

“A bag of gold. DeRouchie, Martin, and Naselli gift the church with an abundance of riches. These three fine scholars examine biblical theology from every conceivable angle—definition, methodology, hermeneutics, theology, typology, storyline of the Bible, and the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament, to name a few. This volume is a wonderful entry point into the vast and complex field of biblical theology. My prayer is that lay people, students, pastors, and teachers would take up and read.”

—Benjamin L. Gladd,
Associate Professor of New Testament,
Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, MS

“This is not only a book for professionals and scholars; this is a book that every serious student of the Bible should own and refer to often. Although it proceeds on the basis of the evangelical faith, Christians of all persuasions will find this a mine of well-organized, clearly written, comprehensive, informative, and easy to understand discussions of the forty questions posed. The matters dealt with are not only relevant to those who focus on biblical theology as a discipline, but also concern the formation of systematic, historical, practical, and homiletic theology. The authors have used every means at their disposal to make this the kind of reference book in which every aspect of biblical theology is presented in a format that makes the information easy to find. I wish I had had a book like this when—over sixty years ago—I began my own journey in biblical theology.”

—Graeme Goldsworthy,
Lecturer Emeritus in Biblical Theology, Old Testament, and Hermeneutics
Moore Theological College, Sydney, Australia

“When people get a taste of biblical theology, it makes them hungry for more. They wonder where this way of understanding the Bible has been all their lives. They want to know how they can learn more. I’ll be telling them that *40 Questions About Biblical Theology* is a great place to start and that it will continue to be a terrific resource to keep coming back to.”

—Nancy Guthrie,
Teacher, Biblical Theology Workshops for Women;
Author of *Even Better Than Eden*

“Good biblical theology is needed for a faithful and full reading of the Bible; it is thus essential for Christian living and teaching. *40 Questions About Biblical Theology* provides the framework and theory by answering questions in bite-sized chapters. Examples of biblical-theological themes and readings of Bible passages highlight the value of this approach and draw out the richness of God’s Word. More than just an introduction, DeRouchie, Martin, and Naselli’s book also provides a snapshot of the discipline in 2020, with references for the interested reader to chase. This book helps us see how the whole Bible fits together and points to and is fulfilled in Christ, and as such, is a great safeguard against moralism. Highly recommended for Christians the world over.”

—Peter H. W. Lau,
Researcher and Writer, OMF International;
Old Testament Book Review Editor, *Themelios*

“When three scholars who are committed to the Bible as the inspired Word of God combine efforts to write a book like this, you should not be surprised that you have a landmark product in your hands. Study biblical theology! When well understood, it is like a well-cut diamond that sparkles and bounces the light of Christ on every page of the Bible, leaving you worshipping the God of history as the God of wonders. Get this book, because it not only teaches you biblical theology, but also leaves you with a growing appetite for God’s Word.”

—Conrad Mbewe, Pastor,
Kabwata Baptist Church, Lusaka, Zambia

“I was thrilled to see Kregel take on the subject of biblical theology in this particular series because the format makes this vitally important subject accessible to readers. I was doubly thrilled to see the trio of pros who wrote it! Pastors will benefit from *40 Questions About Biblical Theology* because it contains important Christ-exalting observations and implications for the church and is written with a pastoral tone throughout. Professors will benefit from it as they look for supplemental texts on the subject. Church members will gain a good understanding of the themes and the redemptive storyline of Scripture. And I wouldn’t hesitate handing this book to some inquisitive skeptics, since I find the unity of the Bible to be a powerful apologetic—one that we should not overlook when giving a defense of the faith. May all who read it walk away with a deeper love for Jesus our Savior, who is magnified throughout the pages of Holy Scripture.”

—Tony Merida, Pastor for Preaching, Imago Dei Church, Raleigh, NC;
Dean, Grimké Seminary;
Director for Theological Training, Acts 29

“Biblical theology is among the most contested and misunderstood disciplines of biblical and theological study. It is also among the richest and most rewarding. And faithful teaching and preaching of the Bible depends on a clear understanding of biblical theology. This lucid and engaging *40 Questions* volume is a comprehensive guide to its definition, presuppositions, major themes, and applications. Highly recommended for students and ministers alike.”

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“DeRouchie, Martin, and Naselli have written a beautifully clear introduction to biblical theology. They explain what biblical theology is, unpack how it works by considering key topics, illustrate it by considering central texts, and apply it to our lives today. We also benefit as readers in having an Old Testament scholar, a New Testament scholar, and a systematic theologian working together on the project. Their interdisciplinary collaboration gives the book both depth and breadth. I recommend enthusiastically this introduction to biblical theology.”

—Thomas R. Schreiner,
James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation
and Associate Dean, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“What is biblical theology? What does it include? How do we do it? What themes can we better understand from it? How does it help us, as individuals and as the church? Old Testament scholar Jason DeRouchie, New Testament scholar Andy Naselli, and systematic theologian Oren Martin team up to address these questions and more. The result is this valuable, perceptive, and noteworthy volume.”

—Christopher W. Morgan,
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California Baptist University

“Biblical theology can look like a maze with many twists and turns for novices and for experts—if there is an expert in Scripture. With the many intricacies, the more guides one has the better, as with many counselors success is most achievable. Here we have three escorts to lead us through the maze to behold the King in his beauty. These pastor-scholars have composed a primer to biblical theology that answers some of the most puzzling questions in the field. They do not disappoint as ushers into the world of biblical theology, giving us tools to mine the treasures of Christ. I heartily recommend this work.”

—Dieudonné Tamfu, Pastor, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Yaoundé, Cameroon;
Assistant Professor of Bible and Theology and Executive
Director of Cameroon Extension Site, Bethlehem College & Seminary

“DeRouchie, Martin, and Naselli present the essence of biblical theology in moving and captivating ways. Though the level of scholarship is high, the question-and-answer format allows one to read and comprehend without difficulty. By defining, comparing, illustrating, and applying biblical theology, the authors magnify the overarching storyline of Scripture in such a vivid way that none can miss it. The book answers the key questions in the discipline and will serve as a foundational textbook. But even more, readers will not escape the intense urge to worship the Triune God as they grow in their understanding of the great salvation that Messiah Jesus has accomplished! DeRouchie, Martin, and Naselli have given us a treasure that needs to be in the hands of pastors, laypersons, and scholars alike.”

—Frew Tamrat,
Principal, Evangelical Theological College,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

“In every era, the church stands or falls on its knowledge of the triune God from Scripture. Apart from the exposition and application of ‘the whole counsel of God,’ the church will endlessly drift and wander. This is why the study of biblical theology is so important. Biblical theology is the theological discipline that seeks to understand all that Scripture teaches on its own terms. In this very helpful book, our authors introduce the reader to the study of biblical theology and its importance for the life and health of the church. By thinking through different approaches to biblical theology and then illustrating how biblical theology is done in practice, this book is a valuable resource for all those who want to know Scripture better.”

