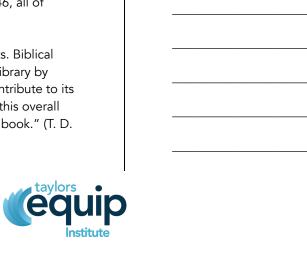
THE EQUIP INSTITUTE Theme: Christian Story Topic: Introduction to Biblical Theology Fall 2023 Introduction The Equip Institute exists to equip members of Taylors First Baptist Church to think rightly about God and His Word for the sake of living rightly before God in His world. This fall, we are spending twelve weeks studying the Christian Story. Last week, we finished a three-week introduction to basic biblical interpretation. Next week, we will begin a survey of the Old and New Testaments. This week, we are going to discuss the concept of biblical theology, which helps form a bridge from basic interpretation to understanding the message of the Bible. **Defining Biblical Theology** The term biblical theology can be defined in different ways. Many pastors use this term to simply mean theology that comes from the Bible. This definition is understandable, but it is far too broad since all theology should be driven by the text of Scripture. Some scholars use the term to define the theological

some scholars use the term to define the theological emphases of one of the testaments, a section of Scripture, or a particular biblical author. This type of biblical theology can be very helpful, especially if the author is committed to biblical inspiration and authority, but it is a bit narrower and more technical than what we are talking about in this session.

For our purposes, biblical theology is the study of how the one unified story of the Bible develops, as well as the development of key recurring themes that Scripture emphasizes, at the center of which is the saving work of Jesus Christ. This one unified story is inspired, authoritative, truthful, and coherent. As Jesus reminds us in Luke 24:25–27, 44–45 and John 5:39–40, 46, all of Scripture testifies to Him.

"The Bible is a unique library of religious texts. Biblical theology enriches our understanding of this library by exploring how the different biblical books contribute to its overall theological message and how in turn this overall message influences our appreciation of each book." (T. D. Alexander)



Biblical theology is different than systematic theology, though ideally the two disciplines complement each other. Systematic theology attempts to explain what the whole Bible has to say about a given doctrinal topic. Biblical theology attempts to study the Scriptures in their canonical and redemptive-historical contexts. This allows the story to develop and the recurring themes to develop across the canon of Scripture and "inside" the story the Scriptures are telling.

The Grand Biblical Narrative

One common way of studying biblical theology is thinking about what many have called the Grand Biblical Narrative. If we think of all of Scripture as telling a story, the Grand Biblical Narrative is the plotline that is developed across the canon. The main character is the Triune God, who is Creator and King, and who is rescuing His rebellious human creatures and restoring His corrupted created order through the saving actions of Jesus Christ, for His glory and the eternal flourishing of all creation.

This narrative is foundational for developing a biblical worldview, which is our interpretive grid for thinking Christianly about all of life. We might think of the Grand Biblical Narrative as the Story of Stories, the one Great Story in which all our individual stories find their true meaning.

Vaughan Roberts, God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible:

- (1) The Pattern of the Kingdom (Creation)
- (2) The Perished Kingdom (Fall)
- (3) The Promised Kingdom (Covenant)
- (4) The Partial Kingdom (the Nation of Israel)
- (5) The Prophesied Kingdom (Exile and Prophets)
- (6) The Present Kingdom (Jesus's life, death, and resurrection)
- (7) The Proclaimed Kingdom (Church and Gospel)
- (8) The Perfected Kingdom (Restoration)

Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen, *The True Story* of the Whole World:

Act 1: God Established His Kingdom (Creation)

Act 2: Rebellion in the Kingdom (Fall)

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Act 3: The King Chooses Israel (Restoration Initiated)	
Act 4: The Coming of the King (Restoration	
Accomplished)	
Act 5: Spreading the News of the King (The Mission	
of the Church)	
Act 6: The Return of the King (Restoration	
Completed)	
Numerous authors divide the storyline of Scripture into	
either three or four parts, focusing more on the theme of	
God's redeeming work through Jesus Christ. Sometimes the narrative is summarized as Creation, Fall, and	
Redemption. Other times it is summarized as Creation,	
Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. This approach is	
especially common among authors who relate the story of	
Scripture to a biblical worldview or use the storyline as a	
way of summarizing the gospel.	
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Nathan Finn:	
(1) Creation	
(2) Fall	
(3) Promise	
(4) Israel	
(5) Christ	
(6) Church	
(7) Mission	
(8) Restoration	
(6) 116555141611	
Recurring Themes in Biblical Theology	
The Bible contains several dozen recurring themes.	
However, certain themes are developed progressively	
across the canon of Scripture as the Grand Biblical	-
Narrative unfolds. Some are constantly present, while	
others are emphasized periodically at key points in the	
story. The following themes seem to be most important to the storyline of Scripture.	
the storyline of scripture.	
God's glory	
 God's creation of all things that are not God 	
 Humanity as God's good, but fallen image- 	
bearers	
 God's mission to redeem sinners and restore His 	
creation	
 God's gracious love for sinners and just wrath 	
toward sin	

- God's gracious presence among His people
- God's conquest of all His would-be rivals
- God's kingdom as it develops progressively through covenants
- God's priests and their service
- The exile and exodus of God's people
- God's promises and their fulfillment
- God's holiness, wisdom, and love displayed in all His attributes and actions

Biblical Interpretation: Digging Deeper

Biblical theology can add a helpful layer to deepen our interpretation of the Bible. Our understanding of biblical inspiration and authority reminds us that the Story we find in Scripture is true and that it matters for all people, everywhere. The canon of Scripture was formed around this Story, especially by the leaders in the early church who saw the New Testament as an inspired and authoritative continuation of the Old Testament. The Story transcends the various genres of Scripture, each of which contributes to the Grand Biblical Narrative. We can see the fuller meaning of a text when we understand where it fits into the Story that the Scriptures are developing.

Recommended Resources

NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible

Nick Roark and David Cline, Biblical Theology: How the Church Faithfully Teaches the Gospel (Crossway, 2018).

Jeremy Kimble and Ched Spellman, *Invitation to Biblical Theology: Exploring the Shape, Storyline, and Themes of the Bible* (Kregel Academic, 2020).

Vaughan Roberts, God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible (InterVarsity, 2003).

Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael Goheen, *The True Story of the Whole World: Finding Your Place in the Biblical Drama*, 2nd ed. (Baker Academic, 2020).

Thomas R. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments (Baker Academic, 2013).

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