

Biblical Theology

Session I: What Is Biblical Theology?

Housekeeping

- Introduction to me, everyone else...
- [Handout]
- Packet...outline...schedule...commitments...homework load...
- Purpose...
- Goal...risk...discipleship model...

Opening

- Read **Luke 24:13-27, 44-49**. [PRAY]
- If you wanted to, you hop on a boat here in Piqua Ohio and make it all the way to the Atlantic Ocean. You could put a boat on the Miami River and follow the river downstream, through Troy and into Dayton where it joins up with other rivers and continues south to Cincinnati where the Miami river dumps into the Ohio river. From the Ohio river, if you were to continue downstream, you would travel southwest past Indiana, where at the southernmost tip of Illinois, the Ohio river would dump you into the Mississippi. The Mississippi would go downstream and dump you into the Gulf of Mexico, where you could travel around Florida and into the Atlantic Ocean.
- The Bible is like this. You can hitch a ride on any chapter and any verse and the undercurrent of the text will eventually lead you to the vast ocean of God's glory in Jesus. This is why Jesus was able to lead those two men from Moses and all the Prophets to Himself. Jesus said in John 5:39 the Scriptures bear witness to Him. Biblical theology is the boat that follows the bible's river to Jesus.
- Now turn to Mark chapter 9. Here on the mountain we have Moses, a representative of the Law and Elijah, a representative of the Prophets. A cloud descends and God the Father speaks, "**This is my beloved Son; listen to Him.**" The disciples look around and they see Jesus only. Mark is telling us something. The law and the prophets are swallowed up in Jesus, with God the Father endorsing Him and commanding them to listen to Jesus.
- Over the course of the next six sessions, I hope to help you feel out the undercurrent of the text leading you to Jesus. Here's the good news. If you're a Christian, you already have everything you need to do this. You have the Spirit of God and the Bible. This is one of the roles of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said this about the Spirit in John 16:14, "**He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.**" So the first and greatest tool you need to do Biblical Theology is the Spirit of God, which every blood-bought Christian has in full measure.



- Of course, we can always get better at it. God has given us help. And so we look to guides to help us. For this course, you'll need two books. The first: The Bible. We use the ESV translation, but most other modern translations will work. The second: *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* by Graeme Goldsworthy. Sections of this book will be assigned reading.
- What is Biblical Theology? Well, before we can get a definition of Biblical Theology, we need a definition of the Bible. Let's make sure we are on the same page with our definition of the Bible.

What Is the Bible?

- We believe the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments to be God's Word. We believe the Bible is verbally inspired, inerrant, totally sufficient and trustworthy, and the sole authority for the church.
- Scripture is "verbally inspired". 2Peter 1:20-21, "**...no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**" The supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on the authors of Scripture rendered their writings an accurate record of revelation which resulted that what they wrote was actually the Word of God.
- The Bible is "inerrant". 2Timothy 3:16-17, "**All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**" In its original manuscripts, Scripture does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact. The logic that flows from 2Timothy 3:16 is this: God is perfect and cannot error; Scripture is God-breathed; what God breathes retains His perfect nature; therefore, Scripture cannot error.
- The Bible is totally sufficient and trustworthy. Here is what I mean. God has revealed Himself to everyone through Creation and man's conscience. Yet, these general forms of revelation are not sufficient to convey the knowledge of God and His will that is necessary for salvation. In mercy and grace, God has revealed Himself and His will in the 66 books of the Bible. It contains all that is necessary for God's glory, the salvation of sinners, and all we need for life and godliness. Nothing may be added to Scripture, either by new revelation or traditions of men.
- Last, the Bible is the sole authority of the church. We hold to the doctrine of "*sola scriptura*"—Scripture alone is our final authority. This is a distinctly protestant doctrine. The Roman Catholic church maintains that church tradition is equal to, and I would argue, greater than Scripture. But we maintain Scripture alone is our authority.
- For me the most convincing reason I believe the Bible is true is that Jesus believed the Bible was true. No one had a higher view of Scripture than Lord Jesus. And if Jesus believe it, that settles it for me.
- So, along with Christians across 2 millennia, we hold a high view of Scripture. Does that mean we should read the Bible literally? Yes...and no. We should read it literature-ly.
- The Bible is one book that is a library of books. It contains several types of literature. Different types of literature are to be read differently. So you read historical narrative differently than you do, say, poetic literature. When we



read that God will hide His people under the shadow of His wings in the Psalms we don't take that to mean that God literally has wings like a chicken. We understand this is a figure of speech. When we read God physically raised Jesus from the dead in the gospels, we understand that literally. With me?

- Alright, now we can get to the definition. What is Biblical Theology?

What Is Biblical Theology?