—Stephen J. Wellum,
Professor of Christian Theology,
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“This is an outstanding resource for the study of biblical theology. The question-and-answer format makes it ideal for both classroom instruction and self-study. Not only do the authors define and compare approaches to biblical theology (Parts 1–2), but they also illustrate and apply it (Parts 3–5) from a variety of important angles. DeRouchie, Martin, and Naselli are to be commended for their work in the service of the church.”

—Miles V. Van Pelt,
Alan Hayes Belcher Jr. Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Languages,
Director of the Summer Institute for Biblical Languages,
and Academic Dean, Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, MS

40 QUESTIONS ABOUT
Biblical Theology

Jason S. DeRouchie
Oren R. Martin
Andrew David Naselli

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40 Questions About Biblical Theology

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Published by Kregel Academic, an imprint of Kregel Publications, 2450 Oak Industrial Dr. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505-6020.

This book is a title in the 40 Questions Series edited by Benjamin L. Merkle.

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ISBN 978-0-8254-4560-6

Printed in the United States of America

20 21 22 23 24 / 5 4 3 2 1

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Introduction

The glorious, transcendent God *over us* has graciously “stooped down” to speak to and fellowship *with us* (Gen. 1–2). The Lord who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity (Isa. 57:15), is also the Lord who draws near, acts, and speaks in order to establish, sustain, and perfect fellowship with his people. He has spoken to us most supremely by his Son (Heb. 1:1–2), and by his Spirit he has given us his words in Scripture (1 Cor. 2:12–13; 2 Peter 1:20–21)—the very words of life (John 6:68–69; Acts 5:20). Scripture, therefore, is a gift from God, and we hope this book on biblical theology will help you understand it.

But why add to the growing list of books on biblical theology? This book on biblical theology is important for a number of reasons. First, Kregel established this particular series to address various important theological topics in clear and accessible ways for the church. As both professors and pastors, we regularly teach biblical theology, and so an introductory book that concisely yet comprehensively covers various topics in biblical theology will serve our students and churches. Most of all, we long for the living and true God to sanctify his church—the pillar and buttress of truth. Therefore, this book is our attempt to aid in this joyful task, for both our joy and God’s glory in Christ.

Second, the Triune God created and called Christians to know him and his saving works in Christ by the Spirit through what he has revealed. God the Holy Trinity is a fountain of life (Ps. 36:9[10]),¹ and this life is characterized by communication and communion. God the Father eternally communicates his life to the Son (John 5:26), who is his Word, image, radiance, and exact imprint (John 1:1; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). Together the Father and Son communicate this life to the Spirit (John 15:26–16:15), who works to give life (John 3:1–8; Titus 3:5) and bring us into this Trinitarian-shaped life of communion. We come to know this life only because the Triune God has revealed it to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ. “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Matt. 11:27). Thankfully, the Son invites us to come to him

1. When the Hebrew and English verse numberings differ, we will include the Hebrew numbering in brackets.

(11:28–30) and sends his Spirit who is from God, that we may understand the things God freely gives us (1 Cor. 2:12). Thus, the Holy Trinity redeems and enables Christians to know him through the works and words he has revealed in his Word. If this is the case, then we must grow in understanding his works and words so that we may better know him—a glorious task that will occupy us for the rest of our lives and, yes, for eternity (indeed, God is just that infinitely glorious and wonderful!).

Third, mining the Scriptures to know the only true God and his saving ways in Christ is the work of apprentices training for eternal life. Biblical theology is an essential path to reach that goal. But biblical theology is not just one way to read the Bible. Because all Scripture is from God and progresses, integrates, and climaxes in Christ—as Christians throughout the ages have confessed—the Bible demands we read it in a certain way. God speaks to his people through his Word and words and, as a result, we must read it according to *what it is* and *how God has structured it*. In other words, it is *God's word* from beginning to end, from Genesis to Revelation, and therefore we must receive and read it accordingly. This reception and reading is the task of biblical theology. This task, however, is not always easy. Why? Perhaps an illustration will help.

As a father of young children, I (Oren) have spent a significant amount of time building (and stepping on!) tiny individual building blocks that, when properly fitted together, form a masterpiece. I have learned (often the hard way) that each stage is crucial in the building process, and that to skip a step for the sake of efficiency often ends in undesirable and frustrating results. Therefore, the builder must carefully progress through the steps. The first thing to do when beginning the building process is to lay out and examine the pieces, which often brings confusion and anxiety as the task awaits—confusion because it initially seems impossible to see how these tiny and diverse pieces will fit together to form the unified whole, and anxiety because of the prospect of time it will take to complete it. As the set grows more complex, the blocks grow in diversity and number, increasing the confusion and anxiety. It is easy to miss the proverbial forest for the trees. Thankfully, however, hidden among the parts is a manual that contains what is needed: a picture and instructions that guide the process toward the goal. And so the builder moves step by step and piece by piece until that picture reaches the grand reality.

Reading and understanding Scripture can often feel like those building sets. The individual parts can at times seem disconnected from the whole, especially when those parts are foreign to us (e.g., culture, language, genres). What is needed, then, is a picture that guides us toward the goal. Thankfully, God has provided such a picture—the glorious gospel of our blessed God (1 Tim. 1:11). And though our knowledge will forever be finite and therefore we will never know exhaustively how each part fits into that glorious whole, we nevertheless can grow by God's grace to become better builders by

analyzing and synthesizing the whole canon on its own terms and by trusting that God has truly given us what we need to know him and his saving purposes in Christ. Thus, we have written this book to explain how to better understand God's Word. May we fix our eyes on Jesus as we make our way through it. And may God's grace fuel our efforts to understand and proclaim the whole counsel of God to see the obedience that flows from faith realized among all the nations for the sake of Christ's name (Rom. 1:5).

A couple of notes about this book are in order: (1) Although you may read this book from beginning to end, we wrote it in such a way that you may read a particular question without a knowledge of the other questions. So feel free to look through the table of contents to see if there is a particular question that most interests you (though it may help to read some of the methodological questions first). (2) Although one person is primarily responsible for writing each chapter, the other two authors gave significant feedback on all the material.

Words of Thanks

There are many people whom we should thank for making this book a reality. We wish to thank Ben Merkle, the series editor, and Kregel for allowing us to add this book to an excellent series from which we have greatly benefited.

