

Building Biblical Theology

RESOURCES

STUDY GUIDES BY SECTION



BUILDING BIBLICAL THEOLOGY
STUDY GUIDE 1.1
Lesson 1: What is Biblical Theology?
Section 1: Orientation

OUTLINE FOR NOTES

Introduction

I. Orientation

A. Historical Analysis

B. Acts of God

C. Theological Reflection

1. Factual Historical Analysis
2. Theological Historical Analysis

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between the "broad" sense of Biblical Theology and the "narrow" sense?
2. Make sure you memorize Dr. Pratt's definition of Biblical Theology, understood in the more narrow sense.
3. What are the three aspects of exegesis explained in the lesson? Which aspect is the focus of Biblical Theology?
4. Explain the perspective of the Westminster Confession of Faith regarding God's providence and His use of means.

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. Is the concept of Biblical Theology (in the narrow sense of the word) new to you? What was your first idea of what it meant? What was your initial attitude toward this aspect of theological studies?
2. What type of analysis (historical, literary, or thematic) do you do most often? Why?

3. How can your study of Scripture improve if you develop abilities in other types of analysis?
4. How can understanding Biblical Theology help you write a sermon or teach a Bible study?
5. What do you hope to learn in this course?

BUILDING BIBLICAL THEOLOGY
STUDY GUIDE 1.2
Lesson 1: What is Biblical Theology?
Section 2: Historical Developments

OUTLINE FOR NOTES

II. Historical Developments

A. Cultural Changes

B. Theological Response

1. Critical
2. Evangelical
3. Recent

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain the historical context that gave rise to Biblical Theology. What intellectual movement was especially important in this process?
2. Explain the basic philosophical view of G. W. Hegel. What name is given to his view of history?
3. What theological address is considered to be the beginning of Biblical Theology? Who gave the address? What year?
4. Explain the particular views of each of the following theologians regarding Biblical Theology. Note also their views of the authority of Scripture.

Johann Gabler

G. Ernest Wright

Charles Hodge

Benjamin B. Warfield

Geerhardus Vos

5. Explain the difference between "historia" and "heilsgeschichte," as understood by G. Ernest Wright.
6. What do you think Geerhardus Vos meant when he said that Systematic Theology endeavors to construct a "circle," while Biblical Theology seeks to produce a "line"?
7. According to Dr. Pratt, what theologian has had the greatest influence on the contemporary Evangelical view of Biblical Theology?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. Which of the theologians studied in this lesson do you like best? Why?
2. How would you compare Hegel's view of history with the biblical view?
3. Do you think it is important to recognize the differences between the way the human authors of the Bible each present their views? Why?
4. In what way does it help to find a common thread or a common focus in the Scriptures?
5. Do you agree that the best way to describe the common thread of the Scriptures is the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth? Why?

BUILDING BIBLICAL THEOLOGY
STUDY GUIDE 1.3
Lesson 1: What is Biblical Theology?
Section 3: History and Revelation

OUTLINE FOR NOTES

III. History and Revelation

A. Act and Word

1. Act Revelation
2. Word Revelation
3. Interconnections

B. Contours

1. Goal
2. Rising and Falling
3. Organic

Conclusion

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. According to Dr. Pratt, why do we need word revelation as well as act revelation? Explain the contemporary example he gives.
2. What does Dr. Pratt mean when he speaks of the "radial significance" of an event?
3. Explain the biblical examples Dr. Pratt gives of word revelation given before, during, and after the act revelation.
4. According to Romans 11:36, what is the ultimate goal of history?
5. Give examples of "high points" and "low points" of divine revelation.
6. How does Dr. Pratt describe the connection between different periods and events of history as recorded in the Bible?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. How should the ultimate goal of "bringing God immeasurable glory" by "establishing God's kingdom on earth" affect the way we live our lives and do ministry? Note a specific change that you think this should make in your life.