- *“Biblical theology is a way of reading the Bible as one story by one divine Author that culminates in one Man, Jesus Christ and what He has done, so that every part of Scripture is understood in relation to Him.”* (Biblical Theology, Roark & Cline) It's an attempt to understand every part of the Bible as streams and rivers leading us to God's glory in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Make sense?
 - Dr. Jim Hamilton puts a finer point on this, making the main theme about the glory of God in salvation through judgment.
- Some people may have this idea that God created the world good and everyone was happy. Then Adam and Eve rebelled against God and so God had to adjust His plans. Jesus had to come and die on a cross. But that's not what the Bible teaches. The cross wasn't plan-B Turn in your Bible to 2Timothy chapter 1. Look at verse 9 & 10.
- **“[God] saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel...”**
- Look closely at verse 9. What does Paul say are the two reasons God saved us? [His purpose; His grace] And *when exactly* did God give grace to us? When we asked for forgiveness for our sins? When we walked an aisle to accept Jesus into our heart? [Before the ages began].
- Hold up a second! God gave grace before I was made? Before Adam and Eve were made? Before *anything* was made? Verse 10 says that God's purpose and grace has been manifested/revealed through the appearing of Jesus. So put this together. God's purpose from before the beginning was to save sinners by grace through Jesus Christ. Everything God has done and is doing and ever will do is about the glory of His grace in Jesus Christ. It's all about Jesus.
- Everything, from Genesis 1 forward was about the cross, and everything springs from there. The bible is split into Old Testament and New Testament. Everything *before* the cross points to the cross. Everything *after* the cross points back to the cross. Jesus abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel—His life, death, and resurrection.
- Understanding Jesus as the centerpiece of history was what the earliest Christians understood the Bible to teach. In Acts 17, Paul and Silas are in the town of Thessalonica preaching Jesus. Acts 17:2-3, **“And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures,**



explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.’” Some believed, others didn’t. Paul and Silas did the same thing in Berea and we are told, “**...they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.**” (17:11)

- Because the Bible is one story, then every part of the Bible will be consistent with and coherent with the rest of the Bible. Therefore it was right of the Bereans to use Scripture to verify the Apostle’s teaching.
- That’s Biblical theology. One book, one story, one glory, one man. Why is Biblical Theology Important? Why do we need it? More to the point, what happens if we don’t do Biblical theology?

Why Is Biblical Theology Important?

- A Catholic parish is entrusted to a what? A priest. In the Catholic tradition, he is called a priest because priests were the only people in the Old Testament permitted by God to offer sacrifices. And since they believe the Eucharist—the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper—are the actual body and blood of Jesus being sacrificed again, they are called priests.
- The problem with this is not that the Catholic church is not reading the Bible. They are. It’s not that they are twisting the Bible, even. It’s that they are not doing Biblical theology. They aren’t putting the Old Testament and the New Testament together right. The book of Hebrews shows that Christ is our great High Priest, He offered His body and blood once for all. And there is no longer a need to offer blood sacrifices, or for Christ to be sacrificed over and over. The Eucharist (Lord’s Supper) takes on a different meaning, thus not requiring a special priesthood to perform the ceremony.
 - Can you think of another way the “special priesthood” of the Catholic church has neglected Biblical Theology? [*1Peter 2:5; Rev 1:6; Priesthood of all believers...*]
- Another result of not doing Biblical Theology is Prosperity Theology. Turn to Deuteronomy chapter 30. Starting in verse 8. **“And you shall again obey the voice of the Lord and keep all his commandments that I command you today. ⁹ The Lord your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your cattle and in the fruit of your ground. For the Lord will again take delight in prospering you, as he took delight in your fathers, ¹⁰ when you obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in this Book of the Law, when you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”**
- Now let’s be clear. This is a promise to God’s people that if we obey God, keep His commandments, then He will prosper us in all our work. That’s a promise from God, is it not? We would not be twisting the Bible to say that God has forever connected righteousness to blessing. The prosperity gospel says that if I have faith in God, keep His commandments, He will bless me with health and wealth. That’s what the text says.
- So why aren’t we all prosperity theology teachers? Because Biblical Theology. Doing Biblical theology shows that this promise was given to God’s people as they are about to enter the Promised Land. God’s purpose in



choosing them was to make them a kingdom of priests who would tell the nations of the world about God. If they are true to God's word and do His will, He will bless them.