I (Jason) thank Oren for collaborating with me and Andy and for bringing to this book a pastoral heart that helps others revel in the Triune God. I am grateful to the administrations at both Bethlehem College & Seminary and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary for empowering my writing and for celebrating with me an approach to the Old Testament that exalts Christ. I thank my fourth-year MDiv biblical theology students and my co-teacher and coauthor Andy Naselli for engaging thoughtfully, questioning insightfully, and worshipping with me over the beauties of Christ seen in the whole of Scripture. I am grateful to my research assistant Brian Verrett for his careful eye to both form and content and for his numerous thoughtful suggestions regarding the book as a whole. I thank my wife, Teresa, and my six kids for joining me in this great work of academic ministry and for treasuring the God who reveals himself in a Word that progresses, integrates, and climaxes in Jesus. Finally, I thank the Joint Heirs Sunday School class of Bethlehem Baptist Church north campus who came week after week for thirteen years to study the whole counsel of God, to awaken a heart for the nations, and to nurture hope in the gospel from the Old Testament. I dedicate my portion of this volume to you, and I will forever praise the Lord for letting us love, live, and learn together.

I (Oren) thank the trustees and administration of Southern Seminary for granting me a sabbatical in the fall of 2018, during which time the bulk of my part was written. I also thank Jason DeRouchie and Andy Naselli for the privilege of cowriting this book with them. I did not want to write this book alone; your names were first on my list; and your contributions have made it

far, far better. Thank you for your friendship, example, encouragement, and feedback. I also thank my wife, Cindy, who is a joyful and faithful Christian, wife, mother, and partner in the gospel. My life is abundantly richer because of her. Lastly, I thank my children—Jonathan, Anna, and Benjamin—to whom I dedicate my portion of this book. As I wrote at the dining room table watching and listening to them play, I was filled with joy because of the gifts they are to me. My hope and prayer is that one day they may read and benefit from this book—but even more, that they would find their supreme joy in Christ, who alone can save and satisfy them.

I (Andy) am grateful to Layton Talbert for introducing me to biblical theology. I'm grateful to Don Carson for mentoring me and modeling how to do biblical theology. I'm grateful to my school, Bethlehem College & Seminary, for encouraging and empowering me to research and write in order to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ. I'm grateful to Jason DeRouchie for co-teaching a fourth-year graduate course with me on biblical theology for the past five years. And I'm grateful for my wife, Jenni, who enthusiastically supports the research-writing-teaching-shepherding ministry that God has called me to.

Most of all, we wish to thank our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to his blessed kingdom where we find both joy and life. May he use this book—shortcomings and all—to help us all to better behold the glory of the Lord and to transform us from one degree of glory to another by the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18).

PART 1

Defining Biblical Theology

QUESTION 1

What Do We Mean by “Biblical Theology”?

Andrew David Naselli

Biblical theology is a slippery term that people define in many ways. Edward W. Klink III and Darian R. Lockett present and illustrate five types of biblical theology:¹

1. historical description (e.g., James Barr)
2. history of redemption (e.g., D. A. Carson)
3. worldview-story (e.g., N. T. Wright)
4. canonical approach (e.g., Brevard Childs)
5. theological construction (e.g., Francis Watson)

People do biblical theology in different ways.² The type of biblical theology that we are advocating in this book blends types 2, 3, and 4—as do exegetes such as Geerhardus Vos, D. A. Carson, G. K. Beale, Stephen G. Dempster, T. D. Alexander, Thomas R. Schreiner, James M. Hamilton Jr., Peter J. Gentry, and Stephen J. Wellum. Redemptive history *is* a worldview story, and we analyze that story by studying the literary features of the unified canon.³

-
1. See also Andrew David Naselli, *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2017), 231–35; and Edward W. Klink III and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).
 2. See Question 10 below.
 3. We are not convinced that Klink and Lockett rightly present five distinct types of biblical theology. Types 1 and 5 are not properly biblical theology, and types 2–4 belong together. Further, Klink and Lockett do not fairly critique D. A. Carson. See also Darian Lockett, “Limitations of a Purely Salvation-Historical Approach to Biblical Theology,” *HBT* 39, no. 2 (2017): 211–31. For a critique of Klink and Lockett (as well as Lockett’s article), see

Here’s how we understand biblical theology:

- *Shorter definition:* Biblical theology studies how the whole Bible progresses, integrates, and climaxes in Christ.
- *Longer definition:* Biblical theology is a way of analyzing and synthesizing the Bible that makes organic, salvation-historical connections with the whole canon on its own terms, especially regarding how the Old and New Testaments progress, integrate, and climax in Christ.

Let’s begin by focusing on four aspects of the longer definition.

Biblical Theology Makes Organic Connections

When you hear the word *organic*, you might think of food that is healthy and expensive. That’s not what we’re trying to connote when we say “organic.” *Organic* relates to how elements harmoniously grow together as parts of a whole.

Think of an apple tree. It starts out as a seed that sprouts and slowly grows into a mature tree that bears apples. The tree has several parts: roots, trunk, branches, leaves, apples. And it’s all one tree.

Many themes in the Bible are like that. They start off early in the Bible’s storyline as a seed. Then they sprout and slowly grow into a mature tree that bears fruit. Biblical theology studies and synthesizes that growth. It traces that growth by making organic connections, by showing how the parts relate to the whole.

Biblical Theology Makes Salvation-Historical Connections

Salvation history refers to the Bible’s redemptive storyline. That storyline moves from creation to the fall to redemption to consummation. God has a multistage plan to save his people from their sins. This is the history of redemption, the story of salvation. It’s a true story. It’s real history. And biblical theology connects key people and events within it. Biblical theology focuses on the turning points in the Bible’s storyline.

There are several overlapping ways to make organic, salvation-historical connections:

1. Trace a theme’s salvation-historical progression. For example, trace the theme of *serpent* from Genesis to Revelation.⁴

D. A. Carson, “New Covenant Theology and Biblical Theology,” in *God’s Glory Revealed in Christ: Essays on Biblical Theology in Honor of Thomas R. Schreiner*, eds. Denny Burk, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Brian Vickers (Nashville: B&H, 2019), 17–31.

4. See Question 23 below.

2. Consider continuity and discontinuity between the covenants. For example, compare and contrast how OT Israel related to the Mosaic law versus how Christians should today.⁵
3. Track promise and fulfillment. For example, work through the fulfillment language (πληρώω, *plēroō*, “fulfill”) in the Gospel of Matthew, and connect it to the OT.⁶
4. Trace type and antitype. Typology analyzes how NT persons, events, and institutions (i.e., antitypes) fulfill OT persons, events, and institutions (i.e., types) by repeating the OT situations at a deeper, climactic level in salvation history. For example, in John 6:32–33 Jesus fulfills God’s giving manna in the OT by repeating that event at a deeper, climactic level in the history of salvation.⁷
5. Think through how the New Testament uses the Old. Why do NT authors quote or allude to specific OT passages in the way they do?⁸

Those are ways to make organic, salvation-historical connections. That’s what biblical theology is all about.