2. How does the concept of organic growth of biblical revelation help you interpret the Bible and teach from it?

3. What is the most significant insight you have learned from lesson one? Explain why.

4. Read the three following quotes. Which do you think should be considered "Biblical Theology"? (After answering the question, you may look at the sources of the quotes at the end of all the study guides. See the asterisk.*)

A. "It is customary in theology to distinguish a three-fold use of the law. ... 1)The law serves the purpose of restraining sin and promoting righteousness. ...2) The law serves the purpose of bringing man under conviction of sin...to lead him to Christ. ...3)The law is a rule of life for believers."

B. "The universal Sabbath law received a modified significance under the Covenant of Grace. ...Inasmuch as the Old Covenant was still looking forward to the performance of the Messianic work, naturally the days of labor to it come first, the day of rest falls at the end of the week. We, under the New Covenant, look back upon the accomplished work of Christ. We, therefore, first celebrate the rest in principle procured by Christ, although the Sabbath still remains a sign looking forward to the final eschatological rest."

C. "We are bound, therefore, to insist upon the maintenance and faithful execution of the laws enacted for the protection of the Christian Sabbath. Christianity does not teach that men can be made religious by law; nor does it demand that men should be required by the civil authority to profess any form of religious doctrine, or to attend upon religious services; but it does enjoin that men should abstain from all unnecessary worldly avocations on the Lord's Day."

BUILDING BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

STUDY GUIDE 2.1

Lesson 2: Synchronic Synthesis of the Old Testament

Section 1: Orientation

OUTLINE FOR NOTES

Introduction

I. Orientation

A. Synchronic

B. Synthesis

1. Denial

2. Affirmation

C. Example

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain the illustration that Dr. Pratt uses in his introduction to describe the way Biblical Theology uses a "synchronic" approach to study the Old Testament.
2. Define the words "synchronic" and "synthesis".
3. What argument did some twentieth century critical theologians use to deny the logical character of the Old Testament? How does Dr. Pratt answer these theologians?
4. Describe the characteristics of the Old Testament that do NOT exactly fit the standards of formal western philosophical traditions that influenced SYSTEMATIC Theology.
5. Explain how Romans 5:12-14 is an example of "synchronic synthesis."

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. What is your opinion regarding the "logical character" of the Old Testament? Do you think it is forcing a "Greek mindset" on the Hebrew writers when we look for logical coherency in Old Testament theology? Explain your opinion.
2. How do you feel about the characteristics of the Old Testament that Dr. Pratt mentions, when he explains that they do not exactly fit the "standards of formal western philosophical traditions" that influenced Systematic Theology? Do you agree with these characteristics? If these descriptions are valid, how does it affect the way you study the Old Testament?

BUILDING BIBLICAL THEOLOGY
STUDY GUIDE 2.2
Lesson 2: Synchronic Synthesis of the Old Testament
Section 2: Historical Information

OUTLINE FOR NOTES

II. Historical Information

A. Poetry

1. Two Worlds
2. Discerning Information

B. Narrative

1. Two Worlds
2. Discerning Information

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why does it require great care to discern the historical information from the Old Testament?
2. Explain the meaning of "that world" and "their world" as used in Old Testament poetry.
3. What kinds of literary conventions are used in Old Testament poetry?
4. Explain the use of metaphors and similes in Exodus 15:6-7.
5. Explain Dr. Pratt's view of the difference between Old Testament norms for historical narrative and modern norms, especially with regard to comprehensiveness, precision, and objectivity.
6. Explain the difference between the way 2 Chronicles 1-9 and 1 Kings relate the history of Solomon.
7. How does Dr. Pratt interpret the word "expanse" in Genesis 1:7?
8. How does Dr. Pratt explain the difference between 1 Kings 9:5 and 2 Chronicles 7:18?
9. What example does the lesson give of an Old Testament writer showing his moral bias?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. Why is it important to be aware of literary conventions in Old Testament poetry? How does it affect the way you interpret poetry in the Bible?