- Did Israel do this? Did anyone in Israel love God with all their heart, and with all their soul? No. Israel did not obey the voice of the Lord. They did not keep the commandments of the Lord. They abandoned God's purposes and made their own. Therefore the curses of verses 17-18 applied to them.
- Biblical Theology helps us read the text in light of the whole story. This passage (like all passages) is a stream which carries us where? To Christ and the cross. God's people came into the Land God gave them and they turned after foreign gods. They failed to do accomplish the mission God gave them.
- So, Jesus Christ came and He kept God's commandments in their place. He was the fulfillment of the priesthood ministry of Israel. All the conditional blessings, Jesus earned. He loved God with all His heart and soul. He earned the blessings of righteousness. So the prosperity theology is right for anyone who could keep God's Law and fulfill God's purpose. Trouble is, no one has...No one except...Jesus.
- Thus, those who have been united to Him (by faith) are forgiven of their sins and gifted the righteousness He earned. Our blessings for His righteousness are in Him, with Him, in heavenly places. And they will be our inheritance when He returns. And when we come to the last book of the Bible, we see people from every nation and tribe and tongue having been gathered to the Lamb of God. See what I mean. It's not that prosperity theology is completely wrong, its just that their timing is off and their vision is way, way too low!
- Not doing Biblical Theology could lead to Catholicism or Prosperity Theology. But these are minor threats compared to the next one. It's far more prevalent in evangelical churches and it's subtle. But time spent reading the Bible the way it is suppose to be read will enable you to spot it in your life and in the church.
- I wish there was a better term for it, since this term has been overplayed in the last decade and a half. But it's a term coined by an evangelical philosopher named Christian Smith, it's called "*moralistic therapeutic deism*". Moralistic therapeutic deism. Let's unpack the phrase first and then give some examples. We'll unpack it working backwards.
- It is deism. Deism is the belief that there is a God but that He isn't involved into life and day-to-day of His creation. He built the clock, wound the clock, and He is watching it run. Thomas Jefferson was a deist. Many modern "church goers" are functionally deists. They believe that God acts as a sort of cosmic therapist, to advise them of ways they can improve their life. And that's how they read the Bible.
- The Bible is therapeutic. It helps me get over my problems with my parents, my spouse/boyfriend/girlfriend, kids, that jerk at my job. Jesus is a sort of miracle-working butler to help me be a good person. Thus, it is moralistic. It is about being and doing good. It is about being a good worker and citizen and it makes me feel good about myself.
- Moralistic Therapeutic Deism happens when we neglect Biblical Theology. The classic example. David and Goliath, which we recently had the opportunity to study together. So often the David and Goliath story is told



like this. There is a little shepherd boy who has to fight a giant. Everyone is scared of this giant. David has faith in God and kills the giant with a stone and a slingshot. Everyone charges into battle after him.

- You are like David. You have giants in your life. The giant of fear. The giant of anxiety. You have an eating disorder. You have a giant of addiction to pills, alcohol, pornography. Be brave. little one, go into the valley, believe in God, and kill that giant with your faith.
- What's the problem with that understanding of the text? Well first of all, that's not how *anyone* of the first readers of 1Samuel would have understood that. They were reading a history book, a history of how God delivered them. There was a giant, an invader in the Land God gave them. They were scared, paralyzed by fear. And God sent someone, from among them, to defeat the giant, and he won victory for God's people.
- Biblical theology teaches us to read the Bible as one story—God's story. This story of David and Goliath is about God revealing His glory in Jesus Christ. Once you know that, it's not hard to understand how to read 1Samuel 17.
- There is an invader in the Land. It's giant and terrifying. God's people are paralyzed. God sends forth a Man, from among the people. The Man trusts God, defeats the giant and His victory is given to God's people. Biblical theology teaches us to see that we aren't David in the story—Jesus is. In His death and resurrection, the Lord Jesus defeated the giant in our life (sin/death). His victory is credited to us...and so we follow Him into battle against the enemy.
- So instead of trusting in yourself (or more specifically trusting in your faith) to save you, you trust in Jesus. He has already defeated the enemy. We don't need to be afraid—Jesus is our refuge. We don't need to worry, Jesus is our provider. The power of an eating disorder, as an attempt to control our lives, dries up because we can trust the Lord is in control and has already won the battle for us. Likewise, addiction, which feels so external to us, we realize isn't. It's an internal issue, which Christ has already fixed. We realize that we've been looking to alcohol and pills to cope, pornography to feel powerful and desirable. But we already have all that in Jesus. So we find our satisfaction in Him and suddenly addiction loses its grip.
- We could go on. Here's the point. Biblical theology gives us the tools we need to see the big picture, to take the birds eye view and by doing so, we'll be able to see the point of the Bible more clearly, read the Bible more richly, appreciate the gospel more fully, and worship the Lord more deeply.

In-Class Examples:

- [If time] Genesis 1-2, create everything, gives order/structure, Bible says, God looked upon things made saw was good. Adam sins, corruption spreads. Come to Genesis 6, God "looks upon earth" sees corrupt (v12). Mankind has become so corrupt that God de-creates the world. In the creation account the waters were separated from the dry land and in the Flood they are joined and cover the dry land.
- But God shows mercy to Noah and his family, saving them from His judgment, by placing them inside an ark. The waters of judgment falls on the ark, but they are safe inside. After some time they find dry land in Genesis 8



and there is language used there eerily similar to the creation language, they walk into a renewed earth (as it were) and we have another “be fruitful and multiply” mandate.

- This story isn't about cute animals on a boat trip. Nor is it about you and I needing to obey God even when it doesn't make sense. That *can* be an application of the Noah story. But the story is really about trusting in God's means of saving His people by uniting them to His means of mercy—His Son. The judgment of God falls on Him. He is raised from the dead. And sinners, safely united to Him by faith, eventually find themselves walking into a new heavens and new earth to the glory of God. See what I mean?
- God bringing glory to Himself in the salvation of sinners from judgment through Jesus Christ. Biblical theology.



Assignments

- In the next couple of sessions, we're going to work through the Old Testament. Your reading assignments for this week are cover some of the things we've discussed tonight and some of the things we'll look at next time.
- In the Bible, your reading will be: Genesis 1-11. In the Goldsworthy book, read chapters 1, 4-5, 9-11.