What are some significant themes that biblical theology should trace from Genesis to Revelation? The editors of the *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible* had to think through that question carefully when they designed that resource.⁹ The study Bible’s main distinctive is that it focuses on biblical theology, not only in the notes but in a section of essays at the back of the study Bible. The editors decided to include short biblical-theological essays for twenty-five themes:

1. The glory of God
2. Creation
3. Sin
4. Covenant
5. Law
6. Temple
7. Priest
8. Sacrifice

5. See Questions 6, 25, and 26.

6. See Question 7.

7. See Questions 8, 27, 29, 32, and 33.

8. See Questions 9 and 31–35.

9. D. A. Carson, ed., *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018). D. A. Carson is the general editor; associate editors are Douglas J. Moo, T. D. Alexander, and Richard S. Hess; and Andrew David Naselli is the assistant editor.

9. Exile and exodus
10. The kingdom of God
11. Sonship
12. The city of God
13. Prophets and prophecy
14. Death and resurrection
15. People of God
16. Wisdom
17. Holiness
18. Justice
19. Wrath
20. Love and grace
21. The gospel
22. Worship
23. Mission
24. Shalom
25. The consummation

It’s relatively straightforward to study these typological trajectories straight through the canon, but it gets more complicated when you analyze and synthesize how so many of these themes interweave with each other. They are like interconnecting ligaments and tendons that tie the whole Bible together.

Biblical Theology Analyzes and Synthesizes the Whole Canon

You can do biblical theology in many different ways. In addition to the ways above (i.e., the five overlapping ways to make organic, salvation-historical connections), three other ways are noteworthy:

1. Focus on a single book. You could focus on how a single book contributes to whole-Bible biblical theology, or you could focus on how a single theme in one book relates to that theme in the rest of the Bible. For example, focus on seed in Genesis, righteousness in Romans, or wisdom in 1 Corinthians.
2. Focus on a corpus—that is, the collected writings by a single author. For example, focus on love in John’s writings (the Gospel of John, 1–3 John, and Revelation) or faith in Paul’s thirteen letters. Even a casual Bible reader notices that John says things differently from Paul or Peter. Their emphases differ from and complement one another.
3. Focus on one of the Testaments. For example, focus on kingdom in the NT. If you focus almost exclusively on just one Testament, then that’s

called *Old Testament theology* or *New Testament theology*. Those are subsets of whole-Bible biblical theology.

When we refer to *biblical theology*, we mean *whole-Bible* biblical theology. It includes the three approaches above, but it does not stop there. It studies these particular portions *in light of the whole Bible* because biblical theology analyzes and synthesizes the whole canon. (The canon is the collection of sixty-six books that the church recognizes as belonging to the Bible.)

This presupposes, of course, that the entire Bible is God-breathed and therefore unified and reliable. And it requires that you read the Bible as progressive revelation: God progressively revealed the Bible throughout history, so later revelation builds on earlier revelation.

In 2010 one of us interviewed Steve Dempster regarding his excellent book *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*.¹⁰ Here is how Dempster replied to the question, “Methodologically, what role does the NT play in your OT theology?”

This is a good question. I try to bracket it out as much as possible, but of course it is there always in my consciousness. Nevertheless, I think it is important to argue with Brevard Childs that the Old Testament must have its own discrete witness. That is why, for example, I use the structure of the Hebrew Bible in my Old Testament theology. In my theology this distinctive structure is an important part of the argument. . . .

To answer the question in another way, I think that if I didn’t try to bracket the New Testament out as much as possible, I am sure I wouldn’t have stressed the importance of land in my study, which does not seem to be important—at least on the surface—in the New Testament.

While we understand and respect why Dempster answered the question that way, we don’t think that we should do biblical theology this way *and stop there*. And Dempster agrees.¹¹

10. Andrew David Naselli, “Interview with Stephen Dempster on Old Testament Theology,” *The Gospel Coalition*, August 5, 2010, <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justintaylor/2010/08/05/interview-with-stephen-dempster-on-old-testament-theology>; Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, NSBT 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003).

11. Dempster wrote this to Andy Naselli: “I agree with your assessment. . . . I guess when I say that I try and bracket out the NT understanding first I am certainly not saying that I wish to stay there. I want to read a book on its own first and hear its distinctive voice. But after doing this I have a responsibility and imperative as a Christian scholar to see how this connects to the New Testament and to read the OT in light of the end” (email to Andy Naselli,

It’s valuable to think through what God’s people at any given stage of history may have thought given the revelation they had received up to that point. But we live now—at this point in salvation history. We have the whole canon. We might temporarily “bracket out” part of the canon as a thought experiment, but at the end of the day, we shouldn’t bracket out any part of it. We should read every part of it in light of the whole.¹² When we read any part of the Bible—including the OT—we must read with *Christian* eyes.¹³

So one danger is to focus on the OT in a way that brackets out the NT. But there’s an inverse danger: you can focus on the NT in a way that essentially brackets out the OT. You cannot responsibly read the NT apart from the OT. They are inseparable. As D. A. Carson puts it, “There is likely to be something distorted about a string of learned essays and monographs on, say, Paul, if those essays have been written by someone who has not bothered to study intensely Paul’s Bible.”¹⁴ The single most important literature for understanding the NT is the OT. We must not interpret the NT as though the OT doesn’t exist. If we do, we will badly misread the NT.

November 25, 2015, used with permission). To get an idea of how Dempster reads the New Testament as a key for understanding the Old Testament, see Stephen G. Dempster, “From Slight Peg to Cornerstone to Capstone: The Resurrection of Christ on ‘the Third Day’ according to the Scriptures,” *WTJ* 76, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 371–409.

12. See also Brian S. Rosner, “Biblical Theology,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, eds. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 3: “Biblical theology is principally concerned with the overall theological message of the whole Bible. It seeks to understand the parts in relation to the whole and, to achieve this, it must work with the mutual interaction of the literary, historical, and theological dimensions of the various corpora, and with the inter-relationships of these within the whole canon of Scripture.”
13. See also D. A. Carson, “Current Issues in Biblical Theology: A New Testament Perspective,” *BBR* 5 (1995): 40–41:

All Christian theologians, including those whose area of specialty is the Old Testament or some part of it, are under obligation to read the Old Testament, in certain respects, with Christian eyes. . . . I acknowledge that certain kinds of historical study of the Old Testament documents must specifically disavow later knowledge in order to ensure accurate historical and theological analysis of the people and of the documents they have left behind. At the same time, no Christian *Alttestamentler* [i.e., Old Testament scholar] has the right to leave the challenge of *biblical* study to the New Testament departments. The Gospel records insist that Jesus himself, and certainly his earliest followers after him, read the Old Testament in christological ways. Jesus berated his followers for not discerning these points themselves. The rationale for such exegesis is multifaceted and complex. But if we are *Christian* theologians, that rationale must be teased out from both ends of the canon.