2. Read Ecclesiastes 1:2: "Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity." How should we interpret this verse in the light of what the lesson teaches about Old Testament literary conventions?
3. Read Psalm 23. Mention the uses of metaphors in the psalm.
4. Do you agree with Dr. Pratt's view of the Old Testament norms regarding comprehensiveness, precision, and objectivity? Why?
5. If the Old Testament writers were not necessarily as comprehensive, precise, and objective as modern historical norms might require, how does this affect your view of the authority and trustworthiness of the Bible? Explain your answer.
6. Do you agree with Dr. Pratt's interpretation of the "expanse" in Genesis 1:7? Explain your view. How does this make you feel about the trustworthiness of Scripture with regard to scientific matters?

BUILDING BIBLICAL THEOLOGY
STUDY GUIDE 2.3
Lesson 2: Synchronic Synthesis of the Old Testament
Section 3: Synthetic Structures

OUTLINE FOR NOTES

III. Synthetic Structures

A. Variety of Sources

1. Biblical Revelations
2. Extra-Biblical Sources

B. Variety of Levels

1. Basic-Level Structures
2. Middle-Level Structures
3. Complex-Level Structures

Conclusion

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does Dr. Pratt mean by "synthetic structures"?
2. What sources are available to us for discerning synthetic theological structures as we study a passage of the Old Testament?
3. What theological concept from Genesis 1 is related to the promises given to Abraham in Genesis 12?
4. How does Psalm 72 help us understand the promises made to Abraham in Genesis 12?
5. How does Dr. Pratt explain Abraham's understanding of the omniscience of God at the time he was asked to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22:12)?
6. What are some possible kinds of extra-biblical special revelation?
7. According to Dr. Pratt, how did Noah know which animals were clean and which animals were unclean (Genesis 7:2)?
8. Explain the examples from the lesson of each level of synthetic structure (basic, middle, and complex).
9. What concept lies in the background of everything God did and said in the Old Testament?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. How do the concepts presented in this lesson help you understand the Old Testament better?
2. What was the most important thing you learned from the whole lesson?
3. Leviticus 25

This lesson is about the "synchronic synthesis" approach to Biblical Theology. For this application question, you will make a partial analysis of Leviticus 25, using this approach.

First, read the complete chapter of Leviticus 25.

To which historical period does this passage belong?

- The period from Adam to Babel
- The period of the patriarchs
- The period of Moses and the exodus
- The period of the conquest and the monarchy
- The period of the division
- The period of the exile
- I'm not sure.

What genre of literature is this?

- Historical narrative
- Poetry
- Law
- Prophecy
- I'm not sure.

What probable historical information can you discern from this passage?

- The Israelites were a farming community.
- The Israelites were living in Egypt when this was written.
- The Israelites were divided by families.
- The Israelites sometimes sold and bought land among themselves.
- The Israelites always shared everything equally.
- The Israelites sometimes sold themselves as hired workers among themselves.
- God brought His people out of Egypt.
- I'm not sure.

What theological themes or structures do you detect in this passage?

- God is the sovereign owner of all things.
- God will take care of His people.
- The Messiah will die on a cross and rise from the dead.
- Man needs to learn to rest from his works and trust God.
- It is good to have compassion on the needy.
- The kingdom of God brings justice and redemption.
- Man is justified by faith in the Messiah.
- I'm not sure.

