

Building Biblical Theology

Lesson Guide

LESSON
FOUR

CONTOURS OF NEW
TESTAMENT BIBLICAL
THEOLOGY



THIRD MILLENNIUM
MINISTRIES

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CONTENTS

HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE	3
NOTES.....	4
I. INTRODUCTION (0:23)	4
II. ORIENTATION (4:19)	4
A. Twofold Revelation (5:02)	4
B. Theological Structures (8:07)	5
1. Basic-Level Structures (9:17)	6
2. Middle-Level Structures (12:27)	6
3. Complex-Level Structures (14:36)	6
C. Diachronic Developments (17:19)	7
1. Diachronic Character (18:13)	7
2. Obstacles (20:08)	7
3. New Direction (25:03)	9
III. DEVELOPMENTS IN ESCHATOLOGY (28:44)	10
A. Traditional (29:50)	10
B. Old Testament (33:11)	11
1. Adam (34:18)	11
2. Noah (35:55)	11
3. Abraham (37:01)	11
4. Moses (38:13)	12
5. David (42:30)	13
C. Early Christian Eschatology (51:34)	14
1. First-Century Judaism (51:53)	15
2. John and Jesus (55:19)	16
IV. NEW TESTAMENT ESCHATOLOGY (1:03:14)	18
A. Importance (1:04:31)	18
B. Christology (1:10:37)	19
1. Systematic Theology (1:11:05)	19
2. Biblical Theology (1:11:54)	19
C. Soteriology (1:18:20)	21
1. Systematic Theology (1:18:40)	21
2. Biblical Theology (1:21:43)	23
V. CONCLUSION (1:29:27)	24
REVIEW QUESTIONS	25
APPLICATION QUESTIONS	30
GLOSSARY.....	31

HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

This lesson guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video. If you do not have access to the video, the lesson guide will also work with the audio and/or text versions of the lesson. Additionally, the video and lesson guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — The Notes section of the lesson guide has been divided into segments that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the lesson guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each segment and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Notes

I. Introduction (0:23)

The Old Testament raises questions, problems, and hopes, but the answers, resolutions and fulfillments appear in the New Testament.

There are many similarities between the ways biblical theology approaches both testaments, but there are also significant differences.

II. Orientation (4:19)

To get at the heart of New Testament biblical theology, we can compare and contrast it with what we have learned about Old Testament biblical theology.

A. Twofold Revelation (5:02)

Old Testament biblical theology and New Testament biblical theology have a mutual interest in God's twofold revelation:

- act revelations
 - Christ's earthly ministry
 - Holy Spirit in early church
 - Return of Christ

- word revelations
 - God the Father
 - Christ
 - Angels and humans, by the Spirit

Temporal associations of act and word revelations:

- subsequent

- simultaneous

- antecedent

B. Theological Structures (8:07)

Old Testament and New Testament biblical theology share similar ideas of theological structures.

1. Basic-Level Structures (9:17)

Example:

Matthew 2:1-12 (Jesus birth and the magi)

Matthew 2:16-18 (Jesus birth and Herod)

2. Middle-Level Structures (12:27)

One of the most important moderately complex theological structures is the covenantal arrangement of New Testament theology.

3. Complex-Level Structures (14:36)

The most complex and comprehensive theological structure of the New Testament is the kingdom of God.

C. **Diachronic Developments (17:19)**

One major contrast between Old and New Testament biblical theology is the ways biblical theologians have handled diachronic developments.

1. **Diachronic Character (18:13)**

As New Testament history moved forward, theological structures underwent diachronic changes.

When Christ appeared, theological concerns shifted toward understanding how God had begun to pour out his blessings in Christ.

2. **Obstacles (20:08)**

New Testament history presents at least three major obstacles to extensive diachronic analysis:

- Short period
 - Old Testament — 1600 years

 - New Testament — 100 years

- Similar circumstances
 - Old Testament — variety of circumstances:
 - Patriarchs
 - Judges
 - Early monarchy
 - Later kings and leaders
 - Exile
 - Restoration
 - New Testament — fairly consistent:
 - No extreme changes
 - Consistently marginalized
 - No tremendous wealth or poverty
 - No large group travel
 - No wide scale obedience and disobedience

- Single covenant
 - Old Testament
 - Adam
 - Noah
 - Abraham
 - Moses
 - David
 - New Testament
 - Christ

3. **New Direction (25:03)**

New Testament biblical theologians have tended to treat the entire period of New Testament history as a whole.

New Testament biblical theologians have focused on the ways different New Testament authors provided different perspectives on the entire period.

III. Developments in Eschatology (28:44)

Eschatology: the biblical teaching about the last days

To understand why biblical theology has had this emphasis, we must grasp how the New Testament's outlook on the last days developed out of earlier viewpoints.