14. Carson, “Current Issues in Biblical Theology,” 34.

Biblical Theology Analyzes and Synthesizes the Whole Canon on Its Own Terms

For biblical theology, the text sets the agenda. That’s why the words *on its own terms* are in the definition. This is what distinguishes biblical theology from systematic theology.¹⁵ Biblical theology prioritizes a passage’s literary context.¹⁶

For systematic theology, the text is important, but other factors often set the agenda. It might be a philosophical question (Is God inside or outside time? Do we have a free will?). Or it might be a modern-day controversial ethical issue (What forms of contraception might be acceptable options for Christians? Is *in vitro* fertilization an option for Christians?). Or it could be a pressing personal question (What must I do to be saved? Should a church baptize infants? Does an unborn infant who dies go to heaven?).

We often have questions about an issue and then ask, “What does the Bible teach about that?” That’s a legitimate and necessary type of question. But it differs from biblical theology in that for the latter, the literary themes of the text itself are what drive the questions.¹⁷

For example, imagine taking a college course on William Shakespeare. As you read one of his plays, you would study its literary context—the role that certain passages have within the play and more broadly within all of Shakespeare’s published works. What particular themes and motifs are prominent in a particular Shakespeare play? What themes and motifs are prominent throughout his plays? You would inductively read a play, and that careful reading is what should lead you to explore themes that are significant in the play.

As you read the Bible, you inductively discover that certain literary themes are prominent. Some of those themes are ones that people typically don’t ask about when they are wondering what the whole Bible teaches about a topic. For example, people don’t generally ask what the whole Bible teaches about sonship or about exile and exodus. But those are themes we should be tracing through the Bible because (1) they are so important in passage after passage, and (2) the divine author wants us to see the interconnections.

Biblical theology is historical, organic, and inductive. Systematic theology is relatively ahistorical, universal, and deductive. See figure 1.1, which contrasts the task and nature of biblical theology with systematic theology.

15. See Question 13.

16. On literary context, see Jason S. DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2017), 323–43; Naselli, *Understand and Apply the New Testament*, 188–205.

17. We don’t mean to imply that the text *never* sets the agenda for systematic theology. It often can and should. But it often does not, and that’s fine. And that’s one way it differs from biblical theology.

	Biblical Theology	Systematic Theology
Final Authority	The Whole Bible	The Whole Bible
Task	Inductively describe what texts say in relation to the whole Bible. Explore how and what each literary genre or canonical unit distinctively communicates.	Deductively describe what the whole Bible teaches (with an objective of engaging and even confronting one’s culture). Integrate and synthesize what the Bible’s literary genres communicate.
Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical and literary • Organic • Inductive • Diachronic (traces how salvation history progresses through time) • Bridging discipline: a little further from culture and a little closer to the biblical text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively ahistorical • Relatively universal • Relatively deductive • Relatively synchronic (focuses on what is true at a point in time) • Culminating and worldview-shaping discipline: a little closer to culture and a little further from the biblical text

Fig. 1.1. Comparing Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology¹⁸

Biblical theology must analyze and synthesize the whole canon on its own terms because it prioritizes literary context—the role that a Bible passage plays in its immediate context, section, book, corpus, testament, and the whole Bible. It is the result of careful reading—interpreting text after text by analyzing what the human authors and what the divine author intended to communicate. Biblical theology is essentially whole-Bible, redemptive-historical exegesis—analyzing text after text to discern what the authors intended to communicate. Exegesis draws the meaning out of a text, and biblical theology does that for the entire unified and God-breathed Bible.

Summary

Biblical theology is a way of analyzing and synthesizing the Bible that makes organic, salvation-historical connections with the whole canon on its own terms, especially regarding how the Old and New Testaments progress, integrate, and climax in Christ.

18. See also DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*, 397–98; and D. A. Carson, “Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology,” in Alexander and Rosner, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 89–104.

- *Organic connections* refer to how elements harmoniously grow together as parts of a whole.
- *Salvation-historical connections* refer to integrating key people and events within the Bible’s storyline.
- Whole-Bible biblical theology analyzes and synthesizes *the whole canon*.
- Biblical theology analyzes and synthesizes the whole canon *on its own terms* because it prioritizes literary context. The task and nature of biblical theology are different than systematic theology.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What is one of your favorite ways of doing biblical theology? Why?
2. Do you tend to read the OT without Christian eyes? Why?
3. What is a biblical-theological theme that you would like to trace through the Bible?
4. Pick a novel you enjoy reading. How might you analyze and synthesize themes in that novel?
5. In your own words, how does biblical theology differ from systematic theology?

QUESTION 2

What Is Scripture's Storyline?

Jason S. DeRouchie

Christ fulfilled the Old Testament (Matt. 5:17; Luke: 24:27, 44; John 5:46) by means of a message and ministry related to God's kingdom (Luke 4:43; Acts 1:3). The kingdom relates to God's reign over God's people in God's land for God's glory.¹ And this theme stands at the core of God's purposes from Genesis to Revelation: God reigns, saves, and satisfies through covenant for his glory in Christ.

What Luke tags in Acts 1:3 as a "kingdom" message after Jesus's resurrection, he earlier describes as a message about the Messiah and the mission he would generate. Thus, Jesus "opened [the disciples'] minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem'" (Luke 24:45–47). In Jesus's view, to understand the OT rightly means that one will see a unified message climaxing in the Messiah—his death and resurrection—and in missions, by which God is declaring the intrusion of his eschatological kingdom (cf. Acts 20:25; 26:22–23; 28:23).

When the Old and New Testaments are read alongside one another, at least seven historical stages are apparent in God's kingdom program. The initial five are the foundation that is ultimately fulfilled in the last two. We use the acronym KINGDOM for easy memorization.

1. See also Jason S. DeRouchie, "Jesus' Bible: An Overview," in *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About: A Survey of Jesus' Bible*, ed. Jason S. DeRouchie (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013), 30–41. While Goldsworthy does not front the importance of God's *reign* for understanding *kingdom* language in the NT, he does similarly note that God's kingdom is characterized by "God's people in God's place under God's rule." Graeme Goldsworthy, *The Goldsworthy Trilogy* (Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 2000), 112.