BUILDING BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

STUDY GUIDE 3.1

Lesson 3: Diachronic Developments in the Old Testament

Section 1: Orientation

OUTLINE FOR NOTES

Introduction

I. Orientation

A. Diachronic

1. Contrast
2. Interdependence

B. Development

1. Divine Purposes
2. Divine Providence

C. Example

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the meaning of the term "diachronic"?
2. How does the "diachronic" approach of Biblical Theology differ from the "synchronic synthesis" approach? What illustration does Dr. Pratt use to explain the difference? How are the two approaches related?
3. Explain the teaching of the lesson regarding God's providence. What does Dr. Pratt mean when he says that it is sometimes expected, sometimes inexplicable, and sometimes responsive? Give examples.
4. How is Matthew 19:3-9 an example of diachronic development?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. This lesson discusses how theology develops over time. Is this a new concept to you? How will it affect the way you study the Bible?
2. Do you agree with Dr. Pratt's interpretation of Matthew 19:3-9? Do you have any other comments to add to the analysis of this passage?
3. Can you think of other examples of "diachronic developments" in the Bible?

BUILDING BIBLICAL THEOLOGY
STUDY GUIDE 3.2
Lesson 3: Diachronic Developments in the Old Testament
Section 2: Epochal Developments

OUTLINE FOR NOTES

II. Epochal Developments

A. Diverse Emphases

1. Universal Covenants
2. National Covenants
3. New Covenant

B. Organic Unity

1. Kingdom Administration
2. Abiding Authority
3. Extended Application

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain the difference between the "universal" covenants, the "national" covenants, and the "new" covenant.
2. What are the three aspects that are included in all covenants?
3. What are the six key covenants that Dr. Pratt mentions? What name does he give to each one? Describe the unique characteristics of each of these six covenants.
4. Explain in general terms how the covenants are related to each other. In what ways are they united? In what ways are they different?
5. Explain Dr. Pratt's perspective on the application of previous covenants in later periods of time. Do previous covenants still apply? In what way? What illustration does he use to explain his perspective?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. What special benefits do you enjoy as a member of the "new" covenant?
2. Can you think of examples of how certain aspects of previous covenants are applied in a different way today?
3. Did this lesson change the way you think about applying Old Testament ethical norms today? How?

4. Read Leviticus 19:28. How does the lesson help you interpret this? Does it mean that it is always wrong to have a tattoo? Explain your answer.

BUILDING BIBLICAL THEOLOGY
STUDY GUIDE 3.3
Lesson 3: Diachronic Developments in the Old Testament
Section 3: Topical Developments

OUTLINE FOR NOTES

III. Topical Developments

A. Traditional Topics

B. Typology

1. Definition
2. Features
3. Identification

Conclusion

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference in the way Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology study topics?
2. What is a "type" as understood in the narrow sense in Biblical Theology?
3. What is an "antitype" as understood in the context of Biblical Theology?
4. Explain what Romans 5:14, 1 Peter 3:20-21, Colossians 2:17, and John 3:14-15 teach us about biblical types?
5. Explain the five features of typology as taught in the lesson.
6. Explain how the figure of speech used in the phrase "That skyscraper is tall, like a mountain" is like "typology" used in Scripture.
7. What are the three main groups of elements used in typologies?
8. What example does the lesson give of how typologies often appear in series?
9. According to Dr. Pratt, did the Old Testament writers know that the types were pointing to a future reality?
10. What illustration does the lesson give to explain how much could be known from a biblical "type" about the "antitype" to which it points?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. How will an understanding of biblical typology help you understand the Old Testament better? How will it help you see Christ and preach the gospel from all of Scripture?
2. What is the most important lesson you have learned from this whole lesson? Explain why.
3. Isaiah 11:1

In order to apply the teachings of this lesson, do a brief analysis of Isaiah 11:1 by answering the questions below.

"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a branch will bear fruit." (Isaiah 11:1, NIV)

To what do you think the term "the stump of Jesse" refers in Isaiah 11:1? Who was Jesse? How do you picture this "stump"? Is it healthy?

To whom do you think the "shoot" refers in Isaiah 11:1? What is the "fruit" that will come from the branch?

In what period of Israel's history was this prophecy spoken? What was the spiritual condition of Israel at the time?

Reflect about the "diachronic development" of the theme of Isaiah 11:1.

