingdom because he knows his Old Testament so much.

He knows his scriptures. He knows the promises of God. He needs to be the people of God. And if he will shift that little bit for the kingdom, then he's going to be very powerful for the kingdom.

He will have a very unique and important gift to give to the kingdom. And that is that perspective of the Old and the New. He knows the Old and he knows the New. Very important there. Biblical theology.

Don't tell me that Jesus is not a biblical theologian. All of which brings us now, which I wanted to very briefly touch on, to this final theme and the new order. Because that the Bible does set up two distinct eras, two distinct orders, is manifest throughout the Bible.

Its division is into two chapters. We have two covenants, the Old and the New. We have the before and after, the before and after of Jesus. In the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, the sending down of the Holy Spirit, we have a new order, a new era.

[20:45] The kingdom of God is brought to birth. Jesus' own proclamation is repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand. Indicates that in his coming, a radical new order, known as the kingdom, was being brought into fulfillment.

It is an age of salvation. There's a before and after, isn't there? Salvation had not been won before Jesus. Salvation was won after, because of Jesus. Because of the historical events of Jesus, and God's intervention in human life, through Jesus, salvation was won.

So we have a division of times. We live in an eschatological age. How does it feel to know that? We are an age of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit was promised in the Old Testament, promised in Joel, for example, was poured out on the day of Pentecost.

These critical events around Jesus, his death, his incarnation, his death, his resurrection, and his ascension, and then the coming of the Holy Spirit. All of these bring us into this final eschatological age.

The kingdom is here. And yet, the kingdom is not yet complete. In Isaiah, if you were here at the carol service last week, you will remember that line from Isaiah, the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh together will see it.

[22 : 01] That hasn't happened yet. The day is going to come when every knee will bow and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord. That day is going to come. There's going to be a final coming. There's going to be a confirmation.

confirmation. So that the kingdom, the new order, is now, but it's not yet. I love that line. I've heard many theologians you can use it in a sermon.

It doesn't have any meaning in a sermon, but it sounds good, doesn't it? I can use it to learn as exchange. Now and not yet. So I want to look briefly at this expression, a new order, which is found particularly in Hebrews.

I want to take my comments from Hebrews for the remainder of our time together. A new order. In Hebrews 9, talking about worship at the earthly tabernacle, so he's talking about the old sacrificial system, the writer of the Hebrew says, they are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washing, external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

What does he mean by new order? It refers to the greatness of salvation provided in Jesus Christ. because if there is an organic unity in the Bible, if what we are doing is looking to see that historical, that interaction between the historical and the eschatological of God intervening in human life, there has to be a relationship between the old order and the new.

[23 : 28] Think about that. We know ourselves to be new covenant people. What is our relationship to the old that just finished? Or does it relate to us in some way?

What is that relationship? Does everything that has gone before have no meaning for us anymore? Or do we, people of the new covenant, the new testament, are we not in some way related to the old?

If there is but one revelation, one salvation plan, how does that mean for our relationship to the old order? Is it all over? The old age has passed and the new has come.

If Jesus is the fulfillment of the old, the promises of God, then how do the two relate? A new order. A new order.

In the Greek, it really means a time of setting straight. The Greek word there, *kairou*, *kairos*, there's two words, *chronos*.

[24 : 25] You probably know all the countries of this many times. And *kairos*, this is *kairos*, so it's the time now. Time of setting straight. The key to understanding the expression is to see what is meant by the old order.

Hebrews 8 announces the new covenant that made the old obsolete. Chapter 9 pursues this in regard to worship. The old order required an earthly tabernacle and priests to offer animal sacrifices.

Christ, however, entered a heavenly tabernacle and offered the sacrifice of his own blood. His atonement is able to cleanse our consciousness from acts that lead to death so that we may serve the living God.

God. See, the old sacrificial system was defective precisely because it was not able to clear the conscience of the worshippers. Therefore, access to God, symbolized by the tabernacle's holy of holies, is not a matter of priestly privilege, but of a purified heart.

This is what God always wanted all along. Hebrews compares Christ to four key elements of the old order. The law, Moses leadership, the Aaronic priesthood, Aaron, that is.

[25 : 41] My computer corrected this as the Ironic priesthood. I don't know if I have a terrible life on the computers today. And finally, the sacrificial system. I'm going to look at two of these, the Aaronic priesthood and the sacrificial system.

Interesting, isn't it? Priests. Realize that we are all a kingdom of priests. In comparison with the Aaronic priesthood, the qualifications of Jesus for the priesthood are presented to us in Hebrews chapter 5, 1 through 10.

Now, like Aaron, Christ's priesthood was founded on his divine ordination. He was appointed by God. Where are we? Every high priest is selected and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin.

No one takes this honor upon himself. He must be called by God just as Aaron was. So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, you are my son. But Christ, the high priest, identifies himself with us in our own sinfulness. Verse 7 of chapter 5, during the days of Jesus' life, on earth, he offered our prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death and was heard because of his reverent submission. [27 : 06] Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be a high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

I've always wanted to talk about Melchizedek and now I can. So Hebrews 5 treats the measure of Christ's identification with humankind. In accepting the likeness of humanity in suffering, Christ became totally assimilated to humankind except for identification in sin.

But his sacrifice of consecration and thus always possessing full deity, he achieved perfection. That is to say, he was fit to mediate the divine presence in a way that was complete and total.

And so in 5, 11 and following, and really moving on through to chapter 10, so in this whole section of Hebrews, the author develops the distinctive of the relationship between Christ and the Aaronic priesthood.

The readers have a new, qualitatively different high priest. They need to understand the new characteristics. Because the danger for the people that Hebrews is written for was that they might go back.