Old Testament Narrative History	K	Kickoff and Rebellion	1. Creation, fall, and flood (ca. ? BC)
	I	Instrument of Blessing	2. Patriarchs (ca. (1900–1550 BC)
	N	Nation Redeemed and Commissioned	3. Exodus, Sinai, and wilderness (ca. 1450–1400 BC)
	G	Government in the Land	4. Conquest and kingdoms (ca. 1400–600 BC)
	D	Dispersion and Return	5. Exile and initial restoration (ca. 600–400 BC)
New Testament Narrative History	O	Overlap of the Ages	6. Christ's work and the church age (ca. 4 BC–AD ?)
	M	Mission Accomplished	7. Christ's return and kingdom consummation (ca. AD ?–eternity)

Fig. 2.1. God's Kingdom-Building Program at a Glance

The major plot developments through this salvation story are marked by five overlapping covenants, the progression of which detail God's global purposes with humanity. The interrelationship of the covenants is like an hourglass, with the most universal scope occurring at the two ends and the work of Christ at the center. Theologians title the Adamic-Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants in light of the covenant head or mediator through whom God entered into a relationship with his chosen ones. The *old* Mosaic covenant

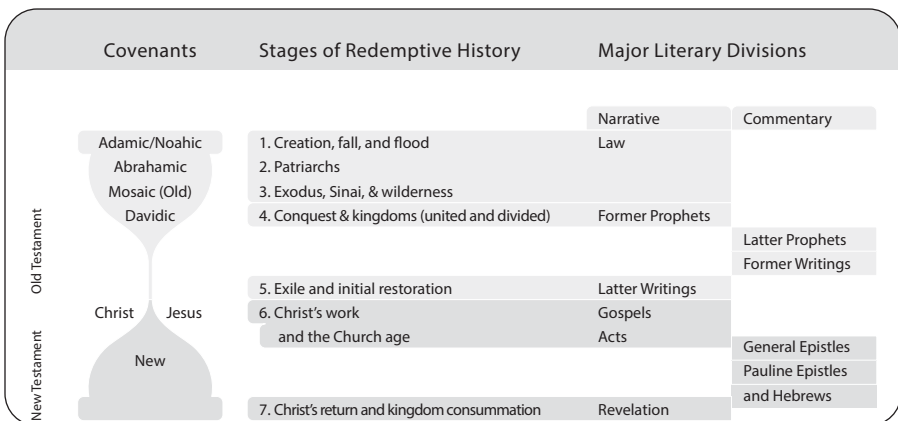


Fig. 2.2. The History of Redemption in the Context of Scripture

and era of punishment contrast with the *new covenant* in Christ, which climaxes all God's purposes in history (see Jer. 31:31–34; Heb. 8:6–13).²



- | | |
|--|---|
| Paradise enjoyed | Blessing to all nations (promise-fulfillment) |
| Fall, sin, rebellion | Waters of judgment (exodus) |
| Exile; paradise lost | Giving of the law |
| Waters of judgment (flood) | Penal substitutionary atonement |
| Patriarchs | Conquest; kingdom established |
| Much offspring (promise-fulfillment) | Saving/atoning work of Christ |
| Land, home, rest (promise-fulfillment) | Fires of judgment |

Fig. 2.3. God's KINGDOM Program through Images

2. See Question 22.

The entire storyline of Scripture pivots on the person and work of Christ. He is the hub around which all turns and the fulcrum upon which all else is weighed. To him all redemptive history points, and through him God fulfills all previous promises. Scripture develops this messianic plotline by asserting over and over again that everything God does is *for his glory*. “I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other” (Isa. 42:8). Yahweh’s ultimate goal at every stage in his kingdom program is to display himself as the supreme Savior, Sovereign, and Satisfier of the world, ultimately through his messianic representative. As such, the Bible’s grand narrative is *the story of God’s glory in Christ*.³ We will utilize a set of images (found in fig. 2.3) to help communicate the movement in Scripture’s grand narrative.

Kickoff and Rebellion (Creation, Fall, and Flood)



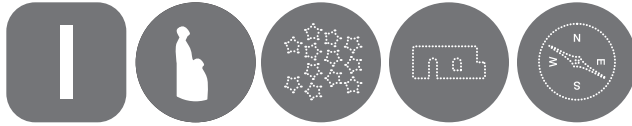
God the creator is worthy of highest praise (1 Chron. 29:11; Rev. 4:11). He created humans to image him and commissioned them to display his greatness throughout the world (Gen. 1:26–28). The first couple failed to honor God rightly, and in light of Adam’s covenantal headship, God now counts all the rest of humanity as having sinned in Adam (Rom. 5:12, 18–19). We are conceived as condemned sinners under God’s just wrath (John 3:36; Eph. 2:1–3), and the result is that all become rebellious and thus fall short of glorifying God as he deserves (Rom. 1:21–23; 3:23). God had called our first parents to heed his voice lest they die (Gen. 2:17), and their rebellion resulted in God’s driving them from his presence outside his garden-sanctuary (3:24).

Before subjecting the world to futility (3:16–19; Rom. 8:20–21), the Lord promised to reestablish cosmic order through a human deliverer, who would decisively overcome the curse and the power of evil (Gen. 3:15). The sustained human sin after the fall resulted in the flood (6:7–8), but God preserved a remnant whose hope was in the coming redeemer. He confirmed through Noah his covenant with creation, thus providing a context in which saving grace would become operative (6:12–13, 18; 8:21–9:1, 9–11). At the Tower of

3. See John Piper, “The Goal of God in Redemptive History,” in *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*, rev. and exp. (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2003), 308–21; cf. Thomas R. Schreiner, “A Biblical Theology of the Glory of God,” in *For the Fame of God’s Name: Essays in Honor of John Piper*, eds. Sam Storms and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 215–34.

Babel, however, such mercy was matched by humankind's exalting themselves over God, resulting in Yahweh's punishing humanity once again (11:1–9).

Instrument of Blessing (Patriarchs)



It was to the praise of his glorious grace that God elected and created a people for himself (Jer. 13:11; Isa. 43:6–7; 49:3; Eph. 1:4–6). Of the seventy families dispersed throughout the earth at Babel (Gen. 10:32), God set apart one through whom he would reverse the global curse with blessing. God's glory compelled Abraham to leave Mesopotamia by faith (Acts 7:2; Heb. 11:8), and Yahweh commissioned him:

Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you so that I may make of you a great nation, and may bless you, and may make your name great. And there, be a blessing, so that I may bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I may curse. And the result will be that in you all the families of the ground shall be blessed. (Gen. 12:1–3, DeRouchie's translation)

The Abrahamic covenant has two stages. The Mosaic covenant fulfilled stage one: in going to the land, Abraham would become a great nation. The new covenant fulfilled stage two: through one of Abraham's representatives (i.e., the Messiah) displaying a life of blessing rather than curse, some from all the families of the earth would be restored into relationship with their Creator.

Though the patriarch's wife was barren (11:30) and though he realized Yahweh's promises would take a miracle, Abraham believed God could do for him what he could not do on his own, and God counted his faith in the offspring promise as righteousness (15:6; cf. 18:13–14). To exalt his faithfulness and anticipate future mercy, Yahweh vowed to fulfill his land promise to Abraham's offspring (15:17–18) and provided a substitute sacrifice in the place of Isaac (22:12–14). He also reaffirmed that he would bless the nations through a royal representative, now known to be from Judah, who would destroy evil and reestablish world peace (22:17–18; 24:60; 49:8–10). Through him and by means of spiritual adoption, Abraham would become a father of a multitude of nations (Gen. 17:4–6), and the land would expand to lands (22:17; 26:3–4), resulting in Abraham inheriting the world (Rom. 4:13). For such ultimate good, God sent Joseph to Egypt to preserve the children of

Jacob/Israel alive in the midst of famine while they awaited the Promised Land (45:7–8; 50:20, 24–25).