What does this verse reveal about the development of the kingdom of God? Can you think of any promises made to Adam and Eve that are related to this verse? Can you think of any promises made to Abraham that are related to the verse? How about promises made to David?

Is the kingdom being manifested in Israel in a healthy form at the time of the prophecy in Isaiah 11:1? Will the promises made previously be kept? In what way?

Where do we see the grace of God in this passage? Does the kingdom come because of Israel's faithfulness?

BUILDING BIBLICAL THEOLOGY
STUDY GUIDE 4.1
Lesson 4: Contours of New Testament Biblical Theology
Section 1: Orientation

OUTLINE FOR NOTES

Introduction

I. Orientation

A. Twofold Revelation

B. Theological Structures

1. Basic-Level Structures
2. Middle-Level Structures
3. Complex-Level Structures

C. Diachronic Developments

1. Diachronic Character
2. Obstacles
3. New Direction

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What characteristics does New Testament Biblical Theology have in common with Old Testament Biblical Theology?
2. Make sure you are familiar with the contents of the following passages. Explain how each one exhibits theological structures, either on a basic level, a middle level, or on a complex level.

Matthew 2:1-12
Jeremiah 31:31
Matthew 4:23
Revelation 11:15

3. What does Luke 24:26-27 tell us about the message of the Old Testament?
4. The phrase "New Testament" is synonymous with the phrase "New _____."
5. Dr. Pratt says, "The coherent system of the entire New Testament can be summed up under the rubric of _____."
6. Ezekiel 37:26 refers to the New Covenant as the covenant of _____.

7. What are some of the differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament that affect the way the biblical writers do diachronic analysis? (These differences may be considered "obstacles.")

8. Note some questions that would typically be asked by New Testament Biblical Theologians as they analyze diachronic developments.

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. Has this lesson changed your view of the New Testament? In what way? Do you think it will influence the way you interpret passages of the New Testament? In what way?

2. What personal benefits do you experience because of living under the New Covenant? That is, what are the differences between living during the time of the Old Testament and living after the time of Christ?

3. How does focusing on the theme of the kingdom of God as you study the New Testament help you avoid an over individualistic concept of our salvation?

4. Note specific ways in which you sometimes focus on your relationship with God as something too individualistic, without considering the broader picture of the kingdom of God. For example, consider the following aspects of your life that you may need to modify in order to live with a more consistent kingdom focus:

Think of the songs we sing in our worship services. Are they too individualistic?

Think of how you treat other people from your church. Do you treat them as part of your family?

Think of how you consider your "private" sins? Do you think they do not affect the Body of Christ?

Think of the importance you give to meeting with other Christians for worship or fellowship.

Think of the importance you give to building up the Church and to ministering to others.

Think of any other area of your life you should change to be less individualistic.

BUILDING BIBLICAL THEOLOGY
STUDY GUIDE 4.2
Lesson 4: Contours of New Testament Biblical Theology
Section 2: Developments in Eschatology

OUTLINE FOR NOTES

II. Developments in Eschatology

A. Traditional

B. Old Testament

1. Adam
2. Noah
3. Abraham
4. Moses
5. David

C. Early Christian

1. First-Century Judaism
2. John the Baptist and Jesus

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does "eschatology" mean in the context of theological studies?
2. Identify the five key Old Testament covenants and explain the unique eschatological emphasis of each one, as explained in the lesson. What was the unique contribution of each one to Old Testament eschatology?
3. Explain how the eschatological promises regarding the rule of David's family developed during the three stages of the monarchy, the early prophets, and the later prophets. What changes were made? Why?
4. How did the first century Jews generally understand "this age" and "the age to come" when they spoke of eschatology?
5. Explain the beliefs of the following groups regarding the "age to come."