[28 : 23] They're clearly Jewish Christians. And they hadn't grasped fully the completeness of the new order of what Jesus had won for them. And so they were tending to slide back towards their previous roots.

And so after an exhortation on the difficult nature of what is to follow in 5, 11, he says, we have much to say about this. It is very hard to explain because you are very slow to learn. It is also very hard to explain.

In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food.

Solid food is for the mature. So he's trying to push them on a bit. He introduces that figure of Melchizedek. Now the point about Melchizedek is he provides a fitting analogy for the new glorified high priest.

Melchizedek, like the glorified Christ, possessed no genealogy and seemingly had a priesthood with no end to it. And that is the point of Christ's priesthood in contrast to the Aaronic priesthood.

[29 : 28] It is one that is without end. It is one that is perfect and mediates perfectly the divine presence for us. It is endless. It doesn't have a human genealogy, but the divine one.

And so this is the contrast between a transitory or passing priesthood and one that is complete, between needing to make repeated sacrifices with an earthly priest who was not himself perfect and who could not mediate the divine presence and one who could.

The Aaronic priesthood, but also the sacrificial system. That is the big thing, isn't it? What about the sacrificial system? Of course, as Christians, we're not made righteous by the sacrificial system anymore.

It doesn't make us righteous because of what we've done. And yet, the whole thing isn't just sort of thrown out. You have to see that in the context of Christ, the author of the work of the new high priest, as opposed to the old, with this discussion of the offering accomplished by Christ, explicated on the model of the action of the high priest of the day of atonement.

What's going on here in chapters 8 through 10. Christ's ministry, which replaced that of the Aaronic priesthood or the Levitical priesthood, is housed not in the earthly tabernacle, but in the heavenly sanctuaries, where Jesus sits at God's right hand.

[30 : 50] And so, in Hebrews chapter 8 through chapter 9, that concerns the abrogation of the Old Testament cult, which was characterized by a multiplicity of sacrifices and an inability to achieve peace for the worshippers.

Since gifts and sacrifices identify the system, it is critical to understand the significance of the offering presented by Jesus. Ministry under the Old Covenant was provisional.

It was temporary. It was not complete. But a new and better priesthood stems from a new and better covenant, a covenant inaugurated in this case by the death of Jesus.

Since the need was anticipated in the Old Testament, the provisionality of the Sinai covenant was clear. The Old System had as a climax the entry of the High Priest into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement.

But such a climax, having to be repeated year after year, was an anti-climax. The verdict is that the Old System did not meet human needs.

[31 : 59] As he says in chapter 9, this is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper.

They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings, external regulations, applying until the time of the new order. Until the author turns to Christ and his offerings.

In Christ and his sacrifice, we have all the essentials for an approach to God. A new High Priest who is a perfected mediator, a greater and more perfected tabernacle, perhaps the glorified Christ, the new temple, reflecting all the holiness previously symbolized by the earthly holy of holy, as to a better sacrifice.

To sustain the imagery of the Day of Atonement, we should perhaps see this High Priest as the heavenly or spiritual archetype of the earthly tabernacle. Christ, uniting in himself, perfected requirements of both victim and priest, a requirement impossible to meet under the old system, in which the priesthood must sacrifice itself, accomplished by the Holy Spirit, perfect atonement for sin.

In this way, Christ provided the basis for a new relationship, for the new covenant. The new covenant concluded as the Sinai covenant had been, by sacrifice, but now in his own blood.

[33 : 29] Our assurance of the efficacy of this one sacrifice is obtained from the access into the one true holy of holies that Christ achieved by us. We may now stand before God.

That is to say, we may now enter into the holy of holies, since we are identified with Christ and rejoice in the prospect of our high priest's return.

And so in Hebrews chapter 10, 1 to 18, the old system of lay covenant, of sort of law, covenant institutions, is finally written off as incomplete.

True priesthood is based not on ritual, but on personal obedience. Transformed by his incarnate act of obedience to God, and the identification with humanity that the passion exemplifies, Christ is now able to transform us by his sacrifice, once offered, all sufficient, and it is that which inaugurated the new order.

So that in every case, Christ's superiority turns the comparison into a contrast. The new order is complete. The new order is unique.

[34 : 42] In each case, Christ's superiority turns the comparison into a contrast. There is a dialectical relationship between the old order and the new.

On the one hand, the old was a necessary preparation for the new. Hebrews 9.10 acknowledges that the sacrificial regulations had a function until Christ arrived.

On the other hand, the new order makes the old one obsolete, because it completes what was incomplete, perfects what was inadequate, and makes actual what is only symbolic.

He says in chapter 10, the law is only a shadow of good things that are coming, not the realities themselves. So we have a priest who has offered for once and for all, sacrificed for sins, and then he completed his work and sat down at the right hand of God.

As the author of the Hebrews says, in the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

[35 : 57] The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty of heaven.

Well, I will be happy to take questions in just a moment. I want to say thank you for listening to me for these last few weeks. And I have learned a great deal.

I hope you have also, and are not completely asleep. But remember this, the biblical theology above all places Jesus at the center of God's salvation plan, at the center of the Bible.

And it is in the light of Jesus that we interpret everything else that happens, including the Old and the New Covenant, the Old and the New Order. It is how do they apply, how do they relate to the historical fact of Jesus and the sacrifice that he himself offered.

Biblical theology calls us to read the scriptures and see in them from Genesis to Revelation one salvation plan, one revelation, one activity of God in saving men and women.

[37 : 06] It calls us to see that God acted in history to reveal himself to us in historical events. It calls us above all to look at the scriptures and see Jesus then.

Thank you very much for listening. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.