Nation Redeemed and Commissioned (Exodus, Sinai, and Wilderness)



God fulfilled his promises by sustaining and multiplying Israel through four hundred years of Egyptian bondage (Exod. 1:7; cf. Gen. 15:13–14). For the sake of his name and reputation, God brought the plagues on Egypt and redeemed Israel from slavery (Exod. 7:5; 9:15–16; 14:4; 2 Sam. 7:23).

Yahweh gave Israel his old covenant law through Moses in order to mediate his presence and display his holiness among the nations (Exod. 19:5–6). Through lives of radical love overflowing in sustained obedience (Lev. 19:28; Deut. 6:4–5; 10:16–19), Israel could bear witness to the worth and excellencies of God to a watching world (4:5–8). Yahweh would consider their perfect surrender as “righteousness” (6:2, 5), and they would enjoy lasting life (4:1; 8:1; 16:20; cf. Lev. 26:3–13; Deut. 28:1–14). Yahweh provided a means of atonement so that they could be near him, and he identified that his presence alone would distinguish them from the nations (Exod. 33:16; 34:6–9; Lev. 9:3–6; 10:3). He also restated his promise that a royal deliverer would arise from Jacob who would exercise international influence (Num. 24:7–9, 17–19).

Nevertheless, the majority were “stubborn,” “rebellious,” and “unbelieving” (Deut. 9:6–7, 23–24), and God did not overcome their hard-heartedness (29:4; cf. Rom. 11:7–8). Instead, God foretold that Israel would continue to rebel and suffer exile (Deut. 4:25–29; 31:16–17, 27–29), and God promised to restore Israel in a way that would exalt himself alone as the one who enables his people to love him and do what he commands (4:30–31; 30:3, 6–8).

Government in the Land (Conquest and Kingdoms)



As Israel entered into the land through the conquest, Yahweh exalted himself before the nations as the only true God. In the Canaanite Rahab's words, “Yahweh your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath” (Josh. 2:11; cf. 8:24; 1 Sam. 4:8). The Lord was completely faithful

to his promises that he had made to Israel (Josh. 21:43–45). As with Adam in Eden, he brought them into a new paradise (Exod. 15:17–18).

Nevertheless, the majority of the people soon forgot Yahweh and progressively became Canaanized: “They abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the people who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger” (Judg. 2:12), resulting in their ruin. Without a faithful king, the people did what was right in their own eyes (21:25), and God’s word became rare (1 Sam. 3:1). The people sought a king, which God granted, but they wanted one who would replace rather than represent Yahweh (8:7). Ultimately, because the leaders and community refused to listen to God’s gracious appeal via his prophets, the united empire was divided (1 Kings 11:11, 13), and both the northern and southern kingdoms came to a ruinous end—exile and a destroyed temple (2 Kings 17:14–15, 18; ch. 25).

In spite of all the darkness and rebellion of Israel’s rise and fall, Yahweh graciously renewed his promise of a coming royal redeemer (1 Sam. 2:10). King David foreshadowed this deliverer, and God declared that through David Yahweh would fulfill his universal kingdom purposes (2 Sam. 7:12, 16). One of David’s offspring would be God’s royal “Son” who would possess and bless the nations and destroy God’s enemies (Ps. 2:7–9; 72:17; cf. 2 Sam. 7:14). God would establish and uphold David’s throne with justice and righteousness (Isa. 9:7; cf. Luke 1:32). Bearing the name “Israel,” this new representative servant-king would “bring back the preserved of Israel” (the people) and be “a light to the nations,” thus extending Yahweh’s saving reign to the end of the earth (Isa. 49:3, 6). The anticipated savior-king would proclaim Yahweh’s end-time reign—the year of his favor and the day of his vengeance (52:7; 61:2). He also, while himself guiltless (50:9; 53:9), would, through a substitutionary death, satisfy God’s wrath against sinners and, by his righteousness, “make many to be accounted righteous” (53:5, 10–11; cf. John 11:50–52; Rom. 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Dispersion and Return (Exile and Initial Restoration)



Yahweh cast Israel from the Promised Land because they failed to live for him and heed his voice (2 Kings 17:7; 2 Chron. 36:16). And from the depths of exile, Daniel pled, “Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive.

O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, *for your own sake*, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name” (Dan. 9:18–19).

Yahweh is a God whose “steadfast love . . . never ceases” and whose “mercies never come to an end” (Lam. 3:22–23). Out of his boundless kindness, God promised that, in the latter days, “the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed” (Dan. 2:44) and that “one like a son of man” would receive “dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him” (7:13–14). Hence, *for his own sake*, the Lord would sustain Israel through exile and would ultimately use them as witnesses to his greatness in the world (Isa. 48:9, 11; Ezek. 36:22–23; cf. Acts 1:8).

Yahweh preserved his people. He prevented enemies from annihilating them (i.e., the book of Esther), and he restored them to the land (i.e., Ezra-Nehemiah). He commanded the Jews to rebuild the temple “that I may be glorified” (Hag. 1:8), and he also charged them to honor and fear him as the “great King” over all (Mal. 1:6, 14). But the story of God’s glory still waited for its consummation.

While the seventy-year exile that Jeremiah foretold (Jer. 25:12; 29:10; cf. Ezra 1:1; Dan. 9:2) came to an end in relation to Cyrus’s decree that the people could return to the land (Isa. 44:26–28; 2 Chron. 36:20–23), the royal servant had yet to arrive who would reconcile sinners to God (Isa. 49:6; 53:11; Dan. 9:24). Numerous features identify that the end of the OT era was not the end of God’s kingdom purposes:

- The land had not returned to an Edenic state (Isa. 51:3; Ezek. 36:33–36).
- The nation was not fully reunited (Jer. 23:6; 31:31; Ezek. 37:22), with believing Gentiles in their midst (Isa. 2:2–4; 49:6; Jer. 12:16; 30:8–9).
- The Jews were still slaves (Ezra 9:8–9; Neh. 9:36), and the Davidic king was not yet reigning (Isa. 9:6–7; Jer. 23:5; 30:9; Ezek. 37:24).
- God’s people did not enjoy a new covenant of universal, everlasting peace (Isa. 61:8–9; Jer. 31:31–34; 32:40; Ezek. 37:26).
- God’s people did not have new inner dispositions to love and obey the Lord (Deut. 30:6, 8; Isa. 2:3; 42:4; Jer. 31:33; 32:39–40; Ezek. 36:26–27).
- God’s people did not fully enjoy his presence (Ezek. 36:27; 37:27–28).

Yahweh had not yet fully realized his kingdom purposes. The king who was to bring global blessing still needed to come.