A. Traditional (29:50)

Systematicians have normally discussed the teachings of Scripture in five major categories:

- Theology proper
- Anthropology
- Soteriology
- Ecclesiology
- Eschatology

Traditional discussions of eschatology have led to sharp divisions among believers.

Example: The millennium — Christ's 1,000 year reign on earth

B. Old Testament (33:11)

To understand how New Testament biblical theologians have understood the last days, we need to become familiar with Old Testament eschatology.

1. Adam (34:18)

Two crucial elements of Old Testament eschatology:

- Humanity was created in God's image

- Two groups of people are competing for control of the world

2. Noah (35:55)

This covenant secured the stability of nature as humanity pursued God's plan for the world.

3. Abraham (37:01)

God singled out Abraham to be the one through whom he would carry out his promises given to Adam and Noah.

4. Moses (38:13)

Moses' covenant focused on the law of God as the guide for Israel's special service in spreading his kingdom.

- The curse of exile:

God's greatest threat against continuing, flagrant violation of his law was a national exile from the Promised Land.

- Deuteronomy 4:27-28

- Blessing of restoration:

Despite Israel's future exile, God would not give up on Israel as his special people.

- Deuteronomy 4:30-31

- Deuteronomy 30:5

One key feature of Moses' eschatology is the way he described this time of Israel's repentance and restoration to the land.

- Deuteronomy 4:30: "later days"

5. David (42:30)

- United Monarchy

David's descendants and Jerusalem with its temple played a central role in Israel's understanding of the end times.

- Psalm 72:8-11

- Psalm 72:17-19

- Earlier Prophets

Israel's earlier prophets explained further how the conditions of David's house would relate to the last days.

The prophets declared that in the restoration, a great son of David would become the focus of a new order.

- Amos 9:11-12

- Isaiah 2:2

- Jeremiah 25:11; 29:10

- Later Prophets

God's involvement in history brought about at least two major shifts to the Old Testament concept of the last days:

- The time of exile was extended because the Israelites did not repent of their sins.

- God showed great mercy to his people by giving them the opportunity to shorten their exile.

Old Testament eschatology developed diachronically.

- Adam
- Noah
- Abraham
- Moses
- David

C. Early Christian Eschatology (51:34)

The doctrine of the last days developed even further in New Testament times.

1. **First-Century Judaism (51:53)**

The vast majority of Jews in the first century held to views of the last days that resembled those of the Old Testament.

Twofold view of history:

- This age (their current circumstances)

- The age to come (time of future glory for Israel)

Many religious factions held different views on how the transition from “this age” to “the age to come” would take place:

- Apocalyptic Sects

- Zealots

- Nomists

- Most Jews

2. John and Jesus (55:19)

Major diachronic developments in eschatology took place in the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus.

John:

- preached that the arrival of “the last days” was near

- associated God’s reign and “the last days”

Isaiah 52:7-10

- believed the last stage of history would come through the Messiah acting quickly and decisively

Luke 3:9

- identified Jesus as the Messiah

Jesus:

- affirmed that he was in the process of fulfilling the prophecies of the last days

Luke 7:22-23

- declared that the age to come was not going to appear as expected

Matthew 13-25 — Three phases:

- First coming (Inauguration)

- Grow for an indefinite period of time (Continuation)

- Return in glory (Consummation)

Biblical theologians often refer to this as:

- “already, but not yet”
- “now, but not yet”
- “overlap of the ages”
- “inaugurated eschatology”

IV. New Testament Eschatology (1:03:14)

Biblical theology has brought to light some of the basic outlooks of New Testament authors.

A. Importance (1:04:31)

Biblical theologians have demonstrated that every New Testament teaching was shaped by Jesus' three-phase view of the last days.

Jesus' teaching about the last days represented one of the most decisive ways in which Christians had broken with first century Judaism.

New Testament authors spoke of the entire New Testament period as "the last days."

- Hebrews 1:1-2 (days of Jesus and his apostles)
- 2 Timothy 3:1-5 (extended period of church history)
- John 6:39 (consummation of the kingdom at Christ's return)

B. Christology (1:10:37)

Definition: The doctrine of Christ

New Testament Christology presents Jesus as the fulfillment of Israel's eschatological hopes.

1. Systematic Theology (1:11:05)

Systematicians focus on:

- Trinity
- Hypostatic union
- Humiliation
- Exaltation
- Atonement
- Offices of Christ

2. Biblical Theology (1:11:54)

Biblical theologians stress that New Testament authors presented Christ as the one in whom every Old Testament hope found fulfillment.

Luke 24:26-27 (road to Emmaus)

Jesus was the centerpiece of New Testament eschatology.