Apocalyptic sects
Zealots
Nomists

6. What phrase is used frequently in the New Testament to identify what the Old Testament referred to as "the last days" or "the age to come"?
7. According to the lesson, what made John the Baptist doubt that Jesus was the expected Messiah?
8. What major change in perspective regarding the "age to come" occurs in the New Testament, in contrast with the beliefs of the first century Jews?
9. Explain the illustration that Dr. Pratt uses to show that the arrival of the "last days" was more complex than it appeared from the Old Testament perspective.

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. How does it affect you to know that God modified the way He fulfilled the prophecies regarding David's dynasty? What can you learn from this for your own life? How does it affect the way you pray?
2. What can we learn from the fact that the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies was more complex than they had anticipated? How does it affect the way you view New Testament prophecies? Does it make you less dogmatic about your understanding of the details of fulfillment of the promises?
3. What blessings are you still waiting for at the time of the final consummation of the kingdom of God? What things especially encourage you as you think about that future time?

BUILDING BIBLICAL THEOLOGY
STUDY GUIDE 4.3
Lesson 4: Contours of New Testament Biblical Theology
Section 3: New Testament Eschatology

OUTLINE FOR NOTES

III. New Testament Eschatology

A. Importance

B. Christology

1. Systematic Theology

2. Biblical Theology

C. Soteriology

1. Systematic Theology

2. Biblical Theology

Conclusion

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How important does Dr. Pratt consider the three-phase eschatology of the New Testament? What does he say about its place in the New Testament?

2. Make sure you are familiar with the contents of the following Bible passages. Note in what sense each one speaks of the "last days."

Hebrews 1:1-2
2 Timothy 3:1-5
John 6:39

3. Explain the difference between the way Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology deal with Christology?

4. Explain the meaning of "historia salutis" and "ordo salutis." Which is more the focus of Biblical Theology?

5. Explain the illustration that Dr. Pratt uses to explain the perspective of New Testament authors as they write about salvation.

6. Make sure you are familiar with the contents of the following Bible passages. Note how each one describes SALVATION as something that already occurred, as something ongoing, or as something future.

Romans 8:24
1 Corinthians 1:18

Romans 5:9

7. Make sure you are familiar with the contents of the following Bible passages. Note how each one describes GLORIFICATION as something that already occurred, as something ongoing, or as something future.

Romans 8:29-30

2 Corinthians 3:18

2 Timothy 2:10

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. Think of some promises regarding our salvation, and write down aspects that we have already experienced, other aspects that are ongoing, and aspects that are still future. For example, think of the victory over the power of sin, or liberation from pain and suffering. How does this three-way perspective help you understand some of these aspects of your salvation?

2. Analyze Acts 1:6-8, applying the teachings of this lesson.

What did the disciples ask? What were they probably expecting?

How did Jesus answer? What did He mean?

What do we learn about the kingdom of God in this passage?

3. What was the most important thing you learned in this whole course? Explain why.

4. Has this course changed your attitude toward Biblical Theology? How?

5. How do you think this course might change the way you study the Bible?

6. You may enjoy an optional video, a beautiful rendition of the hymn, "Lo How a Rose E'er Blooming," sung by the Baylor University choir. It is based on Isaiah 11:1, "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit." This is a good example of a biblical theological theme from the Old Testament, which refers to Jesus, the descendant of Jesse (David's father). This verse shows how Jesus brings life to the people of Israel that had become spiritually dead.

We cannot guarantee that this link will always be available, and we are not responsible for the legal rights of the video, nor for the ads that may appear. We simply offer the link to the site where we have found it.

Link: <http://youtu.be/jyuOICYCERc4>

* The sources of the quotes in question 4 of the application and reflection questions of Study Guide 1.3 are the following:

A. "It is customary in theology to distinguish a three-fold use of the law..."

Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996, pp. 614-615.

B. "The universal Sabbath law..."

Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971, pp. 157-158.

C. "We are bound, therefore, to insist upon the maintenance..."

Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. III. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970, p. 347.

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