Overlap of the Ages (Christ's Work and the Church Age)



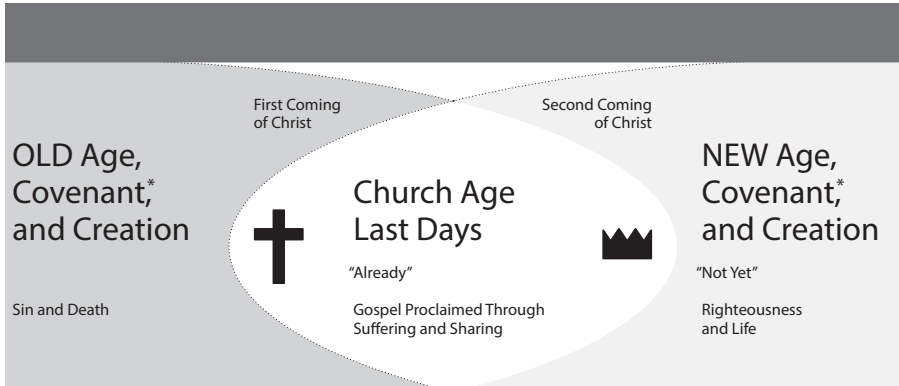
As we move into the NT narrative history, one of the mysterious parts of God's kingdom program was the way Jesus's first coming was as a suffering servant, and only in his second coming would he show himself fully as a conquering king (Heb. 9:28). In his initial appearing, he brought the future into the middle of history. He proclaimed "the year of the LORD's favor," but only later would he bring "the day of vengeance of our God" (Isa. 61:2; cf. Luke 4:19). Today we live in an overlap of the ages: Christ has delivered us from "the present evil age" (Gal. 1:4) yet only in a way that lets us taste "the powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:5).

Thus, "the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18). As Paul says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:11–13). Already we have been "born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," and that hope points to "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3–5; cf. Eph. 1:3–14). Figure 2.4 attempts to visualize the *already* but *not yet* aspects of the kingdom in this overlap of the ages.

In the fullness of time, "God sent forth his Son" (Gal. 4:4), as the very Word who was God "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). And "by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, [God] condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Rom. 8:3–4). The kingdom is *already* here because Jesus came to earth to appease God's wrath toward the sin of Israel and the world. Jesus is the Christ, the promised royal deliver, who came "to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). He is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29), and by his life, death, and resurrection, he inaugurated the new covenant (Luke 22:20; Heb. 9:15) and new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). In the "great exchange" of the ages, God counts every believer's sin to Christ and Christ's righteousness to every believer (Isa. 53:11; Rom. 5:18–19; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Jesus lived for the glory of his Father (John 7:18; 17:4), and his death and resurrection vindicated God's righteousness and exalted God's glory (John

12:27–28; 17:1). “God put forward [Jesus Christ] as a propitiation by his blood . . . so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:25–26). “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us . . . so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles” (Gal. 3:13–14). God’s glory raised Christ from the dead (Rom. 6:4) and through this magnified Christ (Heb. 2:9; 1 Peter 1:21).



*At one level, the old and new covenants do not overlap, for Jesus “makes the first one obsolete” and “does away with the first in order to establish the second” (Heb. 8:13; 10:9). At another level, however, because the old (Mosaic) covenant represents the age of death in Adam, the writer of Hebrews can add, “And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” (8:13), noting that while “the end of the ages” is already upon us (9:26), the consummation of “the age to come” has not yet been realized (6:5; cf. 2 Cor. 3:11).

Fig. 2.4. Redemptive History and the Overlap of the Ages⁴

Jesus and his apostles proclaimed the good news of God’s kingdom (Luke 4:43; Acts 1:1–3; 20:25; 28:23), which is nothing less than God’s end-time reign manifest through “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6; cf. 1 Tim. 1:11). The good news is the message “that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scripture, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the twelve” (1 Cor. 15:3–5). By means of faith-filled, Spirit-empowered disciples bearing witness to Christ, God’s reign and glory have spread from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Under Christ’s universal authority, the church must make disciples of all nations for the sake of Christ’s name, ever trusting the powerful presence of the reigning king to guard his servants and open hearts to the gospel (Matt. 28:18–20; Rom. 1:5).

4. This figure originally appeared in Jason S. DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About: A Survey of Jesus’ Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013), 39. Used with permission.

Mission Accomplished (Christ's Return and Kingdom Consummation)



God's mercy, wrath, and power make known "the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory" (Rom. 9:22–23). Jesus came to satisfy our deepest longing and to help us see and savor his glory (John 6:35; 17:24). His return will be glorious (Matt. 16:27; 25:31), as we "see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (24:30). Only those who "fear God and give him glory" will escape divine wrath when the Son of Man returns to be glorified in his saints (Rev. 14:7; 2 Thess. 1:9–10; cf. Matt. 16:27; 24:30; 25:31; John 17:24).

Even now, those around the throne of the conquering Lion and slain Lamb are declaring him worthy to carry out God's decreed purposes to punish and save (Rev. 5:9–10). And the redeemed mixed multitude will one day cry together, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (7:10). In that day, "[God] will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (21:3–4). And "the glory of God" will give the city light—a glory that will be localized in none other than "the Lamb" (21:23). And "by its light will the nations walk . . . and there will be no night there" (21:24–25). "No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. . . . They will need no light or lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever" (22:3, 5).

In view of these realities, Jesus proclaims, "I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright and morning star. . . . Surely I am coming soon" (22:16, 20). And we say with John, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (22:20).

Summary

Genesis through Revelation reveals a kingdom history that is truly *his*—a story of God's glory in Christ. God's kingdom program develops in seven stages. In the first five stages, which detail the OT narrative history, God identifies the problem and makes promises. In the final two stages, God supplies the solution and fulfills those promises. One can remember all seven stages through the acronym KINGDOM:

1. Kickoff and rebellion: Creation, fall, and flood
2. Instrument of blessing: Patriarchs

3. Nation redeemed and commissioned: Exodus, Sinai, and wilderness
4. Government in the land: Conquest and kingdoms
5. Dispersion and return: Exile and initial restoration
6. Overlap of the ages: Christ's work and the church age
7. Mission accomplished: Christ's return and kingdom consummation

All salvation history points to Christ, and he is the decisive one who fulfills all our hopes, to the praise of God's glorious grace.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are the four elements to which God's kingdom relates?
2. How do we summarize Scripture's theme that stands at the core of God's purposes from Genesis to Revelation? How would you tweak the statement to be more faithful to the biblical message?
3. Using the KINGDOM acronym, what are the seven stages in God's kingdom program?
4. How might you prove to a friend that "the entire storyline of Scripture pivots on the person and work of Christ"?
5. Supply one example of how *each* of the seven stages in God's kingdom program magnifies God's glory. That is, in what ways does God act *for his own sake* throughout the storyline of Scripture? How should our hearts respond to the role of God's glory from Genesis to Revelation?