Christ as the fulfillment of all Old Testament types:

- Adam → Jesus
- Noah → Jesus
- Abraham → Jesus
- Moses → Jesus
- David → Jesus

Different ways Jesus fulfills Old Testament hopes:

	Inauguration	Continuation	Consummation
Adam			
Noah			
Abraham			
Moses			
David			

C. Soteriology (1:18:20)

Definition: The doctrine of salvation

1. Systematic Theology (1:18:40)

- *Historia salutis*: the history of salvation

Accomplishment of salvation in objective history

- Atonement

- Resurrection
- Ascension
- Return

Systematicians have concentrated most of their attention on *ordo salutis*.

- *Ordo salutis*: the order of salvation

Subjective application of salvation to individuals

- Regeneration
- Repentance
- Faith
- Justification
- Sanctification
- Glorification

2. **Biblical Theology (1:21:43)**

New Testament biblical theology looks at the doctrine of salvation from the vantage point of Jesus' three-phase eschatology.

- *Historia salutis*

The application of salvation is always understood within the framework of Jesus' three phases of eschatology:

- Inauguration: joined to what Christ accomplished during the inauguration of the last days

Romans 8:24 (already occurred)

- Continuation: joined to what Christ is accomplishing during the continuation of the last days

1 Corinthians 1:18 (current, ongoing reality)

- Consummation: joined to what Christ will accomplish at the consummation of the last days

Romans 5:9 (still to occur)

- *Ordo salutis*

Example: Glorification

- Romans 8:29-30 (already occurred)

- 2 Corinthians 3:18 (ongoing reality)

- 2 Timothy 2:10 (future)

V. Conclusion (1:29:27)

3. In what ways do New Testament biblical theologians differ from Old Testament biblical theologians in regard to the way they handle diachronic developments?

4. What is eschatology and how has this subject traditionally been approached by systematic theologians?

7. Why were New Testament authors so preoccupied with Jesus' three-phase eschatology? How does this three-phase eschatology represent a decisive break between first-century Judaism and Christianity?

8. What is Christology and how do systematic theologians and biblical theologians differ in their emphases regarding this discipline?

9. Explain the doctrine of soteriology. What is the traditional view of soteriology, and how have biblical theologians understood soteriology in new ways?

Application Questions

1. How does your understanding of the kingdom of God shape the way you do your ministry? In what ways might your ministry change by applying the concept of God's kingdom to all aspects of life?
2. This lesson suggests that different New Testament authors provided different perspectives on Christ and the entire New Testament era. How do we explain these differences to those who claim that the authors of the New Testament contradicted each other?
3. How can understanding the eschatology of the New Testament improve the way you preach or lead Bible studies?
4. How does the fact that we are living in the continuation of an inaugurated kingdom cause us to expect victories for God's kingdom in the present time? What would those victories look like?
5. How does the fact that we have not yet reached the consummation of the kingdom of God help us deal with the suffering that we still experience in our lives?
6. In what ways should we live like we are in the last days?
7. How does the fact that Jesus is the fulfillment of every Old Testament hope affect the way we should study and preach from the Old Testament?
8. Take a moment to read Romans 8:18-25 and note all the references to the inauguration, continuation and consummation of the kingdom of God. What teaching points could you make from this passage in all three stages of the kingdom?
9. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study?
10. After finishing this series, what areas of biblical theology would you like to study further?

Glossary

apocalyptic/apocalypticists – Name given to first-century Jewish sects that expected God to intervene quickly and catastrophically to destroy their enemies and establish the age to come

biblical theology – Theological reflection drawn from the historical analysis of acts of God reported in Scripture

christology – The study and doctrine of the person and work of Jesus Christ

Cyrus – Persian emperor from 559-530 B.C. who decreed that the Israelites could return to the Promised Land

diachronic development – The ways Old Testament theology transformed, changed, or developed over time

eschatological – Having to do with the study or doctrine of the last days

eschatology – The study or doctrine of the last days

eschaton – The last stage of world history; the last or latter days

historia salutis – Theological term meaning “history of salvation”; the ways God accomplished the salvation of his people in history

inaugurated eschatology – View of the end times that says the age to come has begun (been “inaugurated”), but hasn’t yet come in all its fullness; the “already, not yet”

new covenant – The covenant of fulfillment in Christ; first mentioned in Jeremiah 31:31

Nomists – First century Jewish sect that believed God would not intervene to establish his kingdom until Israel had become obedient to the Law of Moses

ordo salutis – Theological term meaning “order of salvation”; the order by which salvation is applied to individual believers

soteriology – The doctrine of salvation

systematic theology/systematics – A theological discipline that seeks to give a rational and orderly presentation of the doctrinal truths of Christianity

testament – An agreement or will; used in the Bible as a synonym for “covenant”

the age to come – Phrase used by rabbis and leaders in Israel to describe the future age of righteousness, love, joy and peace that would follow the exile; time when all of God’s purposes for history would be fulfilled

this age – Phrase used by rabbis and leaders in Israel to describe the present age of sin, suffering and death

Zealots – First-century Jewish sect that believed God would usher in the age to come only when the Jews rose up militarily against the Roman